

WEU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

RHODOS DECLARATION

11-12 May 1998

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the WEU nations met in Rhodes on 11 and 12 May 1998.

2. The Ministerial meeting took place at an important moment for WEU:

Meeting for the first time since the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Brussels Treaty, Ministers expressed their appreciation for the Conference organized by the Permanent Council to commemorate this anniversary. Although circumstances have dramatically changed since the signature of the Treaty, Ministers confirmed that it continues to form a valuable part of the European security architecture.

WEU plays a substantial role in the development of this new architecture. WEU in its pivotal role between the European Union and NATO is an important instrument permitting Europeans to shoulder their responsibilities in the field of security and defence in Europe and beyond whilst reinforcing the transatlantic link. WEU's sustained process of operational development, including through institutional and practical cooperation with the European Union and NATO, has both enhanced its capacity to act autonomously, to respond to requests from the EU and to elaborate and implement EU decisions and actions which have defence implications, and strengthened WEU's operational capabilities in meeting the challenges of crisis management.

Ministers reaffirmed the importance of continuing to develop a genuine ESDI and of pursuing greater European responsibility for security and defence matters. WEU is an integral part of the development of the EU providing the Union with access to an operational capability, notably in the context of the Petersberg tasks, and is an essential element of the development of the ESDI within the Atlantic Alliance in accordance with the Paris Declaration and the decisions taken by NATO Ministers in Berlin.

Ministers looked forward to further progress in these respects, with the involvement of all WEU nations, sharing the vision of a secure Europe, free of any dividing lines, built on the principles of solidarity, respect for international law, human rights and good neighbourliness.

3. WEU confirmed its readiness to support the UN and OSCE in their crisis management tasks.

II. STRENGTHENING COOPERATION WITH THE EU

4. Western European Union is an integral part of the development of the European Union providing the Union with access to an operational capability notably in the context of the Petersberg tasks. It supports the Union in framing the defence aspects of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as set out in Article J.7(3) of the Treaty on European Union. Ministers reaffirmed the objective “to build up WEU in stages as the defence component of the European Union” as developed by the Treaty of Amsterdam. In this perspective, they reaffirmed the importance of implementing fully the provisions of Article J.7(1)-(3) of the Treaty on European Union and recalled their Declaration of 22 July 1997. Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to draw up further arrangements for enhanced cooperation between WEU and the EU, bearing in mind the working priorities set out in paragraph 7 of the 22 July Declaration.

5. Ministers welcomed the continuing work on a modus operandi for the implementation of paragraph 2 of Article J.4 of the Treaty of European Union revised in Article J.7(3) of the Amsterdam Treaty and the further development of an illustrative, practical model for linking the decision-making processes of both Organizations in crisis management operations for which the EU avails itself of WEU. They reaffirmed the importance they attached to this work and requested the Permanent Council to pursue this work as a matter of priority. In this context, they welcomed the intention of the WEU and EU Presidencies to organise a seminar in June, to test the mechanisms elaborated so far. They tasked the Permanent Council to evaluate, in close cooperation with the EU, the lessons learned from this seminar with a view to further improving, inter alia, practical cooperation between the two Organizations.

6. Ministers noted with interest the continuation of the work on the reflection on the framing of a Common European Defence Policy, which has been based on a pragmatic approach identifying building blocks and considering inventory work. They tasked the Permanent Council to pursue this work further. In this respect, they considered that the reflection on the interface between civilian/military aspects in crisis management, as one of those building blocks, could lead to the adoption of concrete measures of cooperation between the two Organizations.

7. They underlined the value of joint WEU/EU ad hoc groups as a useful tool facilitating practical cooperation between the two Organizations. They invited the Permanent Council to develop further practical methods of cooperation in all relevant fields with the European Union including the holding of joint meetings of the bodies of the two Organizations.

8. Ministers acknowledged the progress made in the field of cooperation between the WEU Secretariat and the EU Council Secretariat, thus improving further working relations between the two Organizations and noted the report presented in this context by the WEU Secretary-General. They requested the Secretary-General to take forward the work on proposals, to be submitted to the Permanent Council, for closer coordination of the work of the staff of the Secretariat-General of WEU with the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, taking into account progress in establishing the EU's Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit, including the exchange and secondment of personnel. They expressed their expectation that closer day-to-day cooperation between WEU and the European Union should lead to a rapprochement of the different working cultures of both Organizations in the field of security policy. They expressed their interest in ensuring that WEU cooperate effectively with and contribute to the future Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit. They tasked the Permanent Council to keep the matter under constant review and to report to the next Ministerial Council.

