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**WEU'S ROLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
AND EURO-MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE**

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Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and privileged to have the chance to address you today at this seminar, which can truly be called a pioneering occasion, and I am particularly grateful to the Italian Presidency of WBU for giving me this opportunity'. My task is to talk to you about WEU's philosophy and experiences in the fields of conflict prevention and management, and I will spend most of my time in this statement on that theme, in the hope of hearing your own reactions and perhaps discussing ways in which we might work together to improve our contributions in future. But to put this in the right perspective, I want to say just a few words first about how WEU as an institution has tried to define its place in the general European security architecture related to crisis management since the end of the European Cold War.

In the late 1980's and 1990's, WEU went through a political and operational revival after a long period of virtual inactivity. Its members had the opportunity, which is rather rare in the institutional field, more or less to re-build the institution from scratch. They decided to do so following three main principles:

first, WEU should focus its efforts in future on military' contributions to crisis management'- that is, on actions in support of the international community rather than on actions taken for our own defence, which is practice would remain the responsibility of NATO. WEU's new tasks were set out in the so-called Petersberg Declaration adopted by Ministers in 1992, which talked about humanitarian missions, peacekeeping, and other possible military contributions to crisis management. In the years that followed we were able to build up new military doctrines and politico-military structures designed specifically for these roles, taking advantage of all the latest lessons of successful and unsuccessful crisis management missions carried out in real life;

second, we decided not just to avoid duplication with the work of larger organizations like The EU and NATO, but to seek an active complementary and synergy with them. For its own work in crisis management, WEU can get valuable political inspiration, guidance and support from the European Union which has a much wider range of instruments - diplomatic, political, economic and functional -for helping in The prevention and solution of complex crises and the subsequent work of reconstruction. WEU can also get practical help from NATO if NATO agrees (as it has already done in general principle) to lend us some of the European military units and assets organized within its own structure, to be used under our political control for a purely European mission. We have been working especially hard during the last year to set up practical arrangements for exploiting both these possible partnerships: and from WEU's point of view, there would be nothing to stop us drawing on the help of both the EU and NATO for the same specific operation;

thirdly and lastly, we decided that since crisis management is something that concerns the whole international community WEU should work with as many national partners and as many international institutions as possible in a spirit of maximum openness and solidarity. Our own membership structure has developed to embrace all the European members of both the EU and NATO and also ten of the new democracies of Central Europe, a total of 28 countries, all of whom are welcome to take part in our operations. We also have a wide range of partnerships and dialogue relationship which of course include all your own countries but also for example Russia and Ukraine And last but not least, we are willing to offer our services for missions mandated by the OSCE and UN which might be suited to our capacities. We are interested in developing links with other groups of countries who wish to organize themselves to help with peacekeeping missions in the same spirit: and in this context I might mention that WEU has a policy to liaise with and support the group of African countries who are working together on initiatives for regional peacekeeping, as well as the regional and sub-regional organizations notably the OAU and SADC, who are supporting these initiatives within the wider UN framework.

Mr Chairman,

I will turn now to my main subject for today and here I would like to divide my remarks into three parts:

- WEU's general philosophy of crisis prevention and management
- our system of decision-taking, organization and control for carry out such missions
- and the practical lessons we have learned about problems that can arise and the good and bad ways of handling them.

As to our philosophy I can sum it up quite simply. We do not see military action as an end in itself but as an instrument that can and should be used in the service of human welfare and human security, international peace and stability. Another way of expressing this idea is "military assistance for the civil community", and if we put it this way we can realize that such assistance can be given in many ways and at many times, even if there is no violent crisis going on. Military personnel can help for instance in responding to natural disasters, in mine clearance, in search and rescue missions, and in some cases with major economic tasks like harvesting and infrastructure work. However, when military and defence forces do have to be used to help preempt, resolve or clear up after an actual crisis, it is essential that we see them only as a means to an end and as one instrument among others to be used for the desired result. We all know that most conflicts today do not belong to the traditional category of war between sovereign states, but rather arise from a wide range of problems within countries and an equally wide range of global problems including for instance international crime, drugs, terrorism and ecological pressures and disasters. WEU believes that the solutions need to be equally complex and up-to-date, and that the final aim must always be a political settlement which alone can provide the basis for lasting peace and progress. To put it another way, if we believe the use of force that started or aggravated a particular conflict was wrong, we should not ourselves rely only on the use of force to solve the problem. It seems to me particularly important that those countries and organizations who do possess considerable

military power. and particularly those who have a so-called "global reach", should bear these principles in mind and make sure that their military instruments are used only when justified and necessary to achieve a higher result. That is certainly the philosophy which WEU believes in and which we try out best to reflect in all our actions.

Let me come now to my second question: what system of organization and decision-making has WEU developed for putting its principles into practice? I do not want to go into institutional details since these are to some extent the result of WEUs particular history and circumstances and I certainly would not want to recommend or impose them as a model on anyone else. But I can tell you what are the general aims we try to achieve and the first one of them is political control and responsibility. The highest organ in WEU is our Council, which meets twice a year at the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers and every week at the level of civilian Ambassadors. It is they who speak for their national governments and it is they who take the decisions, collectively, on any operations we may launch. Of course our military staff give their advice and recommendations and they do so very effectively, but the decisions made are political decisions and it is the political authorities who keep responsibility - as we put it - for the "control and strategic direction" of all military actions. Secondly and in the same spirit, our military and civilian staffs at WEU headquarters work very closely together at all levels every single day and our normal approach to handling new problems is to tackle them through team-work involving both military and civilian experts.

