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## INTRODUCTION

The first article in this report discusses recent developments between the EU and Philippines to strengthen maritime cooperation. The topic focuses on increased cooperation in the area of security, safe navigation, seafarers' rights, and marine biodiversity protection.

The second article of the report summarises recent measures proposed by the European Commission to enable faster, coordinated, and more secure movement of military personnel, equipment, and resources across Europe, the so-called "Military Mobility package".

The third article outlines another recent publication by the European Commission aimed at accelerating the production of EU-made sustainable fuels to support the decarbonisation of the maritime and aviation sectors.

The fourth article is dedicated to the topic of maritime security, as it recalls the success of the EUNAVFOR ASPIDES operation in the Red Sea, and a recent meeting where the Rear Admiral advocated for additional resources to support the mission's activities.

## EU and Philippines discuss maritime cooperation

The European External Action Service (EEAS) [reports](#)<sup>1</sup> about the third sub-committee on Maritime Cooperation (SCM) under the European Union - Philippines Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which took place in Brussels in October. Under the [agreement](#)<sup>2</sup>, which entered into force in 2018, the EU and Philippines hold regular dialogues on a number of topics of mutual interest, including maritime transport.

At the last sub-committee on maritime cooperation, both sides expressed their strong commitment to international maritime law under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea as well as the sovereign rights of coastal Member States.

The EU and Philippines also committed to continued cooperation in the field of maritime security, the protection of critical marine infrastructure and the fight against shadow-fleets.

Furthermore, they welcomed the upcoming entry into force of the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction ([BBNJ Agreement](#)<sup>3</sup>). The European Union is currently in the process of translating the agreement into European law.<sup>4</sup>

The sub-committee also discussed seafarers security, rights and well-being. The next meeting is planned to take place in Manila in 2026.

## European Commission makes proposal to facilitate movement of military equipment and personnel

The European Commission has published a package of measures on military mobility, consisting of a (non-legislative) [Communication](#)<sup>5</sup> and a [proposal](#)<sup>6</sup> for a Regulation and its [annex](#)<sup>7</sup>.

In the [definition](#)<sup>8</sup> by the European External Action Service (EEAS), military mobility refers to the "*swift and seamless movement of military personnel, materiel and assets – including at short notice and at large scale – within and beyond the EU.*" Maritime infrastructure like ports and vessels can also play a role in this regard.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/philippines-third-subcommittee-maritime-cooperation-european-union-takes-place-brussels\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/philippines-third-subcommittee-maritime-cooperation-european-union-takes-place-brussels_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree\\_internation/2017/2414/oj/eng](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2017/2414/oj/eng)

<sup>3</sup> <https://docs.un.org/en/a/conf.232/2023/4>

<sup>4</sup> See status of the legislative procedure here: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-sustaining-our-quality-of-life-food-security-water-and-nature/file-conservation-and-sustainable-use-of-marine-biological-diversity>

<sup>5</sup> [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a5b639aa-4d77-44b8-9f98-6bc0e54be984\\_en?filename=Joint%20communication%20on%20Military%20Mobility.pdf](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a5b639aa-4d77-44b8-9f98-6bc0e54be984_en?filename=Joint%20communication%20on%20Military%20Mobility.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0adeee10-af7a-4ac1-aa47-6a5e90cbe288\\_en?filename=Proposal-for-a-Regulation.pdf](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0adeee10-af7a-4ac1-aa47-6a5e90cbe288_en?filename=Proposal-for-a-Regulation.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cb57228c-b5a2-4287-bc38-150566f784f8\\_en?filename=Annex%20to%20the%20Proposal\\_0.pdf](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cb57228c-b5a2-4287-bc38-150566f784f8_en?filename=Annex%20to%20the%20Proposal_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/military-mobility-0\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/military-mobility-0_en)

While so far, there has only been a non-legislative [action plan](#)<sup>9</sup> on the topic, the European Commission with its proposal aims to facilitate the transport of equipment, goods and personnel for military purposes across Europe, while minimising and mitigating the impact of such transport on civilian transport. In a [press-release](#)<sup>10</sup>, the European Commission explains it aims to complete a "military Schengen" area (that is a room of free circulation, equivalent to what already exists for civilians) by 2027 where military troops and equipment can move across Europe faster, safer, and in a more coordinated manner.

As part of the aim to increase the continent's resilience against threats, the European Commission in the Communication also explains it will promote increased production of sustainable aviation and maritime fuels, including in dispersed production capacities if possible, to improve resilience and energy security.

The proposal for a Regulation will now start its way through the ordinary legislative procedure where it will be discussed, amended and voted upon by the European Parliament and Member States before entering into force.

It is important to highlight that most elements of the proposal are directed at national authorities with the aim to make the transport of military personnel and material smoother. However, there may also be certain implications for operators along the maritime value chain.

