

**CIVIL DIMENSION  
OF SECURITY**

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**NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

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**COMMITTEE VISIT TO BRUSSELS**

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**SECRETARIAT REPORT\***

***28 JANUARY – 2 FEBRUARY***

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\* This Secretariat Report is presented for information only and does not necessarily represent the official view of the Assembly.

1. Eighteen members of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security (CDS) visited Belgium on 31 January-2 February 2007. Led by Michael Clapham (United Kingdom), the delegation met with EU, NATO and Belgian officials to discuss the protection of critical infrastructures in Europe and North America.

2. The protection of critical infrastructure has gained a new relevance with the growing threat of international terrorism. Recent attacks in Europe and North America have targeted transport infrastructure (airplanes, train and metro) in particular. As a result, national authorities have been prompted to review existing legislation and protection measures. Additionally, international organisations, such as NATO and the EU, are increasingly engaged in this field, as they consider ways in which they can assist nations in enhancing preparedness and response to natural disasters, technological incidents or terrorist attacks.

### ***I. CIVIL PROTECTION AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION (CIP) IN BELGIUM***

3. The delegation met with various Belgian officials at a federal and provincial level to discuss the organisation of civil protection and the CIP in Belgium. The group was also able to experience first-hand the measures taken to protect two major critical facilities: the port of Antwerp and the Doel nuclear power plant.

#### **The Federal Response**

4. The Directorate-General for Civil Protection within the Federal Public Service Home Affairs (Federal Ministry of Interior) is primarily responsible for overseeing emergency services and organising the federal response in the event of natural or technological disasters, as well as terrorist attacks. Emergency services in Belgium include, at the local level, 251 fire brigades employing 17,000 firemen, and at the federal level, six operational civil protection units. In responding to disasters and incidents, the Directorate-General oversees a broad range of activities including alert, evacuation, sheltering, rescue, organisation of health services and fire fighting, restoration of public services, etc.

5. The Directorate-General for Civil Protection is also a major stakeholder in overseeing Belgium's participation in international civil protection initiatives, including NATO, EU and UN frameworks. Belgium's two main structures in this regard are the Dica-Dir rapid reaction units – made up of a total of 200 specially trained professionals from the fire brigades, the civil protection units and other services, and the Belgian First Aid and Support Team (B-FAST) – an interdepartmental rapid response structure bringing together six ministries under the authority of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

6. As **Philippe Staquet**, Advisor for Civil Protection in the Minister of Interior's Private Office, explained to the delegation, efforts are currently underway to review, assess and reform the organisation of civil protection in Belgium. A bill was presented in December 2006 and should be discussed in parliament in March 2007. The reform aims primarily at rationalising the distribution of emergency services on the Belgian territory to allow for a quicker and more effective response in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the re-organisation of emergency services should reduce current discrepancies in the costs borne by municipalities for sustaining their local fire brigades. According to the current draft, the country would be divided in 24 rescue zones and 339 rescue posts, in lieu of the current 251 fire brigades. The zones would have the authority to organise autonomously their rescue services within the common standards set by federal authorities. Rescue posts would be responsible for field interventions.

7. The Directorate-General Crisis Centre within the Federal Public Service Home Affairs also plays a central role in emergency planning and crisis management in Belgium. The Crisis Centre was created in 1988, when a series of incidents and disasters raised awareness of the lack of a central coordination and crisis management mechanism in Belgium. **Alain Lefèvre**, Director of Public Order at the Crisis Centre, detailed the Crisis Centre's main missions: provide a 24/7 focal point for information; manage the planning, coordination and follow-up of the security of large-scale events; coordinate security measures for VIPs and institutions on the Belgian territory; develop the crisis management infrastructure in Belgium; organise and coordinate emergency planning at a federal level with all relevant departments. Emergency planning in Belgium relies on a prioritisation of threats, as it is impossible to prepare simultaneously for all types of events. The threat of CBRN terrorism is receiving increasing attention, and the Crisis Centre has recently been tasked with preparing an emergency plan to specifically cover CBRN incidents. Food chain security and the prevention of pandemics have also become a major priority since the dioxin contamination crisis in 1999. In this area, the Crisis Centre co-operates closely with the Federal Agency for Food Chain Security.

