Antecedentes
Background

La ministra de Defensa española, Sra. Margarita Robles Fernández, señaló en su intervención ante el Consejo de Asuntos Exteriores y Defensa de la Unión Europea del 20 de noviembre de 2021, que España organizaría y acogería, en colaboración con el Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior, el primer Congreso de Sanidad Militar de la Unión Europea, con el objetivo de compartir las lecciones identificadas de la pandemia por la COVID-19 y plantear la vinculación sanitaria militar a nivel europeo (figura 2).

Esta iniciativa cristalizó en la organización y desarrollo del Congreso. El Ministerio de Defensa impulsó decididamente esta iniciativa, convencido de la oportunidad y acierto de sus objetivos.

Conjuntamente con el alto representante de la Unión Europea para Asuntos Exteriores y Política de Seguridad, Sr. Josep Borrell, enviaron la invitación oficial a las naciones para participar en el «1.er Congreso de Sanidad Militar de la Unión Europea», a celebrar en Madrid del 6 al 8 de octubre de 2021 (figura 3).

El Congreso analizaría el papel de los servicios sanitarios militares de la UE en apoyo de las autoridades civiles durante la pandemia; los desafíos operativos en un estado de incertidumbre, incluida la mejora del apoyo médico a las misiones y operaciones de la UE; y el establecimiento de reservas sanitarias estratégicas, así como los planes europeos de vacunación, en estrecha coordinación con la Comisión Europea.

Por su parte, el inspector general de Sanidad de la Defensa, general de división farmacéutico D. Juan José Sánchez Ramos, en nombre de la ministra de Defensa, remitió a sus homólogos de los países miembros un saluda animándolos a participar activamente en el Congreso mediante la presentación de comunicaciones relativas a los temas escogidos, y basadas en las experiencias adquiridas durante la crisis sanitaria, así como de otros aspectos que cada nación considerara apropiados compartir y debatir (figura 4).

The Spanish Defence Minister, Ms. Margarita Robles Fernández, stated in the Foreign Affairs and Defence Council of the European Union on November 20, 2021, that Spain would organize and host, in collaboration with the European External Action Service, the first European Union Congress on Military Health Services with the aim of exchanging the lessons identified from the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening a military health network at a European level (figure 2).

Together with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles, they sent an official invitation to the nations to participate in the "1st EU Congress on Military Health Services", to be held in Madrid from October 6 to 8, 2021 (figure 3).

The Congress would analyse the role of the EU Military Health Services in support of civil authorities during the pandemic; operational challenges in a state of uncertainty, including improving medical support to EU missions and operations; and the establishment of strategic reserves of medical stockpiles, as well as European vaccination plans, in close coordination with the European Commission.

In turn, the Chief of Spanish Military Medical Services, Major General PHA Mr. Juan José Sánchez Ramos, on behalf of the Minister of Defence, sent greetings to his member states counterparts, encouraging them to actively participate in the Congress through the presentation of communications about their experiences during the health crisis, or other aspects related to the chosen topics that each nation considered appropriate to share and debate (figure 4).

Figura 2. Noticia sobre el Primer Congreso de Medicina Militar de la Unión Europea.
News of the first Congress of Military Medicine of the EU.
Disponible en / *Available at*:
https://www.defensa.gob/gabinete/notas prensa/2020/11

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JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

European Union
EXTERNAL ACTION

MARGARITA ROBLES FERNÁNDEZ

MINISTER OF DEFENCE
KINGDOM OF SPAIN

MINISTERIO
DE DEFENSA

Brussels/Madrid, 28 April 2021
A(2021)3019633

To the Ministers for Defence of the EU Member States

Excellency,

The global pandemic that is ravaging our societies has also underlined the value of our Armed Forces to support civilian populations in health emergencies. Moreover, military medical support is critical for our soldiers deployed on missions. To provide this service in an efficient and effective manner, it is necessary to enhance cooperation at European level.

At the Foreign Affairs Council / Defence held in November 2020, Spain offered to host, in collaboration with the European External Action Service, a European Union Congress on Military Health Services. The aim of this congress is to debate, reflect and share views on issues of military healthcare, deployable medical health services, and other military support, creating a network of links and influence, aimed at identifying best practices and lessons learned on responses for health crises and wider military medical support.

