

Brussels, 25 June 2025

Dear colleagues,

These days are some of the most important in our shared history. A new era of radical uncertainty and instability is unfolding at a rapid pace. The fate of generations to come will be shaped by our response to today's challenges. And these future generations will judge us, not by our words but by our actions.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has directly threatened our collective security and livelihood on a scale unprecedented since the Second World War. It has also confronted us with some hard truths. Europe must become more sovereign, it must do more for its own defence, and it must be better equipped to act and deal autonomously with immediate and future challenges and threats. Inaction is untenable. We must rise to the moment.

The silver lining is that our future is in our own hands. We have immense resources and latent power at our disposal. And I am pleased to say we have made great strides in recent months. Our mobilisation is underway.

The progress we have made since Spring is encouraging. In March, we agreed to accelerate our work on all strands to decisively ramp up Europe's defence readiness within the next five years. Our White Paper on European Defence Readiness 2030 has set out a roadmap of further actions to enhance our collective security. The ReArm Europe Plan laid out the tools to deliver the necessary surge in investment in European defence. Under the clear steer of the Polish Presidency, and with your collective support, we have shown that we can move at a fast pace. The swift adoption of the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) Regulation and the steps taken towards the creation of a European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) show our common determination to deliver.

But this is just the beginning. We must maintain the momentum. We must secure tenacious, consistent and strategic delivery of our plans. The war in Ukraine continues to rage. Putin's ambitions are not waning. Russian military mobilisation continues at pace. The fate of our nearest region, the Middle East, hangs in the balance with two of the strongest regional powers at war. Diplomacy will always be the best way forward. But we must prepare, and we must be ready, to protect our citizens, our interests, and our Union in all possible scenarios.

We must turn to the next phase in securing our defence readiness. Ahead of our meeting this week, we would like to take stock of the progress we made and propose that we move rapidly to the next stages in building a more autonomous and stronger European deterrence capability.

Our proposal is to focus our discussion on the following strategic priorities.

The first strategic priority is to ensure full use of all instruments available to boost investment in defence capabilities.

Our defence capabilities require significant investment and modernisation. The prospect of direct military confrontation is greater than it has been for decades. The scale and urgency of this task cannot be overstated.

Many of you – 16 so far – have requested the activation of the National escape clause within the Stability and Growth Pact, which exempts up to 1.5% of GDP spent on defence from national public deficit calculations. All of you can similarly take advantage of the additional fiscal space to substantially and efficiently increase defence expenditure.

This will also allow us to deliver on the higher spending targets that some of you are committing to in the context of NATO.

Many of you have also indicated your intent to request a share of the up to EUR 150 billion in EU-backed SAFE loans that will fund joint defence procurement. Aggregation of demand through joint procurement will enhance interoperability and increase predictability for the European defence industry, which is essential for ramping up production capacity. We hope that as many of you as possible will decide to use SAFE by the end of July, when you will need to submit a preliminary estimate of your needs.

This is a key step. Each Member State has to decide what capabilities it intends to procure and actively seek synergies and partnerships with other Member States. The White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030 puts forward the critical capabilities identified by the European Council of 6 March 2025. The list of critical capabilities identified by the European Council being open and dynamic, it is for Member States alone to decide which capabilities to jointly procure and develop. The Commission, the High Representative and the European Defence Agency can support your coordination efforts, notably through the Defence Readiness Task Force set up to this end.

In contribution to this work, the EU Military Staff has compiled Member States' national and international capability objectives. This has resulted, for the first time, in a comprehensive picture of all required and missing capabilities, in qualitative and quantitative terms on the missing capabilities, including for high-intensity warfare and collective defence. This will allow us to make better use of collaborative opportunities, address defence capability shortfalls, and strengthen defence industry to build European Defence Readiness by 2030.

The European Defence Agency is working with Member States to identify concrete joint capability projects in all agreed capability areas, aggregating demand towards joint procurement for the most mature projects, such as loitering munitions and integrated air and missile defence. Additionally, its government-to-government matchmaking platform helps mapping further joint procurement opportunities for Member States, as well as for partners including Ukraine.

In addition, we need to make the most of other existing funding sources within the EU budget to redirect investments to much-needed defence projects. This is why the Commission has adopted a number of proposals aiming to further incentivise defence-related investments in the EU budget, including through Cohesion Policy instruments and the possible voluntary transfers of funds towards defence investment, among others. It is now crucial that the co-legislators adopt these proposals as a matter of urgency.

Finally, the European Investment Bank also has a key role to play. The Bank has taken a number of important decisions to step up its support for Europe's security and defence industry. We look forward to further steps the Bank may take, including on the revision of exclusions. It is necessary that this is reflected in an enhanced stream of lending to European defence industry, particularly SMEs and new players.

By using all these tools, we can deliver the surge in defence expenditure which is required to increase Europe's readiness and support Member States who are also NATO member countries in achieving their NATO targets.

The second priority is to intensify progress towards a true EU-wide Market for Defence that substantially strengthens the European defence and technological industrial basis.

We can only effectively reach our objective if we act together. It is only through a collective approach that we can create the autonomous, strong, and dynamic European defence industrial base that we need.

A resilient, agile and competitive defence industry is an indispensable element of a credible deterrence and defence. We need a much stronger European defence industry that is able to cater for the growing defence needs of each Member State. This includes the capabilities required for the near future through technological innovation and synergies with dual-use industry.

In this vein, we trust that the co-legislators will adopt the proposal for EDIP swiftly.

