

German Minister Calls for Lisbon Treaty EU Army

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German Foreign minister Guido Westerwelle has called for the EU to proceed with plans for a European army under the Lisbon Treaty, which he dubbed “the beginning and not the end” of a common security and defence policy.

His remarks at the annual Munich Security Conference followed a call by Berlin’s defence minister Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg to end what he called Nato’s “absurd” practice of unanimous decision-making.

“The (Lisbon) treaty lays out a common security and defence policy. The federal government wants to make progress on this front,” said Mr Westerwelle.

“The long-term goal is to build up a European army under parliamentary control. The EU has to live up to political expectations of its role as a global player.” The foreign minister sketched out a role for such an army as crisis management in a time of resource scarcity, to be developed by willing member states over time as a “motor for closer co-operation” in the EU. In a nod to Nato, Mr Westerwelle said such EU structures would not replace other military structures.

Germany’s top diplomat received backing for his plan from his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, who called for a “single European military-political space” in which no one country’s security was sacrificed for another.

“We want to overcome the bloc-thinking of the Cold War in Europe and create a new kind of mutual trust,” said Mr Lavrov.

The weekend meeting in Munich, a think-in for defence players, was dominated by the ongoing standoff with Iran over nuclear uranium enrichment which Tehran says is energy and not military-related, as western countries fear.

EU foreign minister Catherine Ashton said the “possibilities of dialogue are not yet exhausted”, despite clear impatience from other conference speakers.

Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki made a surprise appearance in Munich, raising hopes of an important announcement, only to dash them again with a general statement about “conducive ground . . . to agreement in the near future”.

Mr zu Guttenberg dismissed Mr Mottaki’s Munich trip as a “farce”.

Turning his attention to Nato, he called on an end to the “cultivated absurdity” of the alliance’s principle of unanimity in decision making. “We talk too much and act too little,” he said.

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