8. CIP was identified as a concern in Belgium as early as in 1977. However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States have demonstrated the need to re-evaluate existing policies. Belgium identifies three types of critical infrastructure: vital points, i.e. facilities that require protection because of their socio-economic importance, e.g. nuclear plants, bridges, ports, etc.; sensitive points, i.e. facilities that require protection because of their importance for the national or allied defence potential; critical points, i.e. persons, public authorities, communities, buildings, facilities, places and goods which face a real or potential threat of political or criminal nature. Belgium also actively participates in international CIP initiatives. For instance, it is the lead nation for the CIP project within NATO's Defence Against Terrorism Programme of Work, which aims to use military know-how, technology and capabilities to enhance the protection of strategic sites on the territory of allied nations, including airports, nuclear power plants, communication networks, etc.

9. Questions focused in particular on the difficulty of organising emergency services in a federal country with multiple levels of administration. Nevertheless, speakers from the Ministry of Interior reassured the delegation that coordination between the different levels functions in a satisfying manner, according to a simple rule: if an emergency affects more than one municipality, the province is called upon to intervene; similarly, if an emergency affects more than one province, the federal level is called upon to intervene. Current efforts focus primarily on improving networking and communication between all stakeholders in an emergency.

10. When asked to assess the current terrorist threat in Belgium, one speaker rated this threat as low to moderate. Although activities of recruitment and logistical support take place on the Belgian territory, these do not pose a major threat. Belgian authorities established a coordinating body bringing together all agencies responsible for the prevention of and response to terrorism in Belgium. This body oversees in particular the implementation of a national plan on radicalisation.

11. The delegation further enquired about the way Belgian authorities deal with competing requests for assistance from various international organisations, particularly NATO and the EU. Officials of the Ministry of Interior acknowledged that requests for assistance can come simultaneously from different organisations. They are usually dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis; nevertheless Belgium has a tradition of working preferably through EU channels.

12. When asked for clarification about the role of the military in civil protection, Belgian officials explained that the military can be called upon to support civilian authorities in their response to an emergency, particularly when specific skills or assets are needed. However, in any event, the military always intervenes under the authority of the police.

## The Provincial Response

13. **Véronique Paulus de Châtelet**, Governor of the province of Brussels-Capital, offered a different perspective on the organisation of emergency services and CIP in Belgium. When an emergency occurs on the territory of the province and affects one or more municipalities, the Governor of the province can decide to activate provincial response plans. These include a General Emergency and Intervention Plan, which provides the overall guidelines for emergency management in the province; the Specific Emergency and Intervention Plan, which provides guidelines for responding to a specific threat; and the Internal Emergency Plan drawn up by infrastructure operators for each particular facility.

14. The protection of the metro system in Brussels provides a good example of the organisation of emergency response in the province of Brussels-Capital. The metro system is a particularly challenging environment, with 69 stations, 84 km-long track and 300,000 passengers a day. Plans have been drawn up involving all stakeholders, including the infrastructure operator and representatives from the five main response specialities – rescue operations, medical, sanitary and psychosocial services, law enforcement, logistical support and information of the population. These plans include common measures for all metro stations, as well as specific response schemes and scenarios for each one of them, where the role of each stakeholder is detailed.

15. **Major Alain Gibson**, Head Officer in charge of interventions at the Fire Brigade and Emergency Medical Service (*Service d'Incendie et d'Aide médicale urgente*, SIAMU) of Brussels-Capital, confirmed that Brussels presents a number of potential targets and vulnerabilities. It is an important and particularly dense hub for road, rail and air transport; it is also a national, regional and European capital, and hosts the Headquarters of the EU and NATO. Within the inter-agency emergency-planning scheme in the province of Brussels-Capital, the SIAMU is responsible for fire fighting, rescue and first aid, and employs 900 firemen in nine fire brigades across the province. Although recent efforts have focused on the modernisation of the SIAMU's mode of operation, particularly in terms of coordination and communication, fire brigades still lack important human and material resources both for preparedness and response. This is particularly true with regard to CBRN capabilities, which participants admitted are still largely insufficient.

## The Role of the Private Sector

16. The delegation's visit to the port of Antwerp and to the Doel nuclear power plant allowed the group to assess the role of the private sector in the protection of critical infrastructure in Belgium.