Yet, a more competitive European defence industry also requires cutting red tape and simplifying rules. This is why the Commission tabled last week a comprehensive defence legislative omnibus proposal which aims to eliminate legal and administrative bottlenecks for European defence industry.

The Defence Omnibus tackles both defence-specific and non-defence specific EU rules aiming at simplifying the EU legislative environment, including by introducing:

- *A new fast track permitting regime for the defence industry;*
- *Clarification on existing environmental derogations covering defence readiness activities;*
- *A broader national exemption for investments in defence in chemical legislation;*
- *Assessment in competition rules to take account of defence readiness objectives;*
- *Improved access to finance through simplifying reporting rules and guidance to promote investments in defence.*

It is now crucial that the co-legislators adopt this proposal as a matter of urgency. It will be essential to facilitate the massive defence industrial production ramp-up that we need for credible military readiness.

In addition, the Single Market Strategy, presented on 21 May 2025, sets out actions for creating an EU-wide market for defence equipment, including the revision of the Directive on defence and sensitive security public procurement. The objective is to support the swift development of European value chains and eliminate barriers between the Member States, including by facilitating procurement of defence products for the national administrations, and incentivising joint procurement while taking account of European strategic interests.

Later this year, we will propose an ambitious package on Military Mobility to ensure that defence materiel and personnel can move fast and effectively around Europe. It will address regulatory aspects, infrastructure and capabilities. Military mobility is a key component of our deterrence. We have made full use of the dedicated EUR 1.74 billion budget for military mobility, with the funding of 95 projects in 21 Member States to further enhance dual-use infrastructure. The new package will provide a single framework, ensuring consistency between work strands, accelerating implementation, unblocking the remaining barriers and taking military mobility to the next level.

Finally, we will complement these work strands with the adoption this week of a proposal for an EU Space Act (EUSA). EUSA aims at de-fragmenting the space sector. Space has become increasingly congested and contested, and the rules that we propose will increase the safety, resilience and the long-term sustainability of space activities. This is key to ensure both the security and the competitiveness of the space sector, as space activities account for 10% of the Union's combined GDP and also form the basis for several critical Member States' defence capabilities.

The third strategic priority is to ensure sustained and timely military support to Ukraine.

Russia's aggression shows no signs of abating. Attacks on civilian have increased. But Ukraine is resisting. This is a war of attrition, of resources and competing defence industrial systems. It is also one of values, fundamental to our shared European identity.

We want a just and lasting peace. We want to keep Ukraine in a position of strength. Ukraine is our first line of defence. Ukraine is a candidate country to the EU. We must therefore shoulder the greatest share of the burden.

Our collective overall support to Ukraine so far already exceeds EUR 150 billion, including EUR 50 billion in military assistance. The EUR 18 billion Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration (ERA) loan can also be used by Ukraine to acquire defence equipment. In view of the urgent need to purchase military equipment, the Commission stands ready to frontload a share of the next disbursements under the ERA loan, as soon as Ukraine requests it. SAFE loans will also fund joint procurement with Ukraine, for Ukraine and from Ukraine. Once adopted, EDIP will provide for a dedicated EUR 300 million budget for the Ukraine Support Instrument (USI), fostering co-production with Ukraine defence companies and accelerating the integration of the Ukrainian defence industry. With our recent Defence Omnibus, we have proposed that costs for testing activities carried out in Ukraine become eligible for funding under the European Defence Fund. In addition, we have established an EU-Ukraine Task Force to help Ukraine with defence procurement. We have also set up an EU-Ukraine Defence Industry Forum to promote the integration of Ukraine's defence industry with the European defence industrial base. The Commission is working with the Ukrainian Government to enhance the role of the Kyiv Defence Innovation Office, in order to harness the full potential of new technologies and test them on the battlefield.

The fourth and final priority is to enhance our international partnerships on defence and security.

Our alliance system is changing. It is clear that we must do more on our own and we must enhance our strategic partnerships.

That is why we must forge stronger links with our partners, covering new domains such as the frontier technologies that will determine the future of war. Investing in our defence is a unique opportunity to enhance our competitiveness, to innovate, to support manufacturing industry, and to create high quality jobs. But it is also a way to strengthen our partnerships, to increase our markets, and to diversify our suppliers.

This is why SAFE can be open to like-minded non-EU partners, notably NATO Allies. Because NATO remains the foundation of Europe's collective defence. Because the surge in European defence will facilitate all NATO Allies to reach their targets faster and more effectively, thereby substantially helping NATO to reach its collective goals.

In this vein, we have already taken tangible steps in response to the UK and Canada's request to join the European defence surge. We need now to open negotiations on the necessary agreements to trigger a broader participation in SAFE joint procurement. And we look further to explore possibly intensifying defence industrial cooperation with other like-minded partners on the basis of clear shared interests.

Dear colleagues,

We must live up to the moment. We must answer the call of history. This requires that we act strategically. That we act together. That we act now.

I trust you will take the necessary steps to bring forward the implementation of the European Council conclusions of last March, including the decision to collaboratively develop large-scale defence capabilities in the priority areas you have agreed.

This will have to be a sustained collective effort, over the foreseeable future. The gap to fill, after years of underinvestment and under attention to defence, is large.

This is why the Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework will also address the need for substantial funding for defence in the years to come through a dedicated Resilience, Defence and Space window of the European Competitiveness Fund.

We look forward to our discussion this week, and to decisive progress on our common work on security and defence.

Yours sincerely,



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