

**EUROGENDFOR 9th Anniversary Celebration - 18 October 2016
Commander's Speech**



Sirs and Excellences,

Distinguished authorities and guests,

Dear friends and family members,

Dear colleagues,

I wish you a warm welcome to this short ceremony celebrating the 9th anniversary of the European Gendarmerie Force.

Allow me to address a special welcome to the Provincial Civilian and Military Authorities present, and heartfelt thanks to our family members for sharing this moment with us.

The EUROGENDFOR Treaty was signed in the town of Velsen, in The Netherlands, on 18 October 2007.

For 9 years, the Force, gathering 9 EU Gendarmerie services, has been engaged in the stabilisation of crisis and conflict areas under the European Union, the United Nations, and NATO, with 3 main objectives:

- protecting the population;
- upgrading human rights by supporting the development of the rule of law;
- protecting the European area of freedom, security, and Justice.

Three brothers in arms sadly paid the highest price for this commitment in Afghanistan:

- Captain **José María GALERA CORDOBA** and Second Lieutenant **Abraham L. BRAVO PICALLO**, from the Spanish Guardia Civil, fallen in August 2010 in the area of Qala-E-Now;
- Corporal **Manuele BRAJ**, from the Italian Carabinieri, killed in June 2012 in Adraskan.

We laid a wreath a few minutes ago to pay tribute to their sacrifice. Our thoughts are going today to their beloved, their families, and their comrades.

After this homage, I had the pleasure to award Major **Sergio PIZZICONI**, Commander of the Carabinieri Criminal Investigations Brigade of the Province of Imperia, with the French National Defence Medal. This medal rewards years of joint work with his French counterparts in several areas including:

- the dismantling of a powerful trans-border criminal organisation dedicated to extortion, prostitution, smuggling of migrants, drug trafficking and other criminal activities,
- the wider strengthening of bilateral security cooperation between Carabinieri and Gendarmerie, including intelligence as well as public security and order.

By doing so, he contributed significantly to the decrease in crimes, and to the improvement of the safety and security of the population on both sides of the border.

This success is showing without any doubt that, **together, we are stronger**. I would like to insist on this added value of joint engagement with 2 examples:

The Italian Carabinieri gathered in the same barracks in Vicenza 3 actors of “Stability Policing”, whose purpose is to contribute to the security of population in war or crisis areas:

- the Italian Center of Excellence for Stability Police Unit, dedicated to the United Nations;
- the new NATO Stability Policing Centre of Excellence;
- and the EUROGENDFOR Permanent Headquarters.

By doing so, Italy is now hosting in Vicenza the only stability policing hub in the world, enabling the 3 entities **to be stronger together by combining their skills and expertise**.

The second example is about EUROGENDFOR itself, whose vocation is to contribute first and foremost to the EU foreign and security policy.

The conditions we face in 2016 are more challenging than ever:

- there are hundreds of thousands of migrants, often victims of traffickers, moving from crisis areas toward Europe to seek refuge or asylum;
- in parallel, the threats of International Terrorism and Organized Crime coming from or through crisis zones is putting high pressure on the *European Union's area of freedom, security and justice*.

Facing such challenges require more reactivity, more agility, and often more robustness than ever. By combining the skills and experience of 7 different gendarmerie services and 360.000 gendarmerie officers throughout Europe, as well as the planning and conduct capabilities of our Headquarters, EUROGENDFOR is today a relevant tool for crisis management.

- Today, EUROGENDFOR contributes to a NATO support mission in Afghanistan, an EU military training mission in Central African Republic, an EU Civil mission in Mali, and an EU planning cell for Libya.
- In the last 12 months, we also provided a training capacity to the EU mission in Ukraine, and produced 2 planning works for EU missions in Rafah and Georgia.
- We are now considering to support the Tunisian National Guard in an EU framework, to provide expertise for the security of EU Delegations in crisis areas, and to deploy an expert team in the UN mission in Mali.

I am sure that together, we will be even stronger to face these new challenges in support of peace and stability, and finally in support of the security of EU citizens, of our citizens.

It is now time to close this ceremony, thanking again all the attending authorities and our comrades from the two centres of excellence for being with us in this ceremony. Please accept our invitation to join us now for a small social gathering and some warm beverage.