17. **Rik Verhaegen**, Deputy Port Security Officer, provided an overview of the challenges of protecting one of Europe's major ports. The port of Antwerp has a total surface of 14,000 hectares, including 120 km of riverbank, 130 km of quay, 960 km of railway, 280 km of road, and 360 km of pipelines. It is the second largest port in Europe for international shipping freight and the fourth in the world. 15,000 vessels transit through the port every year, carrying over 160 million tons of goods. The port brings together a broad range of activities including a nuclear power plant, vessel and barge traffic, railway traffic, truck transport, petrochemical industries, pipelines, etc.

18. A number of initiatives have been taken to enhance the port's security in compliance with various national and international regulations, including, in particular, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS), which sets common standards for international shipping for vessels larger than 500 gross tons. An EU directive of October 2005 incorporates and builds upon the provisions of the ISPS code. It requires port operators to complete a comprehensive risk analysis, which should provide the basis for a port security plan. This plan should include measures to be taken at varying security levels (minimum adequate measures, additional

measures with increased threat, specific additional measures with probable threat), depending on threat assessments made by relevant public authorities. Priority areas include controlling access to port facilities, ensuring full co-operation between services, regulating access to documents and communications, setting up an operational port security organisation, etc. Many of these measures have already been implemented at the port of Antwerp.

19. The port of Antwerp also participates in a number of US-led, multilateral initiatives, including the Container Security Initiative, a programme through which foreign ports commit to pre-screen containers headed for the United States; the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), which aims to engage businesses through a set of supply chain security guidelines; and the Mega-Port initiative, a co-operative effort to enhance radiation detection capabilities at participating ports.

20. The port of Antwerp currently operates one stationary X-ray container scanner for incoming and transiting containers, which the delegation could see in operation. The scanner began operating in May 2005 and has the capacity to scan 100 containers a day. The port also operates one mobile scanner for outgoing containers in the terminals, with a similar capacity. Only containers pre-selected by customs officials and deemed suspicious are directed to the scanners. When implemented in Antwerp, the Mega Port initiative should ensure that every in and out gate of every container terminal, as well as the main railway choke-points, are equipped with a scanner for radioactive material.

21. **Werner Cooreman**, Chief Security Officer at Electrabel, the private operator of the Doel nuclear power plant, briefed the delegation on the protection of nuclear power plants in Belgium. Doel hosts four pressurised water reactors with a total capacity of over 2,800 megawatts, which represents 30% of the electricity used in Belgium. Electrabel runs a second nuclear plant in Tihange, which produces another 28% of the electricity used in Belgium. A Belgian law currently imposes a moratorium on nuclear energy, which prevents the extension of any existing plant or the construction of any new plant.

22. The physical protection of nuclear plants and nuclear material is provided by a number of international regulations, primarily under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as national directives on emergency planning and response. The main objective of protective measures is to increase the delay following an attack to allow for the intervention of specialised units to stop the incident or attack.

23. The security plan for the Doel power plant follows the principle of “in-depth protection”, i.e. the definition of different zones (owner-controlled area, protected area, vital area) with different security requirements. Detection measures include various sensors and detectors, on-site cameras, and multiple access control points for personnel and visitors. Protective measures to delay incidents and attacks include a double fence around the protected area, a strict system of security clearance for personnel, and the five barriers around the reactors (fuel pellets, fuel rods, reactor vessel and double-layered concrete containment structure). The containment structure is built to resist major incidents and shocks, including explosions, fires, flood, earthquakes, and airplane crashes. In the event of an incident, the nuclear reaction can be stopped within one second.

## **II. THE EU'S ROLE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

24. The delegation held a joint hearing with members of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament, as well as with members of the EP Delegation for

Relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. A number of EU officials briefed delegates on EU initiatives in the area of civil protection and CIP.

25. **Gijs de Vries**, the EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator, provided an overview of the EU's counter-terrorism strategy and of the priorities for 2007. The Strategy relies on four main pillars: prevent – the radicalisation and recruitment of terrorists; protect – people, infrastructure and borders; pursue – through enhanced intelligence, police, border and judicial co-operation; and respond – through common assistance procedures and assets. Priorities for 2007 include further work on preventing radicalisation – promoting inter-religious dialogue, preventing the use of the internet as an instrument of radicalisation, ensuring a proper balance between civil liberties and the fight against terrorism; enhancing CIP, including through closer co-operation with third countries; improving protection against CBRN threats; and reinforcing co-operation with the United States and other partners.

