



# Benelux “Space4Defence” Industry Day

## INTRODUCTION BY SASHA BAILLIE

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to welcome you to our first-ever BeNeLux Space4Defence Industry Day here in Luxembourg.

We are most honoured to have BeNeLux national armament directors and representatives of the ministries of defence with us today, as well as industry representatives from the three countries and from the Belgian and Dutch national defence industry associations.

I’m also happy to welcome key officials from the European Commission and the European Defence Agency.

Our first BeNeLux defence event took place online in April 2021 and was organised in the context of the first call for proposals of the European Defence Fund. At that time, Luxinnovation had just engaged in a partnership with the Luxembourg Defence Department. Henceforth, Luxembourg’s innovation agency would facilitate the development by Luxembourg industry and research of innovative solutions to meet the needs of Luxembourg defence within NATO and the EU. This bridge between industry and defence is absolutely crucial. And I am so proud that we have taken on this mission. And so grateful to many of you here today who have contributed substantially to this partnership and who continue to do so.

As we embarked upon this mission to help Luxembourg industry and research develop their capacity to provide security and defence solutions, it became obvious that our close ties within the Benelux have a tremendous potential to increase our impact.

And at a time of geopolitical disruption within Europe, at a time of war on our continent, it’s worth recalling the origins of the Benelux. It was created in September 1944, before the end of WW2. The governments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg still in exile in London took the first pioneering steps on the road to European integration by signing a customs agreement. And this Benelux Union, a living lab of European collaboration, still remains strong today – as an intergovernmental entity in itself, and as a tight-knitted group of like-minded countries within the EU and within NATO. Deeply committed to the core European values of freedom, democracy and human rights and convinced of close European integration as a means to guarantee and defend these values.

I underline this historical background because I think it’s so important that we here today as Benelux countries recall what we together have achieved in the past and can achieve in the future, especially now by joining forces around security and defence as we face immeasurable security threats in Europe and beyond.

In addition to the close collaboration that already exists and functions well between our defence ministries and the military establishments of our three countries, there is enormous potential for meaningful partnerships between our companies and research organisations that are active in the field of security and defence.

The BeNeLux defence matchmaking event that we organised at Eurosatory last year was a great opportunity to connect and explore potential industrial cooperation in some of the capability technology programmes of the European Defence Agency, the European Defence Fund and NATO.

Space has emerged as a really promising area of collaboration. It is a key strategic and operational defence domain. And industrial collaboration in this field that seeks to enhance interoperability, resilience and technological excellence is absolutely crucial.

Based on the Strategic Compass which was approved in March last year by the European Council, the European Commission is about to present an « EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence ». The Luxembourg government has published both civil and defence-oriented space strategies, which strongly emphasise international cooperation and industry development.

We are very proud that Luxembourg is home to a dynamic space industry ecosystem. Thanks to the Ministry of the Economy and the Luxembourg Space Agency, we have gained international recognition as a new space hub in Europe. And we have discovered how Luxembourg Defence provides new opportunities to derive even greater value from the know-how, skills and capabilities that exist within our space industry, thus serving the interests of European security and defence.

Today's event provides the opportunity to learn about the space strategies and initiatives in our three countries. It's a place to discover space defence cooperation opportunities provided by the European Defence Agency and the European Defence Fund. And it's a place to exchange ideas on future projects that could contribute to the development of the EU's space defence capabilities.

The Luxembourg defence community is growing, and the number of organisations listed in our defence industry catalogue has almost doubled in the last year. It now reaches 86, and over 40 of those companies and research institutes are active in the space field. So I'm confident that there is great potential for forming new partnerships here today.

I would like to warmly thank Georges Heeren, the director of the Belgium Security and Defence Industry Association, and Peter Huis, the Senior Business Development Manager Aerospace and Deputy Director International Affairs of the Netherlands Industries for Security and Defence Association. You have worked with us to make this event possible. Thank you so much.

I also thank the representatives from the different ministries of defence, the European Commission and the European Defence Agency for being here with us today. Thanks also to the European Convention Centre here in Luxembourg for giving us the opportunity to use this venue where the GovSatCom conference took place yesterday. And thank you to the BeNeLux Enterprise Europe Network hubs for organising the B2B matchmaking session that will take place this afternoon.

Our next step together will be to jointly organise a second Space4Defence Industry Day in June at the Bourget, with the confirmed participation of the Luxembourg and Belgian ministers of defence.

I wish you all fruitful discussions today, which will hopefully evolve into more mature project proposals by the time we meet again in June in Paris.

Thank you.