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DECLARATION BY THE FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

(Paris, 13 May 2004)

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France and Germany salute the European Union's significant progress on the European Security and Defence Policy over the past few months. 2003 marked a milestone in its development:

- the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe endorses the principle of mutual assistance between EU members and provides for important measures, in particular permanent structural cooperation;
- the EU has adopted a European Security Strategy;
- it has decided to create a European Agency for Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities;
- the European Union has carried out its first crisis-management operations: police mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Concordia and Proxima missions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and ArtØmis mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These operations have enabled it to make an essential contribution to easing crisis situations.

On the basis of an agreement between France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the European Union also decided at the December 2003 European Council to strengthen its capacity for planning and carrying out operations. France and Germany reiterate the importance they attach to this decision. They are calling for the rapid adoption of all the proposals made by the Secretary-General/High Representative in order to implement them and allow the European Union to have the capacity to mount an operations centre for 1 January 2006.

France and Germany will pursue their efforts to promote further progress on European Defence. Both countries wish the European Union to be capable of fully playing its role on the international stage. The bringing-into-use of the instruments provided for by the Constitution constitutes a milestone on this path. Our goal remains to complete the building of a Europe of Security and Defence. In this respect, France and Germany restate their commitment to the strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO in crisis management. The development of the ESDP will help strengthen the Atlantic Alliance as a whole.

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PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

In the framework of the EU's global policy vis-à-vis Bosnia-Herzegovina, France and Germany are together contributing, with their partners, to the preparation of a European Union operation in that country. Our goal must be to contribute to the country's stabilization through a comprehensive crisis-management operation based on a military component, the relief of SFOR towards the end of 2004 with recourse to Atlantic Alliance assets and capabilities (Berlin Plus), and a stronger civilian component, mainly geared to making the country safe and secure.

We are also pursuing our cooperation within the Atlantic Alliance:

- In Kosovo, France will this autumn take over KFOR command from Germany. The latest events have shown the necessity of maintaining a robust military presence to prevent any resurgence of ethnic violence. Against the background of a still-difficult regional situation, we are calling on our Allies to maintain their commitment to KFOR.

- In Afghanistan, both our countries will participate in the Eurocorps HQ which will take command of ISAF from next August.

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The Franco-German Brigade (FGB) created in 1988 is a concrete example of our two countries' cooperation in defence. We wish to deploy the FGB, operating within Eurocorps, to Afghanistan, in the second half of 2004. The FGB HQ will take command of the Kabul Multinational Brigade.

We wish to speed up the upgrading of the FGB's capacity, logistics capabilities and the legal basis on which it operates to enable it to contribute to the European Union's rapid reaction capacity. On the basis of decisions taken at the Summit on 23 April 2003, we also intend to define a common vision of the FGB's development over the next few years. We are going, inter alia, to launch discussions on doctrine and equipment so that the FGB is capable of using the new digital technology for high intensity combat.

We are supporting the European Union's efforts to meet a new 2010 capabilities Headline Goal. The objective is to achieve the complete interoperability of the forces called on to work in a coalition.

In this framework, France and Germany have proposed, with the United Kingdom, that member States develop several "Battle Groups" [also referred to as "Tactical Groups"]. Our objective is to set up by 2007 coherent 1,500-strong rapid reaction forces, including the identification of the appropriate support elements and necessary strategic transport capabilities capable of being deployed within ten days of an EU decision to launch the operation.

France and Germany intend to make the FGB the nucleus of one of these battle groups.



PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE

The continued strengthening of civilian capabilities remains essential for the development of the ESDP. Both our countries will ensure the pursuit of the necessary efforts.

In January 2003, France and Germany took the initiative to relaunch the European air transport command project. On 1 July 2004, the current coordination unit will become a European strategic air transport centre. We wish to see this centre rapidly become a European strategic air transport command with, following its entry into service, the A 400M, as its key capability.

Europe must strengthen its intelligence capacity. We shall pursue the coordination of the two countries' satellite reconnaissance systems, SAR Lupe for Germany and HØlios II for France. The two systems complement each other and are capable of forming the nucleus of a coordinated European satellite reconnaissance capability.

France and Germany will continue to contribute to the establishment in 2004 of a European Agency for Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities under EU Council authority. Our goal is to increase the coherence and efficacy of Europeans' defence efforts by means of an Agency with a genuine capacity for action. At the instigation of the defence ministers, the Agency is thus destined to become the key instrument of an ambitious and effective European armaments policy in the context of the ESDP.

At the European Union Council, the defence ministers will decide on and control the Agency's work in the capabilities and armaments sphere.

France and Germany welcome the establishment of a General Affairs and External Relations + Defence Council in the military capabilities and armaments sphere.

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France and Germany want to promote the development of a European security and defence culture. Our two countries will step up training exchanges between officer cadets in the different armed forces. We shall also pursue the establishment of joint training centres like the existing helicopter training schools.

We are also helping set up a European Security and Defence College. In September 2004 a pilot session will be organized by seven countries (France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Spain and Italy) to which senior civilian and military authorities from the 25 EU member States will be invited. After the EU's adoption of a European Security Strategy, it is indeed important to disseminate widely and strengthen the components of this European security and defence culture. |