



# ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL REPORT

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic compelled the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to move its activities online. Throughout the year, lawmakers connected from Europe, North America and beyond to discuss the coronavirus crisis and adopt a range of special policy outputs on the coronavirus crisis, its impacts, and the way ahead.

In the pandemic's wake, longstanding challenges have not subsided. NATO continues adapting to the future security environment, as it faces Russia's ongoing aggressive behaviour, China's rise, transformations in the East and the South, rapid technological change, swelling waves of disinformation, and continued obstacles to the Women in Peace and Security agenda. Assembly members tackled all these challenges in a year when it had to completely reinvent its parliamentary diplomacy.

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## FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT



## FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL

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### 2020: REINVENTING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY IN TIMES OF COVID



The COVID-19 pandemic, which has gripped the world since early 2020, rocked the fundamental pillars of the modern way of life. As borders closed one after the other, the risk heightened that the pandemic would trigger uncoordinated national responses. With COVID-19 dragging nations into uncharted, literally life-threatening, territory, it also risked becoming an all-consuming vortex, driving international attention away from other pressing challenges.

In this unprecedented moment of crisis, it was vital for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's (NATO PA) leadership to ensure that the Assembly continued to provide a forum for legislators from across Europe and North America, to exchange both on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the full range of challenges facing the NATO Alliance.

The [Assembly](#), a parliamentary organisation independent from but complementary to the intergovernmental North Atlantic Treaty Organization, needed to fulfil what has been its mission since 1955: to strengthen the transatlantic bond, promote shared transatlantic values, and foster greater understanding of NATO policies among parliamentarians and citizens.

By moving online when it could no longer meet in person, the Assembly reinvented its tools of parliamentary diplomacy, organising some 30 webinars and other meetings, including an annual session bringing together close to 250 members of parliament.

This first-ever digital annual presidential report offers a glimpse into how the NATO PA's 269 members tackled today's and tomorrow's challenges throughout 2020 and what recommendations they offer to address them as an Alliance.

Naturally, much of the Assembly's 2020 efforts and recommendations focused on the multifaceted crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. These are laid out in this report's rich section on the Assembly's response to the [pandemic](#).



"In the unprecedented environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NATO PA has sought to reinvent parliamentary diplomacy to ensure legislators from across Europe and North America could exchange both on the response to the COVID-19 crisis and the range of other security challenges facing the NATO Alliance."

Ruxandra Popa, NATO PA Secretary General

The year 2020 was also a pivotal moment for NATO. The Alliance engaged in a wide-ranging [reflection process](#) about ways to enhance internal cohesion, unity, and adherence to shared values as well as to prepare for the challenges of the next decade.

Better informing citizens about NATO should be pursued as a matter of urgency as the Alliance adapts for the next decade, particularly in an environment characterised by growing disinformation. The Assembly continued to play its part in this effort in 2020.

Even before COVID, the Assembly identified the rise of China as a potential competitor to the West on the global stage as a key priority issue. This was a central theme of its discussions in 2020, as was Russia's ongoing geopolitical challenge and military modernisation.

In this new age of global competition, the Assembly has highlighted the vital importance of maintaining NATO's dominance and technological edge across old and new domains of warfare.

Two traditional regions of interest for the Assembly – the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods – witnessed significant changes and crises in 2020.

In the Western Balkans, North Macedonia's accession to NATO in March offered further demonstration of the vitality and positive draw of the Alliance's Open Door policy. While Skopje's commitment to reform and political courage allowed it to fulfil its Euro-Atlantic ambitions, other parts of the region continue to face important challenges.

Last but not least, 2020 marked the 20th anniversary of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The Assembly seized this opportunity to both celebrate the many achievements Resolution 1325 has allowed, while also highlighting where more progress is needed.

The year concluded with hard-fought congressional and presidential elections in the United States and hopes for a renewed transatlantic relationship. In turn, the Assembly elected US Congressman [Gerald E. Connolly](#) as its new President, along with a new [Bureau](#) which, for the first time, includes a majority of women. Under their leadership, the Assembly is already hard at work making parliaments' voices heard on all major challenges facing Allied nations in 2021.

**Ruxandra Popa, Secretary General of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

Ruxandra Popa (France) took up the position of Secretary General of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in January 2020. She first joined the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's International Secretariat in 2005 as Director of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, before serving as Deputy Secretary General in 2011-2019.





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## COVID-19: ALLIED SOLIDARITY & ASSEMBLY ADAPTATION IN THE FACE OF A GLOBAL SHOCK

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most disruptive global event since World War II. Still raging, its path of destruction is readily apparent. Over two million people have died and many more have suffered. The global economy has been thrown into turmoil. And public resources and social cohesion have come under severe strain.

The Alliance reacted swiftly and effectively to play its part to mitigate the pandemic's impact. NATO facilitated hundreds of missions to assist public health efforts and other crisis-related tasks. Over half a million Allied military personnel have supported national response to COVID-19 so far.

Unable to meet in person, the Assembly quickly turned to online meetings to offer members a platform to exchange on the coronavirus crisis as well as on other threats and challenges to transatlantic security. Moreover, a range of [special policy outputs](#) tackled the pandemic, its impacts, and the way ahead.

UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACETED  
IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS

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THE ASSEMBLY ADAPTS  
AND GOES VIRTUAL

KEEP READING





## UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACETED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS



"COVID-19 has taught us important lessons about our ability to sustain major global shocks – as societies and as an international community."

Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary)

Upon the initiative of then President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary), all five Assembly Committees and the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group produced special studies on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The then President himself drafted a report on [NATO's Essential Role in the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). He highlights how Allied forces mitigated some of the immediate impact by coordinating the emergency supply of medical equipment and personnel. At the same time, these efforts "never detracted from the Alliance's ability to deliver credible and effective deterrence." He urges Allies to pursue continued burden sharing and defence investments in the post-pandemic era. Allied forces not only proved key during Allies' hours of greatest need but also face an increasingly challenging international security environment.





The critical importance of NATO's Science and Technology (S&T) network is highlighted in the special report [COVID-19, International Security, and the Importance of NATO'S Science and Technology Network](#) by [Kevan Jones](#) (United Kingdom). "With its pool of defence scientists, engineers, and analysts – the largest such network in the world – NATO can play a major role in finding scientific and medical solutions to defeat the current pandemic and to help prepare for future crises," he notes. "A major impediment to a rapid and efficient pandemic response has been the continued underinvestment in vaccine research and development," Mr Jones argues and calls for Allies to increase resources and use the NATO S&T network more effectively.



[Lord Campbell of Pittenweem](#) (United Kingdom) focuses on COVID-19's impact on globalisation and evolving great power competition in his report [COVID-19 and Transatlantic Security](#). He argues that "The post-COVID global security environment is likely to be more adversarial and characterised by increased geopolitical competition." He urges the Alliance to adapt and to use this experience to further strengthen cohesion and the transatlantic link.



In [The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on the Civil Dimension of Security](#), [Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam](#) (France) notes that “fundamental freedoms and democratic principles, access to verified and unmanipulated information, migration, women’s rights, and participation, as well as the protection and education of children, are all at the core of this crisis.”

A key challenge is Russia’s and China’s disinformation and propaganda campaigns to promote their own governance models as more effective at crisis response than democracies.



[Christian Tybring-Gjedde](#) (Norway) utters dire warnings in [The Economic Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). The pandemic “has effectively put a sudden stop to entire categories of human and economic activity,” he writes. The report’s recommendations formed the basis of an Assembly [resolution](#) on the crisis. In it, the NATO PA urges states to build stronger defences against future pandemics by better shielding economies, intensifying international cooperation, and avoiding overdependence on ‘strategic rivals’ such as China. “Failing to hedge against the likelihood of future pandemics could be catastrophic,” the resolution warns.



In his report [The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Middle East and North Africa Region](#), [Gilbert Roger](#) (France) reminds Assembly members of the wide-ranging impact of the pandemic in the region. He warns that the ongoing crisis could reignite public anger if governments fail to get ahead of the pandemic and manage its consequences effectively. The potential humanitarian and security consequences of pandemic-related instability, he warns, "would be grave and would pose an immediate challenge to trans-Atlantic security interests."

## THE ASSEMBLY ADAPTS AND GOES VIRTUAL

KEEP READING



THE ASSEMBLY ADAPTS AND  
GOES VIRTUAL





Before the first wave of the pandemic hit Europe and North America, the Assembly could only conduct six in-person meetings. Bar one election observation mission to Georgia, members were unable to meet physically, including for its two biggest events of the year – the spring and annual sessions.

Convinced that close coordination among parliaments is essential to democratic, effective and coherent policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis, Assembly leaders deployed [a range of tools](#):

- A special webinar series allowed Allied and partner legislators to share experiences, best practices and absorb lessons to deal with the immediate crisis and better prepare for the future.
- Then President Mesterhazy issued frequent statements and updates to delegations and maintained regular communication with the NATO Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General.
- Delegations were surveyed about the initial lessons identified from the crisis and its impact on national defence plans.
- Many heads of delegation to the NATO PA provided their views on the crisis, including on the role of parliamentarians and interparliamentary diplomacy.

Despite this unprecedented crisis, it was essential that the Assembly continued to address the other critical challenges the transatlantic Alliance faces. These challenges had not disappeared in 2020 and sometimes worsened. Through some 30 online meetings, the NATO PA continued to offer a platform for its members to exchange on these priorities.

Most importantly, the holding of the [66th annual session](#) in a virtual format enabled the Assembly to successfully deliver upon its 2020 political priorities, adopt important [policy recommendations](#) on the main challenges facing Europe and North America, and elect its [new leadership](#). As then President Mesterhazy stressed, "With this session, we demonstrate that, no matter the setting, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly provides an essential forum for open and frank political dialogue on transatlantic security."

ONLINE ANNUAL SESSION PLAYLIST

Photo courtesy of NATO



The background of the slide features a stylized, abstract representation of the NATO flag's chevron pattern. The chevrons are rendered in various shades of blue and grey, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is modern and professional.

## NATO 2030: ADAPTING NATO FOR THE NEXT DECADE

For over 70 years, NATO has served as the bedrock of Europe and North America's security. Its ability to adapt has proven a key reason for its success and enduring relevance. Throughout the major geopolitical shifts since 1949, NATO has provided an irreplaceable platform for consultation, collective defence, and joint action.

At the end of 2019, concerns grew about a number of challenges such as [China's rise](#), the emergence of [disruptive technologies](#) and internal strains among Allies. Meeting in London in December 2019, Allied leaders therefore launched the next phase of NATO adaptation. They asked the NATO Secretary General to lead "a forward-looking reflection process [...] to further strengthen NATO's political dimension including consultation". Throughout 2020, the Assembly actively supported this process – now known as [NATO 2030](#) – and contributed to it with its own recommendations.

## NATO 2030: THE ASSEMBLY'S 2020 INPUT

WINTER - SPRING



EXPLORE

SUMMER



EXPLORE

AUTUMN



EXPLORE

## NATO 2030: A MORE UNITED AND STRONGER ALLIANCE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

The Assembly's principal policy output on NATO 2030 – [Declaration 460](#) – clearly lays out the Assembly's recommendations on how to adapt NATO for the next decade.

### EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA UNITED AROUND SHARED TRANSATLANTIC VALUES

To secure the foundations of the Alliance, the Assembly emphatically calls for "rededicat[ing] the Alliance to the shared democratic values that constitute its founding principles". As a concrete measure, in 2019, the Assembly already [proposed](#) the establishment, within NATO, of a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience to assist Allies and partners in the strengthening of democratic institutions. To prevent and address potential differences among Allies, the Assembly calls on them "to increase the scope and frequency of political consultation and develop a range of tools to facilitate the convergence of views". Strengthening the transatlantic bond should be a constant priority. In particular, Allies must maintain defence spending efforts and better share the burdens and responsibilities for defence, as recommended also in the Defence and Security Committee's [resolution](#).

### AN ALLIANCE FIT TO ADDRESS EVOLVING THREATS AND CHALLENGES AT 360°

To face the evolving threats and challenges, the Assembly calls on Allies to update the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept – the Alliance's guiding strategic document. Among others, the updated Strategic Concept must affirm NATO's policy of deterrence and dialogue towards [Russia](#), enshrine NATO's 360° approach to challenges, and reinforce its framework for safeguarding its [military edge](#) across old and new domains of warfare. For the first time, NATO should also lay out a common approach to the rise of China. Echoing the calls of the Political Committee's [resolution](#), this common approach should include enhancing Allies' understanding of security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific and developing cooperation with partners in the region and with the European Union.



#### AN ALLIANCE WITH A GLOBAL VOICE AND BROAD NETWORK OF PARTNERS

To enhance NATO's global approach, the Assembly's declaration "emphasise[s] NATO's [...] role in safeguarding the rules-based international order and urges Allies to expand cooperation with relevant global and regional organisations." Building on the Political Committee's [report](#) on NATO-EU relations, the declaration urges NATO and the European Union, in particular, to continue to enhance their strategic partnership.



## NATO 2030: NEXT STEPS

At the end of November the Group of Experts issued their report, [NATO 2030 : United for a New Era](#) – one of a number of inputs into the NATO Secretary General's NATO 2030 initiative. The report by the independent group incorporates a significant number of recommendations put forward by the Assembly, including the call to update NATO's Strategic Concept, to establish a Centre of Excellence on Democratic Resilience, to agree a common strategy on China, and to create a NATO scholarship to support youth engagement. It also recognises the Assembly's essential role as a "force multiplier" for public engagement.

Ahead of the 2021 meeting of Allied leaders, the NATO Secretary General will develop his own NATO 2030 recommendations. The new Assembly President Gerald E. Connolly (United States) has made it a top priority for the Assembly to provide continued input into this process.





"NATO 2030 is a timely and important opportunity to outline a vision for NATO's future. And our Assembly is particularly well placed to help shape this vision and, more importantly, to help turn it into reality."

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Attila Mesterhazy, NATO PA President  
(December 2019-November 2020),  
at the online Annual Session, 23 November 2020





## CHINA'S RISE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY

The rapid rise of the People's Republic of China represents a paradigm shift in global affairs with important consequences for Euro-Atlantic security. The Assembly has long acknowledged the growing impact of China's rise. However, it was only at the [NATO Leaders' meeting](#) in London in December 2019 that they broke the unofficial taboo and put China on NATO's agenda, recognising that "China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance."

As a coherent Allied China strategy has yet to be forged, the Assembly put a spotlight on the issue, notably with three comprehensive reports. The key takeaway is the Assembly's call to address the challenges posed by China collectively – without ever compromising the core values on which both the global liberal order and NATO were founded.



### TACKLING CHINA'S RISE: A PRESIDENTIAL PRIORITY

Guiding the Assembly through most of 2020, then President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary) identified tackling China's challenge as one of his key priorities. "China has similar geopolitical ambitions as Russia but a smarter and more effective approach," he argues. "We can no longer afford to be naïve about its ambitions and role," he stresses, calling for Allies to "embrace a clear-eyed, shared response to China's rise and global ambitions."

Likewise, current President [Gerald E. Connolly](#) (United States) has underlined that "China, like Russia, does not share the same values as NATO Allies. Both countries seek to undermine the international rules-based order that NATO countries helped build and which supports stability and certainty in the international system." He calls for NATO to face the China challenge head on, but, at the same time, underlines "scope for dialogue" exists.

"The Alliance is at a crossroads. Are we to step aside, and ignore China's potential threat to our democratic community? Or are we to step up and assert ourselves with respect to China's increasing encroachments?" Gerald E. Connolly, NATO PA President



## FACING THE GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGE

In [The Rise of China: Implications for Global and Euro-Atlantic Security](#), Mr Connolly warns that “In recent years Beijing’s foreign policy has become much more assertive [...] by aggressively exploiting its growing economic and military strength.” He also presented a [resolution](#) encapsulating the Assembly’s overall recommendations on a transatlantic strategy towards China. As the Assembly’s [declaration](#) on NATO 2030 makes clear, adapting to a world of systemic competition with China and Russia should be a key priority for NATO.

A transatlantic strategy on China: key Assembly proposals



## CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL RULES-BASED ORDER

In a report on [China and the Global Liberal Order](#), [Lord Jopling](#) (United Kingdom) homes in on China’s challenge to the global liberal world order. He cites the new security law in Hong Kong, the crackdown on free speech and ethnic minorities, and the consolidation of power around President Xi Jinping as evidence that Beijing does not intend to abide by liberal norms. “Our nations must speak as one to draw attention to those actions undertaken by Beijing, at home and abroad, which are unacceptable and contravene global liberal norms”, Lord Jopling writes.



## THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE

In a third report, on [China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Strategic and Economic Assessment](#), [Christian Tybring-Gjedde](#) (Norway) examines "perhaps the most ambitious investment and infrastructure programme ever conceived." Mr Tybring-Gjedde warns that the project "risks making participating countries more financially, economically, and strategically dependent" – including NATO Allies. For instance, through the Belt and Road Initiative, China has secured greater port access, which is likely to enhance Beijing's capacity to project maritime power. He also discusses concerns about overreliance on Chinese technology in sensitive sectors such as 5G telecommunications. He calls for mobilisation of Western financial and technological assets to ensure that "democracies and not authoritarian societies are at the helm of this paradigm-changing industrial revolution".



## COVID-19 AND CHINA'S DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN

A series of [Assembly reports](#) dedicated to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic also examined how China emerged as a new actor in global disinformation, next to Russia. In a report on [The Impact of The Covid-19 Crisis on The Civil Dimension of Security](#), [Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam](#) (France) notes that the aim of Beijing's disinformation campaign was to "distract attention from the initial disastrous response of its authorities to a pandemic that originated within its territory." More worryingly, it also aims "to bolster China's authoritarian model of governance to the detriment of the liberal values that form the bedrock of the Alliance and our democracies" and to "cast a shadow in the media and on the internet over the much more substantial solidarity that was and that is still being shown by the Allies throughout this health emergency."



## RUSSIA'S CHALLENGE INTENSIFIES AND EVOLVES

The challenge from Russia NATO Allies must confront intensified and evolved over the course of 2020. Russia continues to pursue aggressive policies and actions, employing all levers of power –diplomatic, information, military, and economic. But it increasingly relies on hybrid asymmetric tools such as election interference, cyber espionage and attacks as well as poisoning of opponents. As such, Russia remains the chief threat facing Allies, and Assembly members explored elements of this threat extensively throughout 2020.

## RUSSIAN MILITARY MODERNISATION

An increasingly aggressive foreign policy, backed by the threat of a capable modern military, remains at the core of Russia's multifaceted challenge. Moscow's military modernisation – and its implications for Allied security in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond – was the focus in [Cédric Perrin's Russian Military Modernisation: Challenges Ahead for NATO Allies](#).

The French Senator focused not only on equipment modernisation but also on doctrinal and organisational reforms to create a military capable of acting according to Moscow's understanding of global security. Russia has been, at least partly, successful at reaching established targets, Mr Perrin argues. He thus warns his colleagues "to avoid complacency" in their assessment of Russia's ability to sustain an assertive political-military policy.



## ATTEMPTS TO DOMINATE THE BLACK SEA

Russia's efforts to disrupt what it calls its "near abroad" featured prominently in [The Black Sea Region: Economic and Geo-Political Tensions](#). Ausrine Armonaite (Lithuania) warns of increasing threats to freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. After Russia's illegal annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula, the Kremlin has increased the peninsula's militarisation as part of a broader strategy of anti access/area denial. Ms Armonaite strongly recommends Allies "to reinforce deterrence in the region to protect Allied littoral states". Moreover, she calls upon NATO "to enhance support for key partners like Georgia and Ukraine which, in turn, need to remain focused on genuine democratic reform."



## DISINFORMATION IN COVID-19 TIMES

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold, Russia stepped up its disinformation campaign in a cynical attempt to undermine Allied populations' confidence in their governments' responses. These attempts have underscored the degree to which Moscow is leaning on new hybrid tools to challenge Allied unity. All five Committee's [COVID-19 special reports](#) touch upon this targeted disinformation campaign.

## CONTINUED REPRESSION AT HOME

At home, Russia continued to follow a playbook of ruthless repression. In September, it used banned military-grade nerve agent, once again, in an attempt to silence an opponent, poisoning Alexei Navalny. In a [statement](#), then Assembly President Mesterhazy sharply condemned the attack and called for those responsible to "be held accountable for this heinous attack with a weapon prohibited under international law." With the sentencing of Mr Navalny in an unlawful and arbitrary way in early 2021, which the Assembly President [strongly condemned](#), the Assembly will certainly follow this issue closely.

## UNDERMINING ARMS CONTROL

Russia's recent behaviour has also put a stop to five decades of arms control treaties in the Euro-Atlantic area. 2019 witnessed the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and 2020 likely initiated the end of the Open Skies Treaty.

In May 2020, Russia's long-standing selective implementation and misuse of the [Open Skies Treaty](#) led the United States to declare Russia in violation and announce its intention to withdraw. In a statement, then NATO PA President [Attila Mesterhazy](#), (Hungary) outlined its transgressions and called for "Russia to urgently return to full compliance".

Russia's recent actions have increasingly left Allies without a reliable partner in arms control. Nevertheless, now US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alexandra Bell told Assembly members at a December [webinar on arms control](#) that "treaties, structures and agreements created over the past half-century are bending, breaking, and collapsing[...]but arms control is not dead."

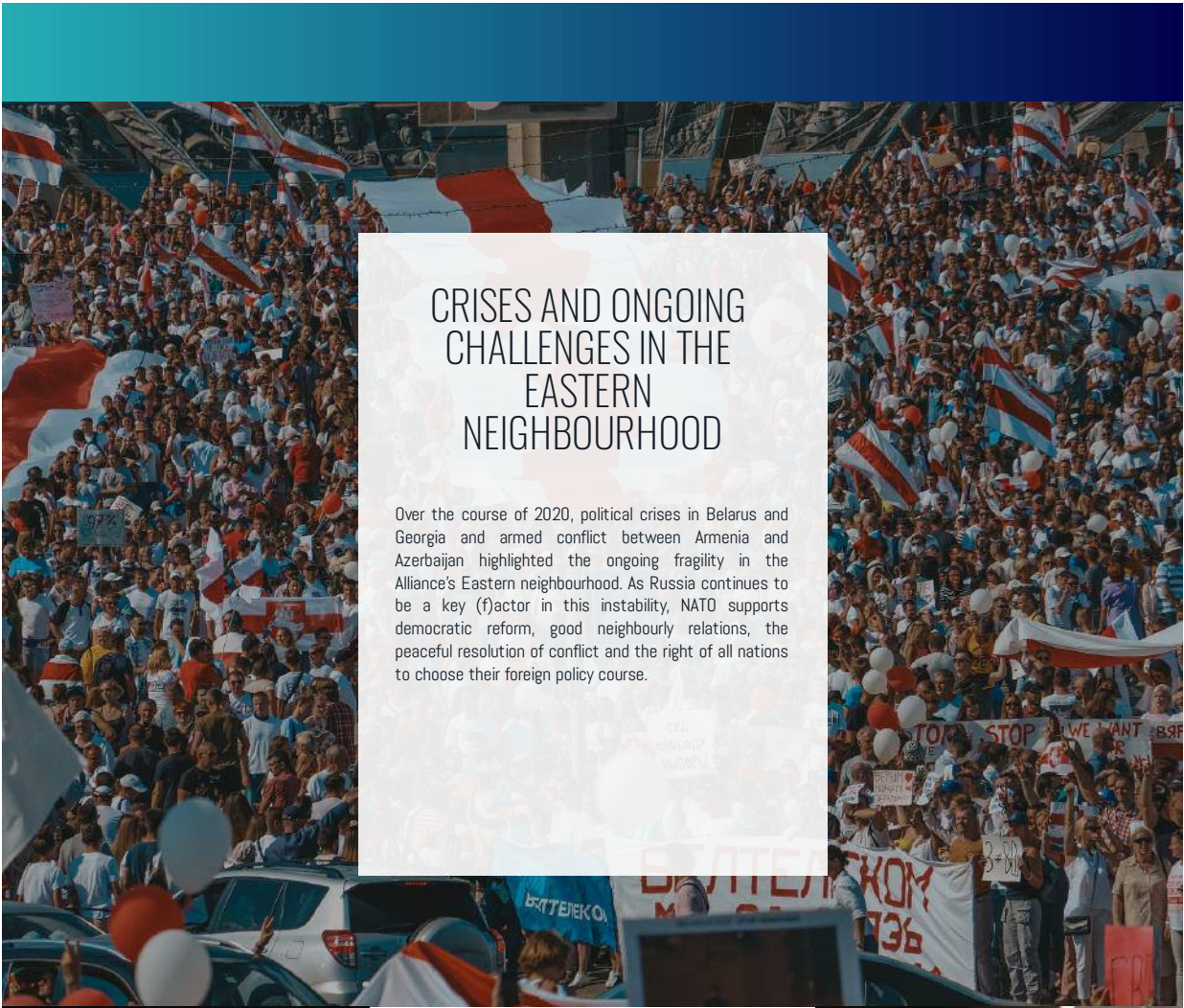
Looking ahead, there may be room for optimism after the extension of the New START Treaty, the sole remaining treaty limiting US and Russian strategic forces.

"Russia continues to forcibly and illegally occupy Crimea and portions of eastern Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. And Putin's military apparatus actively seeks to undermine or disrupt democratic elections and institutions throughout the trans-Atlantic alliance. We must and will meet these threats forcibly."

Gerald E. Connolly, NATO PA President







## CRISES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES IN THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

Over the course of 2020, political crises in Belarus and Georgia and armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan highlighted the ongoing fragility in the Alliance's Eastern neighbourhood. As Russia continues to be a key (f)actor in this instability, NATO supports democratic reform, good neighbourly relations, the peaceful resolution of conflict and the right of all nations to choose their foreign policy course.



### BELARUS IN CRISIS

The rigged presidential election in Belarus in August 2020 triggered the largest and longest protests in the country's recent history. Then NATO PA President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary) [condemned](#) the regime's repression, noting that "[g]ruesome violations of human rights have no place in the Europe of the 21st century". In a call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, he also [denounced](#) attempts to manufacture an alleged threat from NATO as a pretext to crack down on peaceful protest.

Opposition candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was forced into exile in Lithuania, from where she claimed victory – a claim supported by several Western governments. Then Vice-President [Dr Karl A. Lamers](#) met with Ms Tsikhanouskaya on a private visit to Vilnius in August.



At a [special webinar](#) in September, Assembly members examined the possible ways out of the crisis as well as Russia's role in support of the Belarusian regime. President Mesterhazy stressed that "this is the struggle of the Belarusian people. No one can fight it for them, and no one should interfere with their struggle."

The Assembly suspended its relations with Belarus in 1997 in light of democratic backsliding in that country. It has since continued to monitor the political situation in the country and maintained relations with representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society.



### TURMOIL IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

In the autumn of 2020, after months of escalation, Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged in a deadly armed confrontation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh which sent shockwaves across the region and redefined the regional balance of power. The Assembly President issued [statements](#) condemning the violence, and the Assembly reviewed developments in the region in two webinars in [October](#) and [November](#). While NATO has no role in the resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, both Armenia and Azerbaijan are NATO and NATO PA partners and, as such, committed to good neighbourly relations and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

[Georgia](#) began and ended 2020 with serious political crises. Throughout a troubled year, both the outgoing and the new President urged the majority and the opposition to work together to resolve their differences. Despite concerns about domestic political instability, the NATO PA continues to support Georgia's democracy and that country's aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration. It also closely monitors Russia's aggression and its occupation of the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia.



"Russia [...] apparently judges it better to have border lands paralysed by tension, frozen conflicts, and conflict than to live alongside autonomous, prosperous, and confident states enjoying good neighbourly relations."

Ausrine Armonaite (Lithuania)

### BLACK SEA SECURITY

In her report on [The Black Sea Region: Economic and Geopolitical Tensions](#), Ausrine Armonaite (Lithuania) condemns Russia's illegal occupation of Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions, its illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggression against Ukraine. The report highlights Russia's expanded military presence in the Black Sea as a way "to intimidate the countries of the region and to project power both in the Eastern Mediterranean and, at least indirectly, in the Levant".

Ms Armonaite calls on Allied governments to maintain sanctions on Russia. "NATO needs to reinforce deterrence in the region to protect allied littoral states" and to "enhance support for key partners like Georgia and Ukraine which, in turn, need to remain focused on genuine democratic reform", she stresses.

## EXPANDING NATO'S ASSISTANCE



Ms Armonaitė's call echoes that of [Lara Martinho](#) (Portugal) in her report on [NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building \(DCB\) Initiative](#) to expand cooperation with Georgia and include Ukraine in the DCB initiative. NATO should also continue to engage with the Republic of Moldova and other DCB countries, Ms Martinho writes. The programme assists select partners to make their defense institutions and armed forces stronger, more capable and resilient. Ms Martinho also calls for greater synergies between Allies' bilateral security assistance and NATO's DCB initiative as well as between NATO and the NATO PA's assistance. "The NATO PA has the capacity and the experience to work with NATO DCB recipient nations' parliaments as they seek to learn best practices about the oversight of their armed forces", she argues. "From procurement to recruitment to deployment, the democratic control of the armed forces is essential to define and defend national interests and to manage limited national resources as efficiently as possible."



## THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA: GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS AMID A PANDEMIC

The NATO PA maintains a strong emphasis on political, economic, and strategic developments in the Middle East and Africa, as the Euro-Atlantic community's security, prosperity, and stability are directly linked to developments in these regions.

### TOWARDS MORE AND DEEPER PARTNERSHIPS

With the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, NATO has long standing, effective frameworks for cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa. However, Assembly lawmakers agree that NATO should go further.

In the Assembly's [NATO 2030 declaration](#), they urge NATO to enhance its tool box and broaden the network of partners, including institutions such as the African Union, the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Notably, the Assembly calls