26. **Sasa Borko**, representing the Civil Protection Unit within the Directorate-General (DG) for Environment of the European Commission, presented the overall structure of civil protection in the EU. A number of mechanisms focus on enhancing national preparedness through simulation exercises, training and exchange of experts. Since 2001, the EU has also developed a Civil Protection Mechanism, which provides a framework for organising European assistance and solidarity in the event of a major disaster. The operational arm of the mechanism is the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC), which acts as a one-stop shop for civil protection assistance for the 30 participating states (EU 27, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). The MIC's mandate covers all types of emergency, including terrorist attacks. Since its creation, it has been engaged in some 100 emergencies inside and outside the EU. Several measures are currently under consideration with a view to enhancing the EU's civil protection capacity and addressing current weaknesses. These include a new financial instrument, new arrangements regarding the transport of assistance to the field, improved and better networked detection and early warning mechanisms, and better information of the public. A more radical proposal from former Commissioner Michel Barnier advocates the creation of an EU Civil Protection Force.

27. **Magnus Ovilius**, Head of Sector within DG Justice, Freedom and Security, presented the recent Commission proposal regarding the establishment of a European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP). This programme is based on three main pillars: the development of strategic guidelines and measures horizontally applicable to all CIP work; the definition and protection of European Critical Infrastructures (ECI); and support to member states for the protection of national critical infrastructures. The core of the Commission's proposal is a draft directive, which establishes common procedures for identifying and designating ECI, and for assessing the need to improve their protection. ECI is defined as those critical infrastructures the disruption or destruction of which would significantly affect two or more member states, or a single member state if the critical infrastructure is located in another member state. According to the draft, member states would be responsible for identifying ECI on their territory based on a combination of crosscutting and sectoral criteria to be defined at EU level. The Commission would then draw up a list of ECI based on notifications from member states. Finally, ECI operators would be responsible for conducting a proper risk assessment, and for establishing and updating, under the supervision of national authorities, an Operator Security Plan detailing the measures taken to protect the ECI in accordance with the risk assessment. Whenever necessary, the Commission could assist ECI operators and member states with enhancing the protection of ECI.

28. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, a number of measures have been adopted to enhance aviation and maritime security. However, as **Nina Commeau-Yannoussis**, Head of Unit within DG Transport and Energy, explained to the delegation, the completion of the common market in the fields of energy and transport tends to increase the vulnerability of infrastructure. In order to respond to this increased vulnerability, the Commission is preparing a communication on CIP in the fields of transport and energy, which

should be adopted in February 2007. This communication will build upon the EPCIP framework and complement its provisions in the two sectors it covers. One issue remains unclear: the protection of critical infrastructure located in third countries.

29. **Jürgen Merz**, Chair of the Council Working Group PROCIV, speaking on behalf of the German Presidency, stated that the Council would examine the Commission's proposals in the coming months. However, he admitted that, although the Presidency intends to adopt a constructive approach, reaching consensus among all member states might prove difficult, partly because CIP issues involve many different stakeholders, including several national ministries and agencies in each member state, as well as private infrastructure operators. He insisted that a lot has already been achieved at the national level and that EU institutions should avoid excess of regulation, while at the same time ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and able to share their specific concerns.

30. The delegation expressed its concerns on a number of issues. Some members questioned whether the EU should at all intervene in the field of CIP, underlining that CIP is primarily a national responsibility and that the added value of EU intervention is not obvious. Nevertheless, members acknowledged that what prevailed was a general feeling of unreadiness, particularly when considering the threat of a CBRN incident. The delegation also expressed concern at the costs of protection measures and the potential negative impact on the competitiveness of European infrastructure operators. Thirdly, members of the delegation insisted that confidentiality is a major issue when dealing with such sensitive information as the designation and protection of critical infrastructures. European officials assured the delegation that confidentiality of information would be guaranteed within the EPCIP.