9. In this respect, Ministers reaffirmed the significance of concluding improved security arrangements with the European Union, aiming inter alia at facilitating the flow of classified information between the two Organizations, thus rendering their cooperation more effective. They noted with satisfaction the EU Council decision on security clearance for officials of the EU Council Secretariat who are required to handle classified information. To this end, they tasked the Permanent Council to pursue the matter and examine all possibilities for the early conclusion of improved security arrangements between the two Organizations.

10. Bearing in mind the 22 July 1997 Declaration, Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to draw up practical arrangements for ensuring cooperation of WEU with the European Commission reflecting the Commission's role in the CFSP as defined in the revised Treaty on European Union. Ministers asked the Secretary-General to prepare an early report for the Permanent Council which would serve as a starting point for this work.

11. Ministers warmly welcomed the cooperation between WEU and the EU in Albania and in particular, as far as the PHARE programme is concerned, the exchange of letters between Commissioner Van den Broek and the Secretary-General of WEU, dated 23 December 1997 and 16 January 1998 respectively. Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to strengthen further WEU's cooperation with the EU in this field.

12. Ministers welcomed the Permanent Council decision to offer to the EU image interpretation products produced by the WEU Satellite Centre as an important step to enhance relations with the EU.

III. REINFORCING RELATIONS WITH NATO

13. Ministers reiterated their conviction that the Atlantic Alliance continues to be the basis for collective defence under the Washington Treaty and that it remains the essential forum for consultation among Allies and the framework in which they agree on policies bearing on their security and defence commitments under the Washington Treaty. The Alliance has embarked on a process of adaptation and reform so that it can more effectively carry out the full range of its missions. This process is aimed at strengthening and renewing the transatlantic partnership, including building an ESDI within the Alliance which will enable all European Allies to take greater responsibility for their security and defence.

Ministers reaffirmed their determination to continue taking all necessary measures so that the ESDI within the Alliance can be grounded on sound military principles and appropriate military planning permitting the creation of militarily coherent and effective forces capable of operating under the political control and strategic direction of WEU.

14. WEU is an essential element of the development of the ESDI within the Alliance. Ministers therefore reiterated their commitment to continue their efforts to enhance institutional and practical cooperation with NATO. In this regard, they welcomed the substantial progress achieved during the Greek Presidency and in particular

- The progress made in the direction of clear and concrete WEU-NATO consultation arrangements, necessary for the preparation and conduct of future WEU-led operations making use of NATO assets and capabilities. They stressed the importance of arriving at fully agreed consultation arrangements, thus facilitating the linking of the decision-making processes of the two Organizations. In this context they noted with satisfaction that working documents have now been elaborated by NATO and WEU which, in the view of both Organizations, represent a good starting point for conducting trials in the joint events described below, and for reference as appropriate in the event of an operation.
- The decision to further develop WEU-NATO relations by organizing in the coming months a NATO-WEU workshop and seminar to help develop and validate the procedures for consultation between the two Organizations.
- The decision to schedule a joint Crisis Management Exercise (CMX/CRISEX) with NATO in the year 2000, designed to develop and test the consultation and decision-making mechanisms in the case of a WEU-led operation using NATO assets and capabilities and which will reflect the lessons of the aforementioned workshop and seminar for the benefit of all participants.

- The further work done towards the identification of general elements for a framework agreement between NATO and WEU setting out principles and modalities for the transfer, monitoring and return of NATO assets and capabilities. They reiterated the importance of such a framework agreement which would contribute to WEU's operational effectiveness.
- The working agreement reached with NATO on modalities which will be applied during the current defence planning cycle for WEU's participation in the NATO defence planning process, including practical arrangements for the involvement of non-allied WEU Observer States in force planning activities necessary to identify and assess the possible contributions of forces and capabilities of those countries in view of their potential contribution to Petersberg operations.

They tasked the Permanent Council to pursue this work, inter alia through joint meetings of the Councils and relevant WEU/NATO working groups, with a view to satisfactory conclusions in the priority areas identified above aiming at the full implementation of the decisions of Birmingham, Berlin and Brussels by Spring of next year.

