

# Speech by the High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the conference "Hybrid threats and the EU: State of play and future progress"

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*Check against delivery!*

Thank you, Antonio [Missiroli, Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies].

Thank you particularly to the Estonian Presidency [of the Council of the European Union], to the Minister who is present here with us, to the government, to the digital state. It is the first time Estonia holds the Presidency of the European Union, but let me tell you frankly it looks like they have been doing this forever. Congratulations: I think we are going to have a continuation of the Presidency as good, as exciting as it has been so far. Our cooperation is great in all fields, but I am particularly glad for the focus you are putting on hybrid threats and on strengthening of our resilience in this field.

The word hybrid may sound difficult outside the security community, but I believe that the European citizens know what this is about. We have all read about the recent cyber-attacks - and many private companies in Europe were affected. We all know the power of fake news and how difficult it is to address the issue. We all know how terrorist organisations target the youth, in Europe and all over the world. Knowing the threat is essential and yet it is not enough. These hybrid threats take different forms and come from different actors. If we are serious about tackling them, and we are, we need to mobilise all tools at our disposal, as you said.

First, to understand the threat and to respond to it;

Second, to react to attacks, but also to prevent them;

Third, to use the capabilities that we already have, and to develop new ones;

And last but not least, to counter fake news but also to make sure that the real news actually reaches our citizens.

We are all affected, in Europe and beyond, and we all need to mobilise with the means and the resources at our disposal. This is what the European Union is doing already and we couldn't take this issue more seriously. We cannot do this alone, and we are not doing this alone: our coordination with Member States – starting from the digital one [Estonia] is constant, and we have a strong and important partnerships, starting with NATO – I will say more about this in a minute.

The issues we are dealing with transcend borders by definition. The responsibility of national defence belongs, and continues to belong, essentially to our Member States, but when the threat runs on the internet, coordination at the European level is essential. So we are working to understand what are the main vulnerabilities – particularly in the framework of the *Friends of the Presidency group*, led by the Estonian Presidency.

Last year we adopted a Joint Communication on Countering Hybrid Threats, launching 22 practical actions to counter hybrid attacks. We have grouped these actions under five broad headlines. First, improving our situational awareness: in other words, knowing the threats and our security environment. Second, improving our capacity to respond to crises. Third, enhancing our strategic communications. Fourth, improving our partnership with NATO. And fifth, developing the capabilities we need to counter hybrid threats.

Let me give you a few concrete examples about what this means in practical terms.

On situational awareness, the most visible action has been the creation of the Hybrid Fusion Cell, inside the

European Union's Intelligence Centre (INTCEN). The Hybrid Fusion Cell has already distributed some 80 classified analyses on hybrid threats, to support decision makers in their job.

The Cell collects and analyses warnings from the European institutions, from Member States and from our partners. Sometimes, an incident might look like an isolated case at first glance. The Hybrid Fusion Cell has the capability to connect the dots, find the *fil rouge* between different attacks. This work is critically important to prepare the ground for action – be it national or collective at European level.

Second: responding to crises. An essential contribution to our capacity to respond to crises will come from the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, that I will have the honour to inaugurate this afternoon in Helsinki, together with the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Let me thank Finland for its leadership on this, together with ten other Member States, with Norway and with the United States. I know that four more Member States are already in the process of joining.

The European Union and NATO have been invited to join its Steering Board as observers, and this will provide us with yet another opportunity for close cooperation. The Centre will focus in particular on research, training, education and exercises.

And talking about exercises, I would also like to thank Estonia for organising a strategic exercise on hybrid and cyber threats. I took part in the “EU CYBRID 2017” exercise together our Defence Ministers, in Tallinn few weeks ago and with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg – for the first time taking part as an observer to a EU exercise. We were asked to react to a continually escalating threat – and I think it really tested our ability to take decisions and also judgement in a very difficult and delicate situation.

Getting prepared is essential: cyber-attacks are already now causing huge economic loss, but they can cause major disruptions and affect directly our daily life. This is why we have recently updated our Cyber Defence Strategy. The first EU Parallel and Coordinated Exercise on cyber is now underway, to test our ability to collaborate both internally and with NATO, through its annual CMX exercise.

