

Conclusions of the first European High Level Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Brussels, 1st July 2010

The first European High-Level Conference dedicated to Unmanned Vehicle Systems (UAS) took place in Brussels on 1st July 2010, jointly organised by the European Commission and the European Defence Agency.

The Conference was widely attended by representatives of the Member States of the European Union, , the institutions of the European Union, the military authorities, the European Civil Aviation Conference, the European Aviation Safety Agency, The International Civil Aviation Organisation, the professional staff representative bodies, the European air navigation service providers, the European manufacturing industry, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, the airspace user associations, the airports operators, and other representatives of the European aviation community.

The participants in the Conference agreed that the emergence of Unmanned Aircraft Systems sector is a promising new chapter for the aerospace domain and for the aviation industry. Europe has a robust industrial and technology baseline for UAS to assume a leading competitive position in this new growth sector. Capitalising on this growth potential could create thousands of high technology jobs for Europe. We need to be proactive in order to enhance the competitive position of European industries, SMEs, research and service providers.

Once the existing barriers to growth are removed, the civil market could be potentially much larger than the military market. Exponential growth could be expected once user applications are developed and a legal framework is set up.

Unmanned systems enable specific technical developments that could in turn create benefits for the development of manned aircraft, thus contributing to a potential increase in the safety level of commercial aircraft.

UAS are already used today by governmental entities for the protection of citizens, resources, infrastructures and environment and for other domains linked to the Common Security and Defence Policy, such as anti-piracy missions.

The potential capabilities of UAS are being realised step by step. However, the lack of freedom of operations restrains, for the time being, the elaboration of new types of applications for these systems.

Persistent, flexible and quick to react, Unmanned Aircraft are able to achieve any new civil application, whereas satellites or manned aircraft operations may not be able to have the same level of persistency, effectiveness along with a reduction in costs, logistics and the environmental footprint.

The operations are conducted in the absence of a specific legal framework. This lack of a common legal basis and of mutual recognition of certificates and licences prevent cross-border operations and multinational cooperation.

UAS could also constitute an efficient tool to back up efficiently crisis management, as demonstrated during the recent volcanic ash crisis.

The participants in the Conference agreed that:

- a) Unmanned Aircraft Systems must be able to operate without segregation from other airspace users to allow the development of their full potential. Meanwhile, the safety of other airspace users and third parties (public) also needs to be ensured.
- b) The development of civil UAS will not reach its potential without further progress towards an agreed set of rules governing the civil operating environment.
- c) Political intervention and industrial engagement is urgently required to address the development of a regulatory framework.
- d) The development and demonstration of necessary technologies for UAS Air Traffic Insertion is essential. The work under way within the EC and EDA under the “European Framework Cooperation” is a first step in the right direction. But more must be done.
- e) The regulation of civil UAS operations needs still a lot of work before responding to all the challenges. The ongoing work in Europe and elsewhere is promising and could constitute the basis of a future European legislation.
- f) The elaboration of rules and standards must involve all relevant stakeholders of the aviation sector. At the same time, it is important to cooperate with other regional and international entities that are already working in this domain.
- g) Common specific European safety objectives should be applied for civil and state Unmanned Aircraft flying in Europe. A commonly agreed civil-military regulatory framework should favour dual utilisations of the unmanned systems and the development of cost-efficient solutions by the European industry.
- h) The Single European Sky and the SESAR Program provide the overarching framework that should enable the safe access to the airspace of Unmanned Aircraft Systems.
- i) The necessity to establish the appropriate regulatory environment in Europe for ensuring the timely insertion of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the Single European Sky.
- j) There is a potential role to be played by the European Union as the principal actor in promoting investment and supporting the regulation of Unmanned Aircraft, mainly due to the scale of the opportunities and also the regulatory challenges that are ahead.
- k) The requirement for a competitive global UAS market environment as a short-term European action and the development of a common European vision.
- l) The is a need for the European Commission to:
 - a. Develop further the ideas and proposals presented today; in close coordination with relevant civil and defence stakeholders.
 - b. Take into account initiatives currently being developed by other European institutional stakeholders”.
- m) The need for the European Commission to further develop all of the ideas and proposals presented today in order to inspire, animate and support the EU ambitions regarding UAS.
- n) The competitive global UAS market environment now requires short-term European action and the development of a common European vision.
- o) In this context, the European Commission needs to develop further all the ideas and proposals presented today in order to inspire, animate and support EU ambitions regarding UAS.
- p) As a first step towards achieving these goals, a European independent high-level group should be established to discuss the way forward and advise the Commission on these matters. This

group will have to consider all of the domains related to UAS and will have to encompass the complete UAS sector.

The participants in the Conference agreed to:

- Establish as soon as possible, a European independent high-level group (HLG) to discuss the way forward and advise the Commission on these matters. This group will have to consider all domains related to UAS and will have to encompass the entire UAS sector.
- The high-level group will be composed of a small group of representatives from Member States, relevant European and international organisations, user groups and public authorities, whilst working closely with representatives from industry, the scientific research community and academia.
- The high level group will integrate the military representatives in order to ensure that the dual nature of UAS operations shall be addressed from the outset.
- The High Level Group shall submit to the Vice President by mid-2011, a set of recommendations that will establish the way forward on the structural, institutional and regulatory measures that need to be set up in Europe to release the full potential of unmanned aircraft systems. A recommended roadmap should be provided that will achieve the successful achievement of this vision.

Closing the Conference, the European Commission:

- Invited all to acknowledge the goodwill necessary to support this initiative, and hoped that all parties involved will contribute to this ambitious project;
- Expressed its expectation that this first definitive action will lead to the establishment of appropriate measures within Europe that will allow, within a reasonable timeframe, the emergence of UAS markets, along with the assurance that the existing standards of safety shall be maintained.