15. Ministers also welcomed:

- the further development of regular contacts between the two organizations at all levels, especially between the military staffs;
- WEU observation of CJTF trials ;
- the discussions of the Permanent Council with DSACEUR and those held, for the first time, with SACLANT. These meetings are considered as part of the development of relations between the WEU Council and NATO's Military Authorities in the context of the evolution of ESDI.

16. Ministers recalled the operational importance of closer relations being developed with NATO, allowing greater effectiveness at the time of WEU-led operations using NATO assets and capabilities. In this context, the discussion by the Chiefs of Defence Staff (CHODs) of the benefits of and possibilities for the potential participation of the future Chairman of the Military Delegates Committee (MDC) in NATO Military Committee meetings was appreciated by the Ministers. They also emphasized that such participation would further strengthen WEU-NATO practical cooperation and consultation on common operational and military issues.

17. Ministers welcomed the Permanent Council decision to offer to NATO image interpretation products produced by the WEU Satellite Centre as an important step to enhance relations with NATO.

18. Ministers warmly welcomed the important decision allowing the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, prospective new members of NATO, to attend discussions on issues related to WEU's cooperation with the Alliance, thus helping those countries prepare for the prospect of Associate Membership in WEU.

IV. WEU'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN ALBANIA

19. Ministers had an in-depth exchange of views on the current situation in Albania. They noted that although significant progress has been achieved in recent months, much still remains to be done. They recognised the readiness of the Albanian government to promote national reconciliation and strengthen democratic institutions so as to ensure full respect for human rights and other international norms.

20. Ministers stressed the need for all the political parties in Albania to cooperate to restore law and order and normal political life and to promote political and economic reform, in the interests of improving the living conditions of the Albanian people.

21. Ministers welcomed the timely initiative of the Greek Presidency to propose and organise a working visit of the members of the Council to the Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE) mission in Tirana (26-27 February 1998), which allowed them to have high-level meetings with the Albanian authorities and the parliamentary opposition and in particular to appreciate on the spot the conditions and needs of the Albanian police as well as the work of MAPE.

22. Ministers welcomed the decision, in response to a request by the Albanian government, to extend MAPE's mandate for a further one-year period from 12 April 1998 subject to a mid-term review in October 1998, at which time among other things the details of MAPE's deployment for the second half of the mandate period together with manpower and budgetary implications will be addressed. They noted with satisfaction the involvement of an increasing number of WEU nations in contributing to the MAPE's mission, thus underlining WEU's solidarity and potential when responding to an operational task. They asked the Permanent Council to keep closely under review the progress of this mission towards its designated objective taking into account other ongoing bilateral and multilateral activities in the same field.

23. Ministers expressed their appreciation for the work accomplished by the MAPE under difficult conditions and expressed their support and gratitude for their commitment to the implementation of the mandate.

24. Ministers strongly supported the ongoing efforts of the international community to assist Albania through complementary bilateral and multilateral initiatives and expressed their particular appreciation for the substantial contribution the EU provides for the reconstruction of Albania, for the OSCE's role and for the efforts made by some WEU countries on a bilateral basis.

They also welcomed NATO's decision to continue to assist Albania in rebuilding and reconstructing its armed forces under the democratic control of the civilian authorities. In this context, Ministers expressed their wish for increased exchanges of information with NATO.

V. KOSOVO AND REGIONAL STABILITY

25. Ministers held an extensive exchange of views on the situation in Kosovo. They expressed their strong concern about the increasing violence and growing polarisation in Kosovo. They condemned the excessive use of force by FRY and Serbian security forces and insisted that these forces should conform with internationally accepted standards, whilst condemning all terrorist acts, calling on those who are providing support for terrorist activity in Kosovo to cease immediately. They reiterated their support for the territorial integrity of the FRY, whilst underlining that the status quo in Kosovo was unacceptable. They agreed that the crisis in Kosovo constituted a risk to the stability of the surrounding region. They insisted that immediate steps by the parties to reduce tension and to begin an unconditional dialogue are indispensable. Ministers expressed their readiness to promote a clear and achievable path towards Belgrade's full integration in the international community, should Belgrade take the steps needed to launch substantive talks on Kosovo's political status. They also expressed their support for the efforts of the international community, including the United Nations, the OSCE, the G8, the Contact Group and countries of the region; and welcomed the recent declarations of the EU General Affairs Council, North Atlantic Council and of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries of South-Eastern Europe. They deeply regretted that President Milosevic had, nonetheless, so far failed to create the conditions for a meaningful dialogue without preconditions. They noted that insufficient action by Belgrade could only lead to the deepening isolation of the FRY.

