



EUROMIL aisbl

*(European Organisation of
Military Associations)*

Rue John Waterloo Wilson 78
B-1000 Brussels

Tel: +32.2.626.06.80

E-mail: euromil@euromil.org

N° Ent.: 0538.809.759

To the Minister of Defence of the Italian Republic, Ms. Roberta Pinotti

To the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic, Mr. Paolo Gentiloni

Brussels, 11 August 2016

Ministers,

The European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL) is an umbrella organisation composed of 35 military associations and trade unions from 21 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

EUROMIL read with great interest the statement of the Italian Prime Minister Mr. Matteo Renzi following the attacks of 22 March in Brussels claimed by the Islamic State group: *"Europe must go all the way this time. We must invest in a common security and defence structure"*.

We equally welcome your declarations in *Le Monde* and *La Repubblica* of 10 August 2016 on a common European defence: *"Its revival will not only allow us to strengthen our operational capacity in areas of crisis, in the fight against terrorism and increase the efficiency of our resources, but also to achieve significant political impact, highlighting our commitment to concretely supporting the integration project."*

EUROMIL fully agrees with both statements in support of a common European defence calling for more cooperation. Since its foundation in 1972 EUROMIL is of the opinion that the different European armed forces should train and work more and better together. A closer cooperation of our armed forces growing towards a European defence union and even a European army is the key factor for a true and powerful Common Security and Defence Policy.



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However, the implementation of a European defence union also has a social dimension. Every day hundreds of thousands men and women serve in the armed forces. They are motivated armed forces personnel and deserve to be treated with respect. They must be able to execute their duties under the best conditions and this is true not only for the field of training and equipment but also for the social field. As already stated, EUROMIL promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform" and is therefore of the opinion that military personnel should be treated as every other worker. EUROMIL is convinced that executing a very specific task guaranteeing national peace and security is no obstacle to the enjoyment of the most basic fundamental rights and freedoms.

Dear Ministers, despite international legislation and regulations several European countries do not grant the right of association to their soldiers. EUROMIL is aware of the fact that this debate is high on the agenda in Italy, but also knows that there is a huge gap between the demands of the Italian military associations and the propositions of the political and the military leadership. EUROMIL believes that a well-organised social dialogue is very important and the results of such a well-regulated relationship are not only beneficial for military personnel but also for the armed forces as such. It is EUROMIL's experience that an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is needed for a social dialogue in which equal partners come together.

Looking at your encouraging statements on a common European defence, I would like to call on you as competent members of the Italian government to improve the relation with the representatives of Italian military personnel. In these times wherein armed forces pool & share their resources, it is also important that staff organisations work together and share their experiences on the international scene. Of course EUROMIL is available to discuss this topic with you or with your close collaborators in this field. We are always willing to share our experience and information on this and other issues whenever needed and wanted.

Ministers, once again I would like to stress the importance of the Italian governments' (future) relationship with our member associations in Italy. We thank you in advance for your reaction.

Yours sincerely,

Emmanuel Jacob,
President