

Incoming EU foreign affairs chief declares Brussels needs more troops and must be ready to intervene



Josep Borrell

The EU must have more troops and be prepared to use them across the globe, the bloc's incoming foreign affairs chief has told the European Parliament.

Josep Borrell, who is nominated to be the EU's next chief diplomat, said that Europe could not allow itself to become "irrelevant" on a world stage dominated by superpowers such as the US and China.

"We have the instruments to play power politics," he said at a European Parliament hearing into his candidacy to head up the EU foreign affairs service, "The EU has to learn to use the language of power."

"We should reinforce the EU's international role and further our military capacity to act," the 72-year-old Spanish socialist added.

"We should pool our national sovereignties together to multiply the power of individual member states," Mr. Borrell said, "I am convinced that if we don't act together Europe will become irrelevant."

Mr. Borrell called for the numbers of EU troops that could be deployed to be raised to at least 55-60,000 from the current 35,000 worldwide.

"That's impressive but we have to do more," he said before pointing out the 60,000 target was first set in 1999 by EU leaders after the Balkan war.

Mr. Borrell said the EU had to speak with a unified "truly integrated" foreign policy voice on the world stage. He said the total defense spending in the EU was

half the GDP of Belgium and more than in China and Russia.

But that spending did not translate into military capacity because it was fragmented among the EU member countries, Mr. Borrell said.

He backed EU plans for pooling defense research projects. Some critics have accused those plans of being a stepping stone towards a future EU Army.



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