NATO is not the only partner we are working with. For instance, we have also launched risk surveys in our neighbouring countries. A pilot project with Moldova is underway, with the direct involvement of the Commission. A similar survey is being coordinated with Georgia, and soon we will launch the same process with Jordan and with other neighbours.

The third field of action is strategic communications. It is essential for us to analyse, forecast and respond to disinformation. For this reason, we have established within the European External Action Service a first Task Force for Strategic Communications, focusing on our Eastern partners and the Russian-speaking communities. Over the past two years the StratCom East Task Force has uncovered over 3.000 disinformation cases.

And at the same time, we also know that countering disinformation is not enough. Unfortunately, experience tells us that when a fake news is out, it is already too late. Reacting is very important, but it is even more crucial to make sure that the real news reaches the broadest possible audience, both inside and outside our Union. So our first duty is to talk about what we are doing, to explain with the maximum of transparency our policies, spread the real stories about the positive impact that our European action has on the lives of so many people. This is what the StratCom East Team is doing in the Eastern Partnership countries, including in the run up to the November Eastern Partnership Summit.

And for the same reason, we have also launched a Task Force to improve our communications in Arabic – both outside of Europe and inside the European Union. Because there is so much that the European Union is doing in the Arab world that sometimes is not known enough to the Arab-speaking communities, including the European Arab-speaking communities. I think of our work to demine and stabilise Iraq, to our support to women in Syria and I could continue. We must talk about the positive stories, the positive daily stories of our work, because real news is the best antidote to fake news.

All these activities aim at what we call “resilience”. We want to prevent, to make sure that we know how to react, and to minimise the impact of a potential attack. Our aim, in other words, is to reduce the “surface” that is

potentially exposed to an attack.

The fourth field of our action is cooperation with NATO. I have already said something about this: our Hybrid Fusion Cell is constantly working with our NATO partners; we are now synchronising our exercises. We will work together through the Helsinki Centre of Excellence. We got to a stage of cooperation with NATO, especially in this field, that has no precedent in our history.

Last year we signed a Joint Declaration for cooperation between NATO and the European Union. And, as most of you know, since then, we have launched and put largely in practice 42 concrete actions to put the Warsaw Declaration in place, and seven of them concern hybrid threats.

Last, but definitely not least, is our work on capabilities. We all know that this is essentially a national competence. But there is much that the European Union can do and is doing finally to support our Member States also in the field of capabilities. Over the last year, we have set up a number of tools to help Member States to invest together, so that the impact of their investments can be maximised. I always say that the 2% debate on how much national countries invest in defence is a national choice in the hands of national governments and national parliaments – for NATO allies this is also an alliance discussion -, but what the European Union can do is making sure that whatever Member States invest, is wisely invested and maximised in terms of output. So that is the framework on which the European Union can and is currently working – the gap on the output more than the gap on the quantity of the budget that is invested, as I stressed, again, is a national debate.

The European Defence Agency – that I know will join you later today - is reviewing our Capability Development Plan to ensure that the key capability developments required to counter hybrid threats will be integrated in the new European Union capability development priorities by spring next year.

We have launched a European Defence Fund – and I am sure Jyrki Katainen [European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment & Competitiveness] will talk about this later today at length - to support joint research and joint programming on defence. We are setting up a Coordinated Annual Review of national defence budgets, so that investments can be agreed and planned together – this is a real revolution in the way in which the European Union and its Members States do defence together.

And by the end of this year, I am convinced that the Council will finally launch a Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PESCO), so that Member States can join forces and better spend their defence budgets. We advanced significantly on this in Tallinn during our Informal Ministerial Meeting. If you look back one year: we were discussing this during the beginning of the Slovak Presidency. It seemed far away, it seemed almost impossible, now I think that we are less than one mile away from there.

We are finally heading towards a European Union of security and defence. That was the dream of some of our founding fathers already in the 1950s. It did not work completely well at that time. I think that now we are there and this is something we can be proud of. But this is something that, most of all, the Europeans need. In a world where threats are transnational by definition, there is no other way to make our citizens and our world more secure.

I thank you very much and I wish you a very successful day.

Link to the video: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=1144335>