

Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy

Bucharest, 7 – 8 March 2019

Session II

The strategic importance of the Black Sea on the EU agenda

The current security context in the Black Sea region clearly emphasizes the emergence of new threats and risks that call for adapted instruments for consultations, dialogue and crisis management, which should be based on comprehensive approaches, inter-institutional cooperation and close partnership. In this context, a coherent involvement in the process of all the European stakeholders, having security and defence responsibilities, is a key requirement.

Black Sea region is of strategic importance for the EU: the Black Sea is partially internal to the EU and geographically mostly a European sea, which results in shared challenges and opportunities for the EU and the countries of the region, as well as in a common need to ensure that there is an area of peace, democracy, security, stability, regional cooperation and sustainable prosperity around the Black Sea. Thus, a more cohesive, sustainable and strategic approach is necessary in the Black Sea region.

Black Sea Synergy (BSS) has had the merit of recognising the Black Sea region as strategic for the EU, together with the need for a strengthened EU involvement in the area. BSS results have so far been rather limited and no clear and comprehensive picture exists of the current implementation results of the BSS, thus exposing the EU to criticism that it lacks a strategic vision for the region and that it is applying a fragmented approach to implementation. Therefore, the Black Sea region needs active policies and long-lasting solutions to cope with the considerable regional and transnational challenges, such as protracted conflicts, displaced populations, bilateral disputes, closed borders and strategic rivalries leading to militarisation and proliferation of arms, weak institutions and governance and the deterioration of democratic rule, cross-border crime and trafficking, border and movement management, and poor maritime security and safety.

EU could and should play an active role within the Black Sea Region security framework, through establishing, encouraging and developing good-neighbourly relations between the Black Sea countries, as a premise for successful cooperation between them.

Regarding the energy sector, the Black Sea region has a strategic importance for EU energy security and the diversification of the EU's energy supply and, in that connection, reiterates the pressing importance of a coherent strategy for the Black Sea region. Therefore, Romania underlines the importance of Member States taking a common approach towards the Black Sea region, with a view to achieving the EU's long-term objective of security of energy supply and stability in its neighbourhood.

Recent efforts aimed at consolidating EU-NATO cooperation come to offer an answer to this requirement. EU contribution is very important and this is particularly valid if we take into account that in the last couple of years European Union has made a significant

progress in consolidating its role in security and defence. The EU Global Strategy provides a solid foundation for the EU affirmation as a credible and ambitious global actor. The most recent developments in implementing this Strategy is an important step in consolidating the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), but also the EU relations with our partner countries, including those in the Black Sea region.

Furthermore, more European defence cooperation will lead, in our view, to a more systematic inclusion of security challenges from the European neighbourhood on EU agenda, as well as to a coherent development of the instruments required for their management. The launch of new initiatives such as European Defence Fund (EDF), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD), military mobility provides a few concrete examples in this regard, all this efforts having the potential to make a difference as regards EU role on security and defence. With all these mechanisms, European Union will be able to develop the required capabilities and increase its ability to act more swiftly in dealing with a potential crisis.

In order to avoid duplications and overlaps, EU efforts should be coordinated with NATO. European countries have in the majority of cases a single set of forces, so the newly developed capabilities should be available to both NATO and EU. The capability development processes should be conducted coherently, as there should be coordination in conducting actions in trans-sectoral domains, such as increasing resilience, counter hybrid actions, respond to cyber-attacks, manage challenges from the maritime domain, including those from the Black Sea region.

From Romania's perspective, the main objective is an enhanced EU involvement in regional strategic dialogue, and EU cooperation with its strategic partners on security issues and on conflict prevention and resolution, in accordance with international law. In addition, Romania stresses that the full development of the Black Sea strategy is also linked to concrete progress towards the peaceful resolution of unresolved conflicts.

In our opinion, the EU should take a leading role in the negotiations and peace-making processes, to step up confidence-building measures and assistance programmes with a view to establishing the basis for lasting, comprehensive settlements, and to alleviate the consequences of conflicts for local people.

Questions for discussion:

1. Given the *frozen* or *reheated* military conflicts, especially in the context of the electoral campaigns in the Black Sea region, what is the active role that the European Union could play in settling them?
2. Is the EU project sufficiently attractive for the citizens of the Black Sea countries who want to join the Union?
3. Is there a common view of the EU Member State of the Black Sea region about the EU's response to the violation of international law by certain countries in the region?
4. Should the European Union strengthen, together with NATO, the military presence in the Black Sea region?