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President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Council Antonio Costa
High Representative Kaja Kallas, Vice President of the European Commission
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Europe Faces a Persistent and Escalating Threat

The threat to Europe posed by Russia is persistent and evolving. Intelligence assessments and satellite imagery clearly show Russia building up its military presence along the EU's and NATO's eastern borders. At the same time, we are witnessing a sharp intensification of hybrid operations, from airspace violations and cyber intrusions to attacks on critical infrastructure.

Russia poses a systemic threat to our whole continent – and this threat will remain high for the foreseeable future. Europe must prepare for a long-term strategic confrontation that will define our security for decades to come.

Europe's Defence Readiness Must Match the Threat

The last four years and the fundamental changes in the European security environment have revealed the state of Europe's defence readiness. While a lot has been done and the EU Member States have begun to rearm and replenish stocks, we currently remain significantly behind Russia with regard to defence production capacity, as well as available capabilities and stockpiles. Developing EU defence readiness has to be based on an actual threat assessment. The most significant and persistent military threat to Europe is the threat posed by Russia. The security of Europe is our shared responsibility, and we will respond to the threats facing it together.

The threat posed by unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to Finland and the EU as a whole has grown rapidly. Several UAS operations can be carried out simultaneously across the external border and in the Schengen area at low cost and low risk. Russia is expanding its use of UAS in warfare in Ukraine, and there have been repeated violations of EU and NATO airspace. The risk of further adverse development is severe. From a security perspective, this is a clear capability gap.

Building Shared Air and Drone Defence and Learning from Ukraine's Innovations

There is an urgent need to develop air defence, drone and border security capabilities and I appreciate the Commission's efforts to this end, namely the Eastern Flank Watch and the European Drone Defence Initiative. We must strengthen our capabilities starting with the Eastern Flank and then work towards capabilities that can be operated across the EU.

Ukraine has become a pioneer in many ways – not least of all in drones. Europe is now looking to Ukraine for guidance and lessons. At the end of September, Ukraine announced that it had begun setting up a dedicated Unmanned Air Defence Forces branch within the Ukrainian Air Force. The focus is on protecting civilian and critical infrastructure in cooperation with air defence and other parts of the Ukrainian armed forces. Following Ukraine's example, Europe should approach drone capabilities as part of a comprehensive whole, ranging from situational awareness and surveillance to countering UAS, all the way to air defence and C3I systems. Developing comprehensive Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (C-UAS) capabilities will require procurement, scaling up the current production of these capabilities and long-term R&D investments. Cost-effectiveness is key, especially as the threat from drones expands and technology develops.

Finland's Contribution and Vision for Interoperable Defence and Civil-Military Integration

Seamless cooperation between civilian and military authorities is essential, and this will possibly also require regulatory changes at the EU level. In Finland, our security authorities – the Defence Forces, Border Guard and police – work together in line with their competences to ensure our territorial integrity, the integrity of our borders and the safety and security of our critical infrastructure in all situations. This operative cooperation is complemented by other relevant actors, such as the traffic and communications authorities, civil protection authorities, R&D, industry and the private sector. As such, it is our view that building a robust capacity to counter drones at the EU level calls for a comprehensive approach.

Finland has the possibility to contribute to building a comprehensive, multi-layered and cost-effective C-UAS solution on the Eastern Flank. This should be integrated with air defence. We should also explore ways to connect other C-UAS and air defence systems in the Schengen area and allied countries to form a comprehensive and cross-border network of compatible systems.

Mobilising and Financing European Industry and Technological Sovereignty

In building up our drone capabilities, we can utilise the know-how of the European defence, security and aviation industries. We should cooperate closely with the private sector. Most of European critical infrastructure is owned and protected by private companies. Europe must not downplay the increasing significance of rapidly developing unmanned technologies and their expanding use for civilian purposes or their role in European competitiveness. This is a clear case where civilian and military technologies can reinforce each other in a virtuous circle. In this security context, we must make sure that civilian technologies are well connected and can support military capabilities and the defence industry. China's efforts to secure global dominance in the UAS sector already reflect this and serve to underline the challenges we face.

Building up common European capabilities presents an opportunity for our companies, and investing in our defence industry and R&D will benefit us in the long term. The Eastern Flank Watch and the European Drone Defence Initiative will engage the defence industry all around Europe.

I wish to underline that responding to the drone threat is a matter of urgency and, in the short-term, all options to finance a European flagship project must be explored. We need to quickly strengthen our defence capabilities, especially to respond to the long-term threat posed by Russia. Finland is open to various funding solutions to strengthen comprehensive security in Europe. In the long-term, we support the Commission's proposal to significantly increase the amount of funding to support defence in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. We should come up with defence funding solutions that will actually strengthen European defence. Finland emphasizes that funding should be targeted especially to the countries on the eastern frontline.

All of this underscores the continued, urgent need to significantly boost our deterrence and defence readiness – Europe must be ready for high-intensity warfare and able to respond effectively to all security threats. Developing capabilities is a joint exercise. Europe must address capability gaps through a comprehensive, coordinated approach and in full coherence with NATO.

Yours sincerely,



Petteri Orpo