

# OBSERVATORY ON EUROPEAN DEFENCE

## SEPTEMBER 2015

### In the spotlight

9 September

#### **Refugee crisis: new European Commission proposals**

In response to the massive wave of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea in the last months, the European Commission has put forward a package of proposals that will help EU member states and neighbouring countries addressing the refugee crisis. The measures concern relocation and resettlement, returns and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. One of the measures envisions relocating 50,400 people from Greece, 15,600 from Italy and 54,000 from Hungary to other EU member states (with the exception of United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland). The Commission already suggested moving 40,000 refugees from Greece and Italy in May, but a decision by the Council is still to be adopted. The relocation process, which only applies to asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq and Eritrea, follows objective and quantifiable criteria (40% of the size of the population, 40% of the GDP, 10% of the average number of past asylum applications, 10% of the unemployment rate). According to these criteria, the states receiving more refugees will be Germany (31,443), France (24,031) and Spain (14,931). The participating member states will get 780 million euros in funds from the EU budget. According to a temporary solidarity clause, an EU member state unable to participate to the programme, will need to make a financial contribution of an amount of 0.002% of its GDP to the EU budget. In addition, a permanent relocation mechanism is established for all member states: emergency situations would be defined by the Commission on the basis of the number of asylum applications in the previous 6 months, as well as the number of irregular border crossings in the previous 6 months. The

Commission has also recommended to establish a EU common list of safe countries of origin for faster returns, if individual assessments confirm that the right of asylum does not apply. Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey will be added to the list. Furthermore, the Commission has issued a common Return Handbook and an EU Action Plan on Return. Whereas the Handbook offers to national authorities practical instructions to carry out returns, the Action Plan defines the immediate and mid-term measures to enhance voluntary return, to strengthen the implementation of the Return Directive, to improve information sharing, to strengthen the role and mandate of Frontex in return operations, and to create an integrated system of return management. Lastly, the Commission has allocated 1.8 billion euros to address root causes of irregular migration flows from the Sahel, Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and the North of Africa regions. The funding will support these regions to develop better socio-economic opportunities and migration management policies.

15 September

#### **Bosnia will participate in EU crisis management operations**

The High Representative/Vice President of the Commission Federica Mogherini and the Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Marina Pendeš, signed in Brussels a framework agreement allowing the involvement of the country in on-going and future civilian and military EU crisis management operations. The decision of future Bosnian involvement in such missions will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

### 25 September

#### **Enhanced NATO security: fourth US destroyer in Spain**

The US Navy destroyer USS Carney arrived on 25 September at Naval Station Rota in Southern Spain. It is the fourth American multi-mission ship to be stationed in Europe. It will contribute to NATO's ballistic missile defence shield. The shield was conceived in 2010 as a response to the growing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

### 28 September

#### **EUNAVFOR MED: second phase started**

The EU Ambassadors within the Political and Security Committee agreed to start the first step of the second phase of the operation EUNAVFOR MED. The operation has been renamed "Sophia". Starting from 7 October, the EU naval operation will be able, in line with international law provisions, to board, search, seize and divert vessels suspected of human smuggling in the Mediterranean.

### 29 September

#### **EUNAVFOR Atalanta: new Force Commander appointed**

The Political and Security Committee of the EU has appointed the Italian Rear Admiral Stefano Barbieri as the new commander of the EU's counter-piracy operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta. Starting from 6 October, Barbieri will lead the operation, which main focus is to protect World Food Programme vessels delivering humanitarian aid to Somalia, and to deter, repress and disrupt piracy activities off the Somali coast.

### 30 September

#### **New EU aids to Palestinian refugees**

The EU provides the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) with additional 30 million euros to support Palestine refugees in a three-steps programme. The first two steps, accounting for 20 million euros, will support core UNRWA programmes on education and health care. The third step, providing additional 10 million euros, is dedicated specifically to Palestine refugees living in Syria. New funding brings the total EU support provided to UNRWA in 2015 up to 125 million euros.

### 30 September

#### **Stoltenberg at the ACT change-of-command ceremony**

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, along with Ambassadors from the North Atlantic Council and members of the Military Committee, attended the change-of-command ceremony from General Jean-Paul Paloméros to General Denis Mercier for the post of Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT).