

Keynote speech

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Stavanger

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- 12 Oct. 2015
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(As delivered)



Prime Minister, President of the Assembly, Parliamentarians, Ladies and gentlemen,

Det er godt å være her i Stavanger i dag. Hello, it's good to be here in Stavanger.

It's good to be here today with you, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. As a former parliamentarian, I know how important your role is. Representing your constituents, holding your governments, and organisations like NATO, to account for the money they spend and for the actions they take.

It is also a pleasure to address you here in Stavanger, the host city of the NATO Joint Warfare Centre. Hosting this Centre is yet another example of how Norway has always been a committed NATO Ally. Another example is the contributions Norway are making in the High North. This is important for Norway and it is important for NATO. The high north is still characterised by low tensions and cooperation. But there are growing concerns. We have witnessed increased Russian military presence. And the

region is not immune from developments elsewhere. This underlines the importance of Norway's contribution to security in this region, to situational awareness and a predictable military presence. This is important for the security of Norway and NATO as a whole. But despite this commitment, after the Cold War, and in reaction to more peaceful times, Norway and many other countries cut defence spending. I remember this well, as I was Minister of Finance in the 1990s.

But now our world has changed once again. And in recent years, Norway and an growing number of Allies, have been increasing their defence spending.

Once there was a time to collect the peace dividend. But now is the time to invest in our defence. And I would like to commend the Norwegian government for increasing defence spending in the proposed budget for 2016.

For over the last couple of years we have seen dramatic changes. From the annexation of Crimea to the collapse of the Arab Spring. Our world has become less predictable and more dangerous. With new developments almost every day. As demonstrated by the tragic attack this weekend in Ankara. I offer my sincere condolences to those affected.

We are also concerned about Russia's current actions in Ukraine and most recently in the Middle East. About its unacceptable violation of Turkish and NATO airspace. And about Russia's substantial military build-up, its air strikes and its cruise missile attacks.

Many countries from the region and every NATO Ally is taking part in the US-led mission against ISIL. Russia should play a constructive role in the fight against ISIL. To support the Assad regime is not constructive. It is only prolonging the war.

A political solution is needed more than ever. We fully support and encourage all efforts by the UN and others to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Syria. We also need a peaceful and negotiated solution in Ukraine. I am encouraged that the ceasefire is holding in the eastern Ukraine. That heavy weapons are being removed, and that the announced elections outside the framework of Ukrainian law have been postponed.

But the situation remains fragile. Russia has a special responsibility as it continues to support the separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

The crises in Syria and Ukraine underline the importance of what NATO is doing. Increasing our ability to protect our Allies, to reinforce and to deploy.

During the last year, we have:

Doubled the size of the NATO Response Force, making it more ready and more capable, Established a high readiness Joint Task Force, able to move within a matter of days,

We have increased our presence in the east, with more planes in the air, more ships at sea and more boots on the ground. We have established six new headquarters in our eastern Allies, with two more on the way, And we will soon deploy new advanced surveillance drones in Sicily. We have improved our decision making. And increased our exercises three-fold. Including exercise 'Trident Juncture' that is happening right now across Portugal, Spain and Italy, our largest exercise for more than a decade.

This is the greatest increase in our collective defence since the Cold War. And we are just as able to protect Turkey as we are to protect our eastern Allies. NATO's deterrence is significant and it is real. If Turkey needs NATO's help, NATO will be there.

This instability which surrounds us is our new strategic reality, and it will be with us for the long-term.

So our Alliance must also adapt to the long-term.

I see three core issues as part of this, which I will briefly outline now. And afterwards, I can go into more detail during questions.

First, we must modernise our deterrence.

'Deterrence' is often seen as some kind of old-fashioned, Cold War concept. But being strong enough to stop others from attacking you is not old fashioned. Being strong enough so that your people can go about their business without the fear of war is not old fashioned. We have strong forces not because we want to fight a war, but because we want to prevent war.

We face a wide and complex range of threats. Traditional and asymmetric. From the east and from the south. Even from cyber space.

If we are to respond to all of these, then we must modernise our deterrence. With better intelligence and early warning. A better integration of our land, sea and air forces. And significantly better cyber defences.

A strong defence is also key to addressing the second challenge Our relationship with Russia.

There is no contradiction between being strong and being engaged. On the contrary, I believe that a strong defence forms the basis for a constructive relationship with Russia.

But there must be no doubt. Engagement is not the same as accepting a new status quo, or giving Russia a free hand. As we approach our Warsaw Summit, we will assess the long-term implications of the current crisis on our relations with Russia

Then, the third important issue: the South.

We face turmoil, violence and instability from Afghanistan, through the Middle East and across North Africa. This is a huge and complex challenge. A challenge that demands a comprehensive response, from the entire international community.

Primarily, from the countries in the region, the ones on the front line of the fight against the extremists. But also from international bodies like the UN and the EU, From regional organisations like the Africa Union, And by Allies, who have much to contribute. Together, we need to address the security situation, the humanitarian and refugee crises and the economic challenges.

This is a huge task. And NATO has a role to play.

NATO must be ready and able to deploy forces when needed. But we also have to get better at projecting stability without necessarily deploying large combat forces.

Call it Resolute Support, Defence Capacity Building or Partnership What matters is that from Afghanistan to Morocco, and many places in between, NATO is helping other countries to defend themselves. And to stabilise their own neighbourhoods. For if they are more stable, we are more secure.

By building up the capacity of countries like Tunisia, Jordan or Mauritania. Helping others, like Iraq and – at some point – Libya, to strengthen their security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our world is changing. NATO is changing. But what we have achieved so far is not enough. We need to do more.

Our Warsaw Summit next year will demonstrate that NATO is ready to deal with the challenges of our modern world. With a common understanding. A common position. And a common way forward.

Thank you.