## European Commission presents plan on sustainable transport fuels for the maritime and aviation sectors

The European Commission has adopted a [Sustainable Transport Investment Plan](#)<sup>11</sup> (STIP) with a focus on sustainable maritime and aviation fuels. The plan provides a description of the main problems and challenges when it comes to the update of sustainable fuels in the maritime and aviation sectors, in particular the lack of fuel availability, high costs, and significant financing needs. It also makes a few suggestions how the European Commission and Member States can address this.

As regards the production side of sustainable fuels the plan points out that it is urgent to scale-up renewable and low carbon fuel generation capacities in the EU, in order not to run into new dependencies. Furthermore, according to the STIP, e-fuels are not available on a commercial scale in either maritime or aviation at the moment. The plan furthermore deplores the exorbitant price difference between e-fuels and conventional fuels and explains that while more than 40 e-fuels production projects are at a planning stage in the EU, none has been able to reach a final investment decision so far.

Moreover, STIP identifies significant investment needs into sustainable fuels: for aviation and waterborne transport combined, around 20 Mt of renewable and low-carbon fuels will be needed by 2035. To comply with the requirements, around EUR 100 billion in investment is needed by 2035.

When it comes to solutions, some steps can be taken by the maritime sector itself: the STIP suggests that the waterborne transport sector is to make use of different technologies (including wind assisted propulsion) and a broad basket of sustainable maritime fuels (SMF), including LNG as a transitional fuel. LNG, with effective methane slip mitigation technologies, can also reduce GHG emissions, according to the plan.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/Action%20plan%20on%20military%20mobility%202.0.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/commission-moves-towards-military-schengen-and-transformation-defence-industry-2025-11-19\\_en](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/commission-moves-towards-military-schengen-and-transformation-defence-industry-2025-11-19_en)

<sup>11</sup> [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/document/download/73447373-de2a-4ba4-9371-36d1186035d4\\_en](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/document/download/73447373-de2a-4ba4-9371-36d1186035d4_en)

Regarding the EU's contribution, the plan refers to the mainstream funding programmes and schemes, in particular the Innovation Fund, Horizon Europe, the European Investment Bank (EIB), and the European Innovation Council. However, it stresses the EU cannot be up to the challenge on its own and calls Member States to top up EU-funding streams, e.g. by using ETS revenues.

## Rear Admiral of OPERATION ASPIDES in the Red Sea calls for additional resources to support the mission's goals

The European Union's Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) OPERATION ASPIDEST is an "EU defensive maritime security operation under the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)"<sup>12</sup>. Since late 2023, Houthi attacks on commercial ships have increased security threats in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf. This drop in safety has disrupted one of the world's main trade routes, harming both the EU and the wider global community. Hence, Operation ASPIDES was adopted to protect ships and safeguard the freedom of navigation in the area. Since its establishment, even with few resources, the mission has successfully escorted or protected more than 1,300 ships, meeting 99% of requests from shipping companies. The mission has also shot down 20 drones, destroyed two unmanned boats, and stopped missile attacks, always using force only when needed, and as a last resort.

On 17 November, Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis, head of the EU's naval mission EUNAVFOR Aspides, spoke during a [meeting](#)<sup>13</sup> of the European Parliament's Security and Defence (SEDE) Committee, to provide an update on the mission. His main point underlined that the mission currently lacks sufficient resources to carry out its tasks. He explained that EU member states should provide more ships and aircraft to the mission in order to help protect trade routes in the Red Sea. He noted that in the last month the mission is working with "only two ships" instead of the 10 ships and 16 aircraft that had been requested when the operation began in February 2022. Italy, France, and Greece provide most of the ships, while Germany provides air support.

He highlighted that the ASPIDES mission now also collects information on weapons smuggling and on Russia's 'shadow fleet'. But the Admiral said this work is difficult since the mission cannot enter national waters or search ships, which makes the search for hidden weapons very challenging. He added that about 181 of the 557 EU-sanctioned ships are active in the area of operation of the ASPIDES mission. Since July, they have tracked 84 Russian-linked ships making 302 trips, mostly carrying oil from Russia to Asia.

During the meeting, the Rear Admiral said the mission is doing well overall but needs more support to face new challenges. The mission's current mandate ends on 28 February 2026.

On 19 November, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES reached 21 months since its launch, this was communicated by the European External Action Service (EEAS) with an informative [video](#)<sup>14</sup> on the mission's success.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eunavfor-operation-aspides\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eunavfor-operation-aspides_en)

<sup>13</sup> See point 7 in the agenda "7. Debrief on the SEDE delegation visit to EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES and Djibouti, 27-29 October 2025, with Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis, Operational Commander of EUNAVFOR ASPIDES" [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/SEDE-OJ-2025-11-17-1\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/SEDE-OJ-2025-11-17-1_EN.html)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eunavfor-aspides/eunavfor-aspides-21-months-update\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eunavfor-aspides/eunavfor-aspides-21-months-update_en)