26. Ministers considered that WEU's Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE) in Albania contributes to stability in the region. They tasked the Permanent Council to consider further possible areas for cooperation with the Albanian authorities:

- extension of MAPE's advisory role to include advice on police monitoring and control in the border area, and on crowd control and other issues;
- further training and provision of equipment to improve the Albanian police capacity to monitor and control its borders.

Ministers expressed their support for the efforts under way in NATO to seek military advice on possible further contributions to security in Albania and FYROM* and will propose that representatives of the WEU Military Staff be involved in the NATO assessment machinery.

Taking account of the outcome of NATO's current deliberations, WEU would be ready to examine whether any further contributions were appropriate; for example, in the field of military training and restructuring of the Albanian armed forces.

* Turkey recognises Macedonia with its constitutional name.

VI. WEU'S OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

27. Ministers underlined the significant progress that has been achieved in further reinforcing WEU through the development of its operational role.

28. Ministers welcomed the progress achieved since their meeting in Erfurt in the implementation of their decision for the reorganisation of the military structure at WEU HQ which will be effective from 14 May 1998. In this context, they approved the Terms of Reference of the 3-Star General/Flag Officer, in his dual capacity as Chairman of the MDC and Director of the Military Staff, and of his Supporting Staff.

29. Ministers noted with interest the Presidency's Report on the CHODs meeting held in Athens on 7 April 1998. In particular, Ministers welcomed the Military Delegates Group's (MDG) harmonized military advice on the future role of the Planning Cell. They reaffirmed the importance they attach to an effective Planning Cell as a military component of the WEU Military Staff at WEU HQ.

30. Ministers approved the document on the Terms of Reference of the WEU Planning Cell, which has been elaborated on the basis of the developments in WEU's operational capabilities, including the decisions taken in Paris and Erfurt on the implementation of the military committee and on the WEU Military Staff. Ministers looked forward to the elaboration of Terms of Reference for a dedicated Planning Cell unit, as part of the implementation of decisions taken at Erfurt on the participation of WEU nations concerned in planning for operations to which they contribute.

31. Ministers welcomed the decision of the Permanent Council on modalities for mounting Headquarters of multinational FAWEU. They consider follow-up on this issue an important contribution to enhancing WEU's operational capabilities.

32. Ministers welcomed the progress made in preparing for WEU Exercise CRISEX '98, due to take place in November of this year, and designed to maintain and improve WEU's crisis management capabilities by practising agreed mechanisms and procedures, including the interaction between WEU HQ and nations. They welcomed the attendance of Associate Partners at discussions related to the Exercise in the MDG. They expressed their satisfaction with the decision concerning the modalities for observation of the exercise CRISEX '98 by various countries and institutions.

33. Ministers expressed interest in the work carried out so far on the "strategic mobility concept for the WEU".

34. Ministers noted with appreciation the continuing work of the Satellite Centre in support of WEU's missions. They took note of a progress report on the evaluation of the possibilities of WEU's participation in a developing multilateral European programme and tasked the Permanent Council to pursue its work and to present conclusions in due course. They further noted that work continued on proposals to improve WEU's access to HELIOS imagery and looked forward to a timely conclusion of the necessary arrangements. They noted the intention expressed by France to offer, in a future planning conference, the use of a mobile ground station for receiving such imagery in the context of CRISEX '98. Ministers also took note with interest of the introduction for discussion of a conceptual framework paper concerning WEU's space policy as an initiative by the Greek Presidency and asked the Permanent Council to reflect further on this matter.

35. Ministers welcomed the Permanent Council decision on the possible secondment of image analysts from member States to the Satellite Centre. Ministers also recalled the aim of maximising possibilities for participation in space activities by Associate Members and Observer States, and of strengthening Associate Partner participation in an increasing number of activities, and tasked the Permanent Council to explore further possibilities to this effect. In this context, Ministers welcomed the Permanent Council decision on the possible secondment of image analysts from Associate Members to the Satellite Centre. They welcomed the visit to the Satellite Centre of experts from Observer countries, and the forthcoming visit of permanent representatives of the Associate Partners, which constitute further steps towards the deeper involvement of these countries in WEU's operational capabilities.

