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**WEU/ASSEMBLY: LOUIS GALLOIS AND ALAN  
COOK EXPLAIN A400M DELAYS**

*Brussels, 25/03/2009 (EDD)* – During a hearing of the WEU Assembly organised on Tuesday 24 March 2009 in Brussels, Louis Gallois, EADS Executive Director, and Allan Cook, President of Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) and Director General of Cobham PLC, spoke of the effort being made by the industry in the field of strategic air transport. They sought to explain why the A400M strategic and tactical air transport project is so far behind schedule and has exceeded the cost foreseen. The position taken by the new US administration with regard to the market for the KC 45A (based on the A330 MRTT – Multi-Role Tanker Transport) was also discussed at this meeting.

The A400M is a major strategic programme for the construction of a European military aircraft that “*will still be in service in 2050*”, stressed Louis Gallois, affirming that it will create all of 40,000 jobs in Europe in the high-tech field (EADS has already created 15,000 additional jobs since its creation in 2001). The transporter aircraft will have a 30-37 tonne laden capacity, he said, explaining that the A440M systems are at least as complex as those of the Rafale or Eurofighter, originally underestimated by EADS. The mistake has been to launch the programme without risk assessment or prototype. To this must be added the objective of having civilian certification, the first time ever for a military aircraft, and the acceptance by the industry of civil contract constraints (“*a huge mistake*”, as Louis Gallois put it in English). Today, “*the engine is good*” but the associated computer (FADEC) is still being developed. He went on to recognise that the industry had agreed to a timetable that was “*exaggeratedly ambitious*” – 6 and a half years whereas, normally, first deliveries take 12 years. “*If deliveries were within ten years, we would still be the top reference for this*”, said the head of EADS, who recognises the need to find “*transitional solutions*” to meet the most urgent needs of the French and British armies (he mainly spoke of providing the A330 without tactical capability).

Louis Gallois pointed out that the seven partner states taking part in the programme with orders for 180 aircraft are linked – they cannot cancel the contract unless by unanimous decision. Gallois hoped a solution would be found during the next three months (Ed.: the States agreed to a moratorium on the sidelines of the informal EU defence ministers meeting in Prague). Louis Gallois, who placed considerable emphasis on the 40,000 jobs at stake in Europe and on the potential market dimension (he explained there are 30,000 C-130 in flight and the Americans are interested by this programme), obviously trusts there will be a solution through the staggering of deliveries. By using such a pattern of deliveries, the first aircraft will not meet all the conditions in the initial specifications. Additional functions (such as terrain monitoring) would be gradually introduced during successive deliveries and civil certification would come in due course (slighted downgraded – in the initial project everything had to be certified including purely military elements covered by the code of secrecy, which proves impossible).

As far as the A330 is concerned, Louis Gallois – like Allan Cook – highlighted the place of the European world leader when it comes to tanker aircraft. “*Since we have been present, we have won all competitions (...) including that of the United States*”, he said. Evoking the cancellation of American procedure for “*legal reasons*”, he said he did not fear the protectionist wave in the United States, before going on to assure parliamentarians that “*our position remains sound and we remain resolved to fight*”. Louis Gallois also recalled that the KC45A must entail the creation of a construction chain and 10,000 jobs in Mobile, USA.

The time has come to encourage cooperation, said Allan Cook, pointing out that the EU launched the constitution of a European Air Transport Fleet (EATF) last November, which is a “*good thing but there is still some way to go before being able to raise the challenges of external deployment*”. Mr Cook also stressed the need to continue investing in engineering and R&D as it is necessary to face competition not only from the United States but also from other countries like India or China.