

British-French summit St-Malo, 3-4 December 1998

For more than fifty years European countries were primarily focused on NATO for defence cooperation, despite occasional efforts to improve, or rather establish, the EEC/EC/EU's external activities and endow it with a political identity and defence responsibilities. All of this then altered with the so-called 'sea change' in the United Kingdom's attitude towards EU defence and its lifting of its decades-long objections to the EU acquiring an 'autonomous' military capacity, at the Franco-British summit in St-Malo, 3-4 December 1998. St-Malo is widely considered as the start of the European defence project. The new opportunity presented by St-Malo was very rapidly followed up by a multitude of farther-reaching declarations and proposals.

JOINT DECLARATION

The Heads of State and Government of France and the United Kingdom are agreed that:

1. The European Union needs to be in a position to play its full role on the international stage. This means making a reality of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which will provide the essential basis for action by the Union. It will be important to achieve full and rapid implementation of the Amsterdam provisions on CFSP. This includes the responsibility of the European Council to decide on the progressive framing of a common defence policy in the framework of CFSP. The Council must be able to take decisions on an intergovernmental basis, covering the whole range of activity set out in Title V of the Treaty of European Union.
2. To this end, the Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.
In pursuing our objective, the collective defence commitments to which member states subscribe (set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, Article V of the Brussels Treaty) must be maintained. In strengthening the solidarity between the member states of the European Union, in order that Europe can make its voice heard in world affairs, while acting in conformity with our respective obligations in NATO, we are contributing to the vitality of a modernised Atlantic Alliance which is the foundation of the collective defence of its members.
Europeans will operate within the institutional framework of the European Union (European Council, General Affairs Council, and meetings of Defence Ministers).
The reinforcement of European solidarity must take into account the various positions of European states.
The different situations of countries in relation to NATO must be respected.
3. In order for the European Union to take decisions and approve military action where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged, the Union must be given appropriate structures and a capacity for analysis of situations, sources of intelligence, and a capability for relevant strategic planning, without unnecessary duplication, taking account of the existing assets of the WEU and the evolution of its relations with the EU. In this regard, the European Union will also need to have recourse to suitable military means (European capabilities pre-designated within NATO's European pillar or national or multinational European means outside the NATO framework).
4. Europe needs strengthened armed forces that can react rapidly to the new risks, and which are supported by a strong and competitive European defence industry and technology.
5. We are determined to unite in our efforts to enable the European Union to give concrete expression to these objectives.