

OBSERVATORY ON **IAI** EUROPEAN DEFENCE

DECEMBER 2015

In the spotlight

2 December

NATO invites Montenegro to join the Alliance

NATO's Ministers of Foreign Affairs invited Montenegro to begin the procedures to become the 29th member of the Alliance. Since 2009, NATO and Montenegro had collaborated through the Membership Action Plan, an instrument preparing states to enter the Alliance. The Ministers' decision foresees the beginning of the application process in 2016, at the end of which, the allies will sign a protocol that will have to be later ratified by the national parliaments.

1 December

Activation of the new NATO headquarters in Bucharest

NATO has activated the new Multinational Division Southeast headquarters in Bucharest. The centre will be able to control units deployable in NATO's southeast region. The headquarters activation, which will count on 280 personnel, occurs in the context of the Readiness Action Plan's implementation, which was approved at the September 2014 Wales Summit. The Joint Force Command Naples will assure the operational control of the new headquarters.

1 December

NATO maintains its presence in Afghanistan

NATO's Foreign Affairs Ministers agreed to continue sustaining NATO training mission Resolute Support in Afghanistan in 2016 and will seek to finance Afghan security forces until the end of 2020. NATO mission will be composed by 12,000 soldiers. The troops are now exclusively involved in training missions and cannot take part in combat missions. They operate in Kabul, Bagram, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad. The Ministers also agreed with the Afghan government on a further development of

the Enduring Partnership accord, whose main purpose is the creation of a civil-lead presence that will follow the Resolute Support mission.

16 December

NATO-Ukraine agreement on defence

NATO and Ukraine signed the Defence Technical Co-operation Roadmap, whose action plan aims to implement some priorities previously agreed in a corresponding declaration of intents signed in September 2015. These priorities mainly regard the improvement of Ukrainian armed capabilities, cooperation upon standardisation and codification, reform of defence industry in Ukraine, Kiev participation in the Smart Defence initiative and a deeper cooperation in the sector of technology and defence. Most of these activities include Ukraine's participation in a number of working groups under the Conference of National Armaments Directors.

19 December

NATO tests its first drone in California

After taking off from the Palmdale Airbases, the first of five NATO Global Hawk Block 40 has successfully conducted a series of flight exercises in California. NATO is developing its ground surveillance capabilities, with the significant contribution of the 15 states taking part in the Alliance Ground Surveillance program. The drones will be controlled by the main operating base in Sigonella, Italy.

21 December

EU prolongs economic sanctions against Russia

After Moscow's actions in the east of Ukraine, the Council of the European Union decided to prolong sanctions against Russia until 31 July 2016. In March 2015, the duration of the sanctions had been linked by the European leaders to the full implementation of the Minsk's agreements,

whose parties in the accord should have complied by 31 December 2015. In the absence of such implementation, the Council agreed to extend the sanctions by six months. EU sanctions hit exchanges with Russia in diverse sectors, including finance, energy, defence and dual products.

21 December

EU-Kazakhstan partnership agreement

A new partnership agreement was signed in Astana by the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and the Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov. The agreement, which will provide a strengthened legal framework for economic and political relations between EU and Kazakhstan, highlights the role of democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the involvement of civil society in the formulation of Kazakh public policies. It also foresees an enhanced cooperation on security and defence policies, especially in the field of regional stability, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, prevention and management of conflicts. The agreement focuses on numerous other sectors: commerce, energy, finance, transports, climate change, employment, culture, education and research.

21 December

EU: election observation mission to Uganda

In response to the request from the Ugandan authorities, an EU mission will observe the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, which will be held on 18 February 2016 in the African country. Federica Mogherini appointed the European MP Eduard Kukan as chief observer. The first group of 10 experts will arrive in Uganda on December 28 and will remain until the end of the election process. They will be later joined by 30 long-term and 54 short-term observers. A delegation of the European Parliament and EU diplomats resident in Uganda will support the mission on election day.