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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee
Subject: Special meeting of the European Council (6 March 2025)
– Draft conclusions

In accordance with Article 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Council, delegations will find attached the draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission.

I. UKRAINE

1. The European Council held an exchange of views with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.
2. The European Union has from the very beginning stood by Ukraine as it exercises its inherent right to self-defence against Russia's full-scale war of aggression, and it will continue to stand by Ukraine and its people. The European Council reaffirms its continued and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.
3. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has wider implications for European and international security. From the onset of the war, the European Union and its Member States have, with their partners and allies, underlined the need to put an end to it, through a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law.
4. In view of the new momentum for negotiations that should lead to such a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, the European Council underlines the importance of the following principles:
 - a) there can be no negotiations on Ukraine without Ukraine;
 - b) there can be no negotiations that affect European security without Europe's involvement. Ukraine's, Europe's and global security are intertwined;
 - c) a ceasefire can only take place as part of the process leading to a comprehensive peace agreement;
 - d) any such agreement needs to be accompanied by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine that contribute to deterring future Russian aggression;
 - e) peace must respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

5. Achieving ‘peace through strength’ requires Ukraine to be in the strongest possible position, with Ukraine’s own robust military and defence capabilities as an essential component. This applies before, during and after negotiations to end the war. To that end, the European Union remains committed, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, to providing enhanced political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people, and to step up pressure on Russia in order to weaken its ability to continue waging its war of aggression.
6. The European Union will continue to provide Ukraine with regular and predictable financial support. In 2025, it will provide Ukraine with EUR 30.6 billion, with disbursements from the Ukraine Facility expected to reach EUR 12.5 billion and with disbursements of EUR 18.1 billion under the G7 ERA initiative.
7. The European Council reviewed work done on the delivery of military support to Ukraine. It calls for the urgent stepping up of efforts, in particular on the delivery of air defence systems, ammunition and missiles, as well as on the provision of necessary training and equipment for Ukrainian brigades, as well as other needs that Ukraine may have. It highlights in that regard the important role of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine).
8. A Ukraine capable of defending itself effectively is an integral part of any future security guarantees. In this context and in addition to the funds already committed for Ukraine for this year, the European Council welcomes the readiness of Member States to further address Ukraine’s pressing military and defence needs and calls on the Council to advance work on initiatives to enhance EU military support to Ukraine. The European Council also underlines the importance of intensifying work to further support and develop Ukraine’s defence industry and to deepen its cooperation with the European defence industry.

9. In the light of negotiations for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, the European Union and Member States are ready to further contribute to security guarantees based on their respective competences and capabilities, including by exploring the possible use of CSDP instruments. Security guarantees should be undertaken in consultation with Ukraine, as well as like-minded and transatlantic partners.
10. The European Council recalls that all military support as well as security guarantees for Ukraine will be provided in full respect of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States.
11. The European Council underlines the inherent right of Ukraine, based on the UN Charter and international law, to choose its own destiny. The European Union will continue to support Ukraine's reform efforts on its European path.
12. The European Council will revert to this issue at its next meeting.

II. EUROPEAN DEFENCE

13. Recalling the Versailles Declaration of March 2022, Europe must become more sovereign, more responsible for its own defence and better equipped to act and deal autonomously with immediate and future challenges and threats. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions for European and global security in a changing environment represent an existential challenge for the European Union.
14. In this context, the European Union will accelerate the mobilisation of the necessary instruments and financing in order to bolster the security of the European Union and the protection of our citizens. In doing so, the Union will reinforce its overall defence readiness, reduce its strategic dependencies, address its critical capability gaps and strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base accordingly across the Union so that it is in a position to better supply the equipment in the quantities and at the accelerated pace needed. This will also contribute to boosting European industrial and technological competitiveness.

15. Building on its previous conclusions and in line with the respective competences conferred by the Treaties [*p.m.: letter by the Commission on funding options*], the European Council stresses the need to continue to substantially increase defence expenditure, and:
- a) calls on the Commission to recommend without delay a way forward on using flexibilities within the Stability and Growth Pact to facilitate significant defence spending at national level;
 - b) calls on the Commission to propose additional funding sources for defence at EU level, including by means of additional flexibility offered to Member States in the use of their structural fund allocations, and to swiftly present relevant proposals;
 - c) [*p.m. Commission initiative*];
 - d) calls on the Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank to urgently further adapt the European Investment Bank's practices for lending to the defence industry, particularly regarding core defence projects, notably by re-evaluating the list of excluded activities and by increasing the volume of available funding in the field of security and defence;
 - e) identifies the following priority areas for action at EU level in the field of capabilities taking into account the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine, in accordance with the work already done in the framework of the European Defence Agency and in full coherence with NATO: air and missile defence; artillery systems, including deep precision strike capabilities; missiles and ammunition; drones and anti-drone systems; strategic enablers, including in relation to space and critical infrastructure protection; military mobility; cyber; artificial intelligence and electronic warfare;

- f) underlines that the EU land, air and maritime border protection and defence contribute to the security of Europe as a whole, in particular as regards the EU's eastern border as the most exposed to threats posed by Russia and Belarus;
- g) stresses the importance of more systematic aggregation of demand, harmonisation of requirements and joint procurement with the aim of reducing overall costs, ensuring standardisation and interoperability and offering European industry, including SMEs and mid-caps, greater predictability, as well as contributing to a well-functioning market for defence industry that will better mobilise private and public investments;
- h) invites the European Defence Agency, in cooperation with the Commission and with Member States, to swiftly set up appropriate processes to that end;
- i) invites the co-legislators to conclude the negotiations on the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) as soon as possible;
- j) underlines the importance of continued support for research, innovation and development through the European Defence Fund;
- k) calls on the Commission and the co-legislators to swiftly take work forward on simplifying the legal and administrative framework, in particular for public procurement and industry cooperation, in order to address all obstacles and bottlenecks hindering a rapid ramping up of the defence industry, including for SMEs and mid-caps. In this context, the European Council invites the Commission to prioritise a defence-specific simplification omnibus.

16. The European Council also recalls that a stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains, for those States that are members of it, the foundation of their collective defence. It invites the Member States that are also NATO allies to coordinate ahead of the NATO Summit in June 2025.

17. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, in accordance with the Treaties.
18. The European Council looks forward to the White Paper on the Future of European Defence, including elements therein that aim to substantially boost financing for European defence and to strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base.
19. The European Council will revert to this issue at its March and June meetings.

Agence Europe