This represents an opportunity for the results of the Congress to feed into the preparations of the "Strategic Compass" which will provide goals and objectives seeking to improve the Union's Preparedness and Resilience to future pandemics as well as the effectiveness of our crisis management missions and operations.

We are, therefore, pleased to invite you to the ***"1st EU Congress on Military Health Services"***, to be held in Madrid from 6 to 8 October, 2021. The Congress will analyse the role of the EU Military Health Services in support of civilian authorities in the fight against COVID-19; operational challenges in a state of uncertainty, including the improvement of medical support to our missions and operations; and the establishment of strategic medical stockpiles, as well as European vaccination plans, in close coordination with the European Commission.

We are currently planning an in-person meeting; however, considering the uncertainties caused by the pandemic, we are also contemplating the possibility of a hybrid format: online and in-person.

We look forward to your nations' representation in the panels of the congress, in order to benefit from your views and experience. Should you accept this invitation, we would very much appreciate if you could provide a Point of Contact to ours (Major General Jose Luis Figuero and Commander Ricardo Poblaciones info_eumilhealthcongress@mde.es), in order to discuss further possible contributions to the congress and the details of your country's participation.

Yours faithfully,

Josep Borrell Fontelles

Margarita Robles Fernández

Figura 3. Carta conjunta de invitación oficial a los países miembros de la Unión Europea
Joint official invitation letter to the EU member states

MINISTERIO
DE DEFENSA

Juan José
Sánchez Ramos
GENERAL DE BRIGADA FARMACÉUTICO
INSPECTOR GENERAL DE SANIDAD
DE LA DEFENSA

Madrid – 5th May 2021

Dear colleague,

The Military Health Services of our nations have played an important role in the fight against COVID-19, acting in support of the civilian population, thus underlining the value of the Armed Forces to collaborate with civil authorities in the face of health crises.

At the Foreign Affairs Council / Defence held in November 2020, Spain offered to host, in collaboration with the European External Action Service, a European Union Congress on Military Health Services. The aim of this congress is to debate, reflect and share views on issues of military healthcare, deployable medical health services, and other military support, creating a network of links and influence, sharing best practices and lessons learned on responses for health crises and wider military medical support.

Recently, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. Josep Borrell, and our Minister of Defence, Ms. Margarita Robles, jointly sent the official invitation to nations to participate in the "***1st EU Congress on Military Health Services***", to be held in Madrid from 6 to 8 October, 2021.

We are currently planning an in-person congress; however, considering the uncertainties caused by the pandemic, we are also contemplating the possibility of a hybrid format: online and in-person.

The main topics chosen for discussion, all of them related to the support provided by the Armed Forces against pandemics and the operational challenges, are as follows:

- *Operational challenges in a state of uncertainty, including the military medical support to EU missions and operations, adjustment and lessons learned.*
- *Military support to European vaccination plans against pandemics.*
- *Military support for the establishment of European strategic reserves of strategic medical stockpiles against pandemics.*

The final program of the congress is yet to be confirmed, but it will be structured in discussion panels to hear a series of brief presentations provided by the nations, followed by a debate.

To reach the goals set out in this letter, the contribution of each nation is fundamental. This contribution should consist of written abstract related to one or more of the aforementioned topics, collecting those items that your nation considers the most relevant. Regarding the experiences acquired during this health crisis, the most efficient way to contribute to supporting the civil population in future health crises and any other aspect that you consider appropriate to share and debate.

Depending on the time available for the discussion panels during the Congress, it could be appropriate to select the most suitable from among the submitted communications to be presented orally, should the lecturer take part in the national delegation. In any case, all nations attending the Congress are intended to participate actively, and every communication received will be included in the Congress Book, that will later be shared among all Member States and stakeholders.

That is why I encourage you to actively participate in the Congress. I would appreciate very much if you could designate a Person of Contact as soon as possible, so that our Person of Contact (OF-4 Marta PRESA, OF-4 Juan Manuel BALLESTEROS eumilhealthcongress@oc.mde.es) can provide him/her further information on this subject and give some help with the drafting of your nation's abstracts.

I look forward to meeting you at the Congress,

CORREO ELECTRONICO:
jsanram@oc.mde.es

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Figura 4. Carta oficial de invitación del inspector general de Sanidad
Chief of Spanish Military Medical Services invitation letter