31. A major part of the discussion focused on the need to improve co-operation between NATO and the EU on issues relating to civil protection, CIP and the fight against terrorism. EU officials replied that, for the time being, there is no legal framework to allow for direct contacts between NATO and the EU Commission. Co-operation between NATO and the EU is only organised in the areas covered by the Berlin plus agreements and there are several obstacles to closer co-operation. One is the complexities of the EU decision-making process, some of which the draft Constitution would have addressed. Another obstacle is the strong reluctance of at least one member state to promote such a dialogue. Nevertheless, many participants from both parliamentary delegations, including **Paulo Casasa**, Chairman of the EP Delegation for Relations with the NATO PA, felt strongly that it is now time to overcome these obstacles and promote constructive and practical co-operation between both organisations.

32. A final topic raised in the discussion was the relation between counter-terrorism and civil liberties. One participant argued that, in the current security environment, restrictions to civil liberties are sometimes necessary to allow for efficient counter-terrorism action. However, a majority of members agreed that current international human rights agreements offered sufficient flexibility and that recent events have demonstrated that it can actually be dangerous for democracies to give up on their own principles.

### **III. NATO, CIVIL EMERGENCY PLANNING AND THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

33. At NATO Headquarters, the delegation met with several high-level officials and diplomats to discuss NATO's activities in the field of Civil Emergency Planning (CEP) and CIP, co-operation with Russia, as well as other issues on the Alliance's agenda.

34. **Carsten Fausboll**, Head of CEP, presented an overview of the Alliance's experience and activities in this area. CEP in NATO includes two basic dimensions: supporting national CEP activities for the protection of civilian populations; advising and supporting national military authorities as they plan and execute NATO operations. Recognising that CEP remains primarily a national responsibility, NATO's intervention is limited to providing a framework to promote greater compatibility and effectiveness of national arrangements. For instance, in the field of CBRN risks, NATO's activities focus on the promotion of minimum standards of preparedness for first responders, through the adoption of common guidelines, training programme and exercises, etc.

35. The main decision-making body for CEP issues is the Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee (SCEPC). SCEPC oversees the work of eight specialised Planning Boards and Committees, to which over 300 national experts are attached. Implementation is carried out by the CEP division within NATO's International Staff and by the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response and Coordination Centre (EADRCC). An important aspect of NATO's work in CEP is co-operation with partner countries, which participate in CEP decision-making and activities to almost the same extent as member countries.

36. NATO's role in CEP includes a number of activities relating to critical infrastructure. Guidelines regarding NATO's role in CIP were adopted in the 2003 Concept Paper and Road Map. Main objectives include: promoting information sharing among CEP stakeholders; assisting in the development of training and education programmes; contributing to the identification of critical infrastructure; identifying research and development projects to support CIP; and streamlining CIP in field exercises. However, NATO has been engaged in CIP activities – including identification of critical infrastructure – even before 2003, for instance through the work of the planning board on industry. Most member states support NATO's role in this field, yet recognising that CIP, like CEP, remains primarily a national responsibility. An official mention of this role was included in the final declaration of the recent summit of Heads of State and Government in Riga, Latvia.

37. **Guenter Bretschneider**, Head of EADRCC, presented the work of the Centre. The EADRCC is NATO's main operational arm in the field of disaster response. Created in 1998, it coordinates assistance in response to disaster by providing a gateway to CEP organisations in the 49 participating nations (member and partner countries). It also organises regular training and exercises, often with a regional focus, bringing together relevant national CEP stakeholders. The EADRCC has a standing mandate for the coordination of NATO's response to all types of disasters – natural, technological, terrorism – occurring on the territory of one of the participating nations. It intervenes at the request of the stricken nation and coordinates its interventions with the United Nations and other organisations. As appropriate, the EADRCC can also request NATO military assistance. The EADRCC recently intervened in response to the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005. This was a complex operation, which also included the organisation of an air bridge and the deployment of the NATO Response Force.

38. **Keith Gardner**, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Science Co-operation, presented the contribution of NATO's science programmes to enhancing member states' disaster preparedness. A number of projects focus on defence against terrorism and aim to improve national capabilities in this area. Others focus on environmental security. Co-operation with partners is also a priority and NATO Science programmes either fund grants for multilateral projects involving at least one member and one partner country, or support nationally-funded activities. For instance, many projects are conducted together with Russia in the framework of an action plan. Current projects include the development of explosive protection technology, prevention of ecological terrorism, and oil spill response.