Thirdly, we try to give the greatest possibility to all the 28 nations in our system to take part in the development of our operational policies, in our exercises and joint exercises with other institutions, in planning individual operations and in carrying them out. We do actually need the practical help of all of them and in my view, this liberal approach brings us two big extra political benefits as well. First, the support of a range of Central European countries who have no colonial past and indeed have suffered from a kind of colonialism themselves can give our actions an important extra element of political credibility. Second (and this brings us back to the very heart of our discussion), the habit of working together for these shared European goals on a voluntary, equal and responsible basis builds human ties and understanding among the politico-military establishments of the 28 WEU nations which play a very real part in avoiding conflicts that might otherwise break out among the 28 themselves. In short, an institution like ours can serve The cause of conflict prevention within the family at the same time - and by exactly the same means -that it works to create a capacity for helping others.

The operations which WEU has actually carried out so far have not included any major military interventions, though we have practiced for such cases with a whole series of exercises including one held at WEU HQ just last week. I have distributed separately a factual paper listing our experiences over the years since 1998 and indicating some of the lessons we learned from them. Here I would like to sum up our findings in a more general way, going through each stage of a possible crisis in turn. The first lesson is a pretty obvious one: try to get maximum early warning and focus the attention of the institution on a crisis as soon as possible, to give maximum time both for planning and for reaching consensus on the best form of European action. WEU has some specialized instruments for assessing the development of a crisis, notably our independent Satellite Centre: but to arrive at a general assessment and a broader European crisis strategy we would expect to work together with other institutions, notably the European Union which will shortly be setting up a Policy

Planning and Early Warning Unit of its own. One of the main values of such an early assessment is of course to open up the possibility of preventive action and here our organization might have a number of possible roles to play. Working with other organizations and supporting their political efforts, we might be able to provide services that would help relieve the practical strains and human-tensions liable to lead towards a conflict. For instance, our help in the delivery of humanitarian aid could ease distress and pressures for migration and lessen the risk of violence over control of scarce resources. Or we could provide services in the field of law and order, border control or blockade enforcement which would check the spreading of harmful influences and materials. At the stronger end of the spectrum, our planning does allow for the use of our military forces as a preventive deployment of the more classic kind, to deter possible aggressors or to interpose between two possible adversaries or to guarantee de-militarized or special security zones. I would only make the obvious point that all such deployments should be planned as strictly temporary and kept at the most modest realistic level, so that our main energy can be devoted to non-military ways of calming the situation down. We all know how dangerous it can be if the international community simply takes security measures which relieve the violent people from some of the natural consequences of their actions, while doing nothing to deter or persuade them from following the path of violence in the first place.

But if such Preventive efforts are not possible or if they fail, what roles could WEU play in containing, resolving or tidying up from an actual conflict? Here again our military and other specialized resources could be used in a wide variety of ways, ranging from logistic support such as aid delivery and disaster relief, through monitoring, patrolling, mine clearance, blockade enforcement and the disarming and reorganization of previously hostile forces as well as all the familiar types of peace support. We have tried several of these more specialized roles and we have realized that they are far from being soft options: they often place the individual soldier in more exposed situations> they certainly drawn on a wider range of his skills and test his self-disciplines, and they often demand equipment that is not part of the forces' normal issue, which makes the problem-s of budgeting and planning much more complicated.

The other, more general point to remember is That while armed forces can meet a wide range of needs besides plain fighting they are not necessarily always the best way of meeting them. Their advantages of speed, discipline and robustness are obvious but they almost always cost more in purely cash terms than civilian methods of fulfilling corresponding tasks. The other risk they carry is that they may dramatize and polarize a situation by their mere presence, for instance because some of the local players may see them as a provocation. If we do decide to use military methods, therefore, we need to be alive to these problems and be prepared to monitor the situation flexibly and react quickly to any negative turn. Getting the command and control arrangements right for a crisis management mission is actually quite a tricky business. Because the aim is political there will be a temptation for politicians at home to stay too close to the implementation and to try to second-guess the local commander, especially when things get difficult. But experience suggests that this often leads to bad decisions or to delays which can be just as bad in a fast-moving situation. Good political control does not consist in this kind of micro-management but rather in setting clear aims and rules at the outset; establishing clear lines of command and delegation to commanders who can be trusted; and above all, thinking from the very

beginning about a good exit strategy. Good civil-military cooperation is where the civilians and military understand and respect each others' expertise too well to want to interfere with it: and this understanding can only come from systematic civil-military contact even at the earliest stages of planning, training and preparation.

These are the general lines of WEU's thinking about crisis management, but we realize that they will need to be adapted and applied afresh for each specific case. That is why WEU's advance planning is only done in general, generic terms and even when we decide on an action we normally ask our military' staff to produce several different options for carrying it out. I believe this flexibility is one of our advantages and one of the benefits we draw from being able to focus full-time on action for the international community rather than on self-defence. Another benefit is the fact that we can take action - when the situation demands This - under purely European leadership and on purely European political responsibility, in solidarity among a wide range of nations including many who belong in this Mediterranean region, and with a completely open mind about other non-member countries who might be able and suitable to join us for specific tasks. Finally, if I may repeat here at the end a point I have perhaps already stressed too much, we can guarantee to follow the most modern principles of civil-military cooperation and political control both at the level of framing an overall crisis strategy, and at the stage of actually carrying out an operation. There is, as you will know, a great deal of debate going on now about institutional changes in European defence and about the possibility of phasing out WEU so that its functions can be taken over by the EU or NATO or both. If this should turn out to be the right way for the future, I can only hope that the lessons of European crisis management I have tried to outline today' can be inherited by and prove useful to those who will come after us as well.