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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/69/50.



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/67, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encouraged them to strengthen such efforts through, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognized the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security.

2. The General Assembly recognized that the elimination of the economic and social disparities in levels of development and other obstacles as well as respect and greater understanding among cultures in the Mediterranean area would contribute to enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries through the existing forums.

3. The General Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region. The Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

4. The General Assembly encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

5. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its sixty-ninth session on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

6. In this connection, a note verbale dated 7 February 2014 was sent to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. The replies received are contained in section II below. Additional replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[6 May 2014]

Within the framework of the national defence policy, the Ministry of Defence cooperates with other countries to strengthen capacities to counter the global drug problem and transnational organized crime and improve public safety and operational capacities, based on the principle of shared responsibility.

In this regard, the Ministry of Defence, through the armed forces and the national police, has developed bilateral and multilateral mechanisms focused on providing technical assistance, exchanging lessons learned and determining lines of action based on common interests. In the Mediterranean region, the Colombian National Army participates in the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai through the Colombia Battalion, which helps to maintain peace and stability in the region.

In other forums, the Ministry of Defence has been working with strategic partners to expand cooperation on security. It has established a mechanism for dialogue with Spain concerning drugs, under which significant operational results have been achieved, thus helping to counter illicit drug trafficking into Europe and increase stability in our region.

In addition, a cooperation plan is being developed with some West African countries to strengthen institutional capacities in security, which will raise operational standards and enhance the security forces' capacity to respond to criminal groups and terrorists in the Sahel.

Lastly, the Ministry of Defence supports non-proliferation efforts and condemns the use of weapons of mass destruction in the Mediterranean or anywhere in the world. Therefore, it urges other States to adopt security and defence policies that do not include the development or use of weapons of mass destruction.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[12 March 2014]

Lebanon abides by United Nations resolutions and cooperates in combating terrorism, international crime, illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking in the Mediterranean region and worldwide.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[14 May 2014]

At its sixty-eighth session, the General Assembly, recalling the previous resolutions adopted on this issue, reaffirmed the importance of the cooperation among the Mediterranean countries as a basic way to assure peace, security, stability

and development in the region, which involves the European countries, as well as the Maghreb and the Middle East.

Portugal has been involved in the cooperation process with the Mediterranean countries specifically with respect to defence, through active participation in projects that have contributed to strengthening relations between European countries and the countries of the Middle East. It participates in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and others.

Portugal also participates in the 5+5 Dialogue, whose actions, which regard military cooperation and civil emergencies, involve 10 countries from the Mediterranean region, namely, Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia.

In 2013, Portugal assumed, again, the presidency of the Dialogue, and chose, as a priority, increased cooperation and levels of security in the region. The activities developed for this purpose allowed the strengthening of cooperation and dialogue among the countries on the two shores of the Mediterranean. The following is of particular relevance:

- The results of the Directorate Committee meeting in March 2013, which highlighted the importance of improving military joint exercises;
- The participation by Portugal in the European project “Seahorse Mediterranean Network”, led by Spain, to be implemented in Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, with a total amount of €4.5 million. Cyprus, France, Greece and Italy also participated to increase the capacity of North African member States to combat illegal immigration and illegal traffic, by reinforcing surveillance at the borders.

The cooperation aimed at under this project is being accomplished through:

- Training and education in the coast guard, which involves search and rescue and operations conducted in high seas; surveillance of borders; the code of conduct of security forces; and human rights of migrants;
- Increasing the technical capacity of functioning operational centres;
- The information exchange, by satellite, through the European Border Surveillance System, among North African coast guard and European Union member State national coordination centres.

Also in the areas of defence and the 5+5 Dialogue, Portugal participated in the El-Med 13 exercise. The aim of this multilateral exercise, led by the army of Algeria and developed within the framework of the Dialogue, was to reinforce operational cooperation between the Algerian navy and the navies of other countries on surveillance and maritime security.

We also highlight the participation by Portugal in the Seaborder-13 exercise, within the framework of the 5+5 Dialogue, in which 10 countries were represented.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[13 June 2014]

For historical and geographical reasons, the Mediterranean region has always been a priority for Spain in all respects.

The region was included in the Spanish Security Strategy adopted in 2013, which emphasizes that the peace and prosperity of the southern Mediterranean are essential to our security and the security of Europe as a whole.

The Mediterranean region represents a clear framework for external action by Spain (in line with action by the European Union and other organizations of which Spain is a member) and a priority in the development of its defence policy.

Spain's defence policy (and the Defence Diplomacy Plan as one of its major drivers), together with the 2012 National Defence Directive, indicate that security in the Mediterranean region is of fundamental importance, taking into account that full stability in the Mediterranean basin will be achieved only if the surrounding regions — the Middle East and the Sahel — also move in that direction.

This is a policy that reflects a high level of commitment, as demonstrated by our military presence in Lebanon.

The unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict, the situation in Libya, which is moving towards the status of a failed State, and the civil war in Syria stand out as major causes of instability in the Mediterranean.

One possible solution could be to develop principles that would serve as the basis for confidence- and security-building measures in the Mediterranean. The full text of Spain's submission can be found at <http://www.un.org/disarmament/disarmsec/resolutions/>.