39. In the discussion, several members of the delegation regretted that CEP activities within NATO are insufficiently publicised, although they could provide excellent publicity for the Alliance.



Nevertheless, the discussion highlighted several areas where NATO's CEP role could be improved. There is for instance no mechanism for common funding of disaster relief; contributing nations pay for the assistance they provide. As this arrangement can sometimes impose an excessive burden on national defence budgets, one NATO official suggested that disaster relief operations could be covered by development budgets instead of defence budgets. Another possible improvement to reduce delays for interventions would be to establish a system whereby countries have assets on standby. This is currently being discussed within NATO circles and Russia has already expressed interest in contributing transport capabilities.

40. Another topic raised in the discussion was the role of the military in support of disaster relief operations. NATO officials explained that the intervention of the military is sometimes necessary for major emergencies or for operations requiring special equipment (field hospitals, bridges, etc.). However, there is for now no civilian plan within NATO regarding military support to civilian disaster relief operations. Decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis. At the national level, several member states have recently started developing plans for military support to civilian operations.

41. Finally, several members of the delegation raised again the issue of NATO-EU co-operation. NATO officials acknowledged that co-operation with the EU is difficult for the same institutional and political reasons mentioned to the delegation by EU officials. Misperceptions and a tendency to protect institutional interests also play a role. Nevertheless, NATO officials insisted that there is a growing willingness within NATO to develop direct contacts with the EU Commission. They also admitted that it could be possible to define some form of division of labour between both organisations, but that this required a very careful reflection and analysis based on a real inter-institutional dialogue.

42. Concluding the session on NATO's role in CEP, Ambassador **Maurits Jochems**, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for CEP, reiterated that NATO can bring added value to international CEP efforts thanks to its longstanding experience in this field. Co-operation or even some form of division of labour with EU is desirable, but would require a real consensus among all members of both organisations.

43. **Paul Fritch**, Head of the Russia and Ukraine Relations Section, reviewed the history of NATO's co-operation with Russia, from the first partnerships focusing on traditional military issues to a broader and more pragmatic approach since 2001. The NATO-Russia Council provides a unique framework for this co-operation, as Russia has equal rights and responsibilities in implementing its decisions. Although overall co-operation often remains difficult, activities in the field of CEP are some of the most successful, not the least because they involve a broad range of stakeholders, including scientists and other civil society groups. Counter-terrorism co-operation relies on the 2004 NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism, which covers activities aimed at preventing, combating, and managing the consequences of terrorism. Russia's participation in Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean is both a good example and a major achievement of this co-operation.

44. The discussion raised several issues: Russia's role as a supplier of energy and recent accusations that it is using energy as a weapon; the necessity for NATO and Russia to focus on tackling new challenges, such as counter-narcotics and climate change; the current state of NATO's relations with Georgia and Ukraine, and their impact on NATO's relations with Russia.

45. In a meeting with several **NATO ambassadors**, the delegation was able to receive additional perspectives on these and other issues. The ambassadors also underlined that CIP was not a new issue within NATO, but that it has received more attention recently. Member states are guided by the principle that NATO's intervention is only justified if it brings added value to existing efforts.

This was also implicit in the mention of energy security in the Riga declaration. One Ambassador speculated that NATO's role in this particular field could focus on the protection of maritime routes, as well as on intelligence collecting and sharing.

46. Because CEP is not NATO's primary task, Ambassadors also insisted that co-operation with other relevant organisations is particularly important. They added that even in those operations where NATO is in the lead, such as Afghanistan, co-operation should also be a priority. NATO Ambassadors insisted that this issue of co-operation with other international organisations is currently very high on NATO's agenda and will be discussed at upcoming ministerial meetings.

47. Afghanistan was a major focus in the discussion. Both NATO Ambassadors and members of the delegation underlined the vital importance for NATO of successfully completing its operation there, as well as the impact that this operation has had on NATO's transformation. Success in Afghanistan, including winning the important battle for the hearts and minds, requires a comprehensive approach, combining security and reconstruction, civilian and military efforts. This comprehensive approach should also bring together all relevant international organisations in order to avoid that one organisation becomes the focus of all attention and expectations, as has been the case in the past.

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