36. Ministers welcomed the initiative taken by Austria and Italy, the forthcoming EU and WEU Presidencies, to co-host in Vienna (from 7-10 July 1998) a seminar for European experts on the implementation of Treaty obligations with regard to mines in the armed forces. Considering the dramatic human cost caused by the scourge of landmines, recalling the Erfurt Declaration, Ministers reaffirmed their determination to do their utmost to ban anti-personnel landmines worldwide. In this context, they requested the Permanent Council to continue its work with a view to strengthening WEU capabilities.

37. Ministers welcomed the announcement made by Italy, Hungary and Slovenia regarding the establishment of a Multinational Land Force (MLF). After the completion of the respective internal procedures, the MLF could be made available to WEU for Petersberg-type missions on the basis of a unanimous decision by these three countries, within its framework of employment established in their agreement.

38. Ministers welcomed the mandate of the Western European Logistics Group (WELG) and the arrangements related to the participation of interested WEU nations, not being full members of the WELG.

39. Ministers welcomed the efforts undertaken by the Council to implement the mandate, given at their meeting at Erfurt, to reflect on procedures within WEU, facilitating consensus-building and, where appropriate, the emergence of a decision to act in response to a specific crisis, within the framework of the relevant provisions of the modified Brussels Treaty. They requested the Permanent Council to take the work further forward, building on the progress made so far, with a view to reporting its conclusions at their next meeting.

VII. ARMAMENTS COOPERATION

40. Ministers noted with satisfaction that, in line with agreements reached by WEAG Defence Ministers at Erfurt, a number of interested WEU Observers, which are not members of WEAG – in particular Finland and Sweden – attended the meeting of WEAG National Armaments Directors held in Berlin on 13 March 1998 and that Austria is currently considering its participation in WEAG activities in the future.

41. Ministers looked forward to WEU Associate Partners taking up the opportunities to participate in armaments cooperation activities offered at Erfurt.

42. They also noted that the question of how to respond to the interest of the Russian Federation and Ukraine in armaments cooperation was being studied.

43. Ministers noted with satisfaction the ongoing work in WEAG to develop a final plan, including a timetable, on progress towards a European armaments agency, which will be presented to WEAG Defence Ministers in Autumn 1998.

VIII. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

44. Ministers underlined the need to develop WEU's relations with third countries in a way which enhances cooperation in the framework of European security.

45. Ministers noted the debate in the Special Working Group on Peacekeeping, on the initiative of the Presidency, which provided a useful opportunity for reflection on WEU's relevant policies, experiences and contributions as regards the general norms and methods of peacekeeping. This reflection will provide an input into forthcoming exchanges of views with Russia and Ukraine on peacekeeping.

46. Ministers reviewed the status of relations with Russia, conscious of its strategic importance and significance for the development of the European security architecture. They welcomed the adoption of practical steps leading to further enhancement of the ongoing dialogue and cooperation, including in the field of satellite imagery. They underlined the importance of starting discussions as early as possible for an agreement on long haul air-transport to the benefit of both parties. They also welcomed the development of contacts with Russia by the WEU Assembly and the WEU Institute for Security Studies.

They tasked the Permanent Council to continue to promote WEU's dialogue with Russia and to identify further possible practical cooperation.

47. Ministers expressed their appreciation for the development of WEU's dialogue with Ukraine and reaffirmed Ukraine's significance as an important European partner of WEU. Considering Ukraine's essential role in the consolidation of security in Europe, they welcomed the concrete steps taken in the direction of further strengthening Ukraine's practical cooperation with WEU and in particular the forthcoming visit, for the first time, of Ukrainian experts to the Satellite Centre. They also welcomed the development of contacts with Ukraine by the WEU Assembly and the WEU Institute for Security Studies.

Ministers tasked the Permanent Council to examine all possibilities to provide a firm and viable basis for further dialogue, and practical cooperation with Ukraine.

48. Ministers reiterated the wish for a timely ratification of the Open Skies Treaty by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

49. Ministers reiterated their conviction that the dialogue with non-WEU Mediterranean countries should continue to be enriched in substance and practical content. Thus, they welcomed the work to that effect carried out during the Greek Presidency. They also welcomed the Council decision to expand the dialogue to include the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Ministers requested the Permanent Council to pursue its work taking into consideration the Barcelona process and NATO's Mediterranean initiative.

50. They expressed their appreciation for the decision of the Permanent Council on the participation of the Associate Partners in meetings of the Mediterranean Group to discuss matters related to the WEU dialogue with the non-WEU Mediterranean countries.

