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 concerning **Discussion paper on EU Battlegroups (Workshop 3)**

Dear Colleague,

In a few days from now the CFSP/CSDP conference will take place in Athens. We very much look forward to seeing you there again and to get acquainted with those of you we have not met yet.

We will have plenty to discuss. Needless to say, the developments in the Ukraine are currently at the forefront of all of our minds and will undoubtedly be part of our discussions.

Fully acknowledging the urgency of this situation, we very much hope we will also be able to seize the opportunity in Athens to address some other concerns regarding the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy, that have been on the agenda at our previous meetings.

One of these issues concerns the deployment of the EU Battlegroups. At our previous meeting in Vilnius we called upon last December’s European Council “*to give a much needed boost to address the serious decline in European defence and to make proposals for speeding up CSDP decision making and the financing of CSDP operations as well as on structured cooperation and on the future of the EU Battlegroups;”* […]. We considered that these Battlegroups “*have the potential of being one of the key tools of the CSDP”.*

As from 2007, two Battlegroups, both with a personnel strength of 1500, are on standby to be deployed within 5-10 days in military operations for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.. So far, however, the EU Battlegroups have not been deployed. In Vilnius we therefore also expressed “*our support for the EU European Council to endorse a new approach on the EU’s rapid response assets in the December meeting”*.

Our plea was heard by the European Council which stated that *“[f]urther improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the EU Comprehensive Approach, including as it applies to EU crisis management, is a priority”.* It identified a number of priority actions to this end.

As representatives of national parliaments we play a crucial role in taking the discussion on the deployment (or rather non-deployment) of the EU Battlegroups a step forward, for example by exchanging views on the varying parliamentary procedures and practices in the EU member states regarding military deployment. We are therefore most grateful to you for the organisation of workshop 3 on this particular issue on Friday 4 April.

As input for the debate during the workshop, a short discussion paper prepared by the delegation of the Netherlands is attached. We would kindly request you to distribute this paper to the participants of conference.

We very much look forward to our discussions in Athens and are most willing to respond to any of the questions you may have regarding our discussion paper.

Kind regards, also on behalf on also on behalf of Major General Royal Netherlands Marines (Rtd) Frank van Kappen, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation of the Senate of the Netherlands,

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Angelien Eijsink

Head of delegation to the IPC CFSP/CSDP

Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs

House of Representatives of the Netherlands