

EU Targets Maintenance, Logistics for Savings

BRUSSELS - EU foreign ministers meeting here May 23 identified research and technology, procurement, maintenance, logistics, education and training as potential areas for pooling and sharing initiatives. The EU's Military Committee compiled the findings, which are based on individual EU member state analyses, as part of a mapping exercise across the EU. The ministers also stressed "the need to further explore role specialization." They also welcomed the engagement of individual member states to develop further pooling and sharing initiatives "by extending existing projects to other partners and/or by setting up new cooperative projects, also building on the commitment by national Chiefs of Defence to establish multilateral contacts to that end." The ministers encouraged the European Defence Agency to help identify opportunities for pooling and sharing. They will come back to the issue "on a regular basis, first in the autumn of 2011," they said, including on the basis of the forthcoming report on Common Security and Defence Policy by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. In that sense, they are considering holding an extraordinary ministerial meeting "where member states could declare their intentions with regard to new cooperative initiatives." On the same day, at a conference on creating a European defence equipment market, the EU Internal Market Commissioner Michel Barnier indicated that the commission would clamp down on the practice of offsets. "We need to bring forward mindsets and practices in terms of offsets. Civil offsets must no longer be tolerated. The same goes for military offsets," he said. As for the EU's Article 346, which gives a member state the possibility to opt out of the single market where its essential national security interests are at stake, he said, "The application [of that article], of course, continues to be possible, but it must be duly justified." He added that the

commission will work on setting a framework for this together with the European Defence Agency, which held a seminar on the subject in May. "Our budgetary resources are limited" and "we need to pay special attention to security of supply if we want to maintain Europe's strategic autonomy," Barnier said. "Security of supply does not mean making everything in Europe," he added, but means having a vision of "the degree of dependence that we can accept for certain technologies" and of "the technologies that are essential for our sovereignty and that therefore must be accessible without restrictions. "Europe must have active public policies to support key technologies, "which often have parallel applications in the civil sector," and must accept the need to regulate to pool and spend better, he said.

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