51. Ministers noted the opening of accession negotiations between Cyprus* and the European Union. They expressed their appreciation for the ongoing dialogue with Cyprus* which evolves in line with the development of its links with the EU.

52. Ministers took note of the report on African Peacekeeping, reviewing the priorities and modalities for further steps within the framework of WEU's African Peacekeeping policy during 1998. They tasked the Council to explore further possibilities in promoting this cooperation, in close coordination inter alia with the European Union and the United Nations. They noted that WEU had sent observers to the West African peacekeeping exercise, Guidimakha, which comes within the framework of the US-Franco-British initiative on training for peacekeeping activities.

* Turkey dissociates itself from this reference by reserving its position on this issue.

IX. OSCE

53. WEU supports the OSCE role in European security as an organization specializing in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, in setting norms and principles for the behaviour of States, and in creating an integrative and flexible framework for cooperative security and cooperation among different organisations and institutions. In this context Ministers welcomed the OSCE's efforts to build a comprehensive and indivisible European security system and to foster mutually reinforcing relations between the OSCE and other international organisations. Underlining the importance of maintaining close cooperation between the WEU and the OSCE presence in Albania, they stressed the need for direct information exchange, which is one of the practical means of enhancing the effectiveness of work.

X. TRANSATLANTIC FORUM

54. Ministers reiterated the importance of continuing the Transatlantic Forum dialogue and welcomed the various initiatives of the Transatlantic Forum developed by the Belgian Chair aimed at further enhancing its impact on the decision-making circles in the United States and Canada. They requested the Permanent Council to pursue this work further.

XI. OTHER QUESTIONS

55. Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Greek Presidency to organize, in cooperation with WEU's Institute for Security Studies, a seminar for young diplomats of all 28 WEU nations, aiming at providing them with information and insight on WEU's role in the shaping of the European security architecture, confirming thus its character as a genuine framework for dialogue and cooperation among Europeans on wider security and defence issues.

56. Ministers stressed the continuing valuable contribution of the WEU Parliamentary Assembly and its Committees in relation to the Organization's work and, in this context, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly had addressed their meeting. Ministers welcomed the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly to organize, in cooperation with NATO, a seminar in Madrid, from 4-6 May 1998, on the subject "European Security and Defence Identity".

57. Ministers recalled the work accomplished by the Institute for Security Studies in the field of research and information directly related to security and defence issues. They noted the proposals submitted by the Institute with respect to its gradual development into a European Security and Defence Academy and requested the Permanent Council to explore this question further. Ministers also reiterated their wish to have all WEU nations involved as closely as possible in the Institute's activities.

58. Ministers welcomed the statement presented by Italy on its programme for the next six months during its Presidency of WEU, which includes:

- the further improvement, according to the WEU Declaration of 22 July 1997 and in the light of the Amsterdam Treaty, of WEU's institutional and practical links with the European Union. In this context, the strengthening of the relations between the parliamentary institutions of both Organizations will be encouraged;
- in close cooperation with the Austrian Presidency of the European Union, meetings of the WEU/EU ad hoc group and other ad hoc meetings will continue in order to intensify the dialogue with the EU to develop the modalities and the principles on which closer cooperation between the two Organizations in security and defence matters should be based, according to relevant decisions of the two Organizations;
- broadening the basis for the development of the European Security and Defence Identity, in particular the further strengthening of cooperation with NATO in the light of the relevant decisions of summits and ministerial meetings of both Organizations;
- the further strengthening of WEU's operational capabilities;
- the further deepening of the participation of Associate Partners in the operational development of WEU;
- the prospect for deepening cooperation in the field of armaments policy, in all appropriate fora;
- the development of measures designed to strengthen the role of WEU in the field of demining;
- the intensification of WEU's dialogue with third countries, both with non-WEU Mediterranean and European countries;
- the continuation of the action implemented by WEU in Albania through the Multinational Advisory Police Element with the objective of contributing to the reconstruction of the Albanian Police Forces, in a framework of cooperation and complementarity with other multilateral and bilateral initiatives.

59. Ministers expressed their appreciation to Admiral Rafael De Morales on the occasion of his forthcoming replacement, for his invaluable contribution to the operational development of WEU and welcomed the appointment of Vice-Admiral Jean Marie Viriot as the Chairman of the Military Delegates Committee and Director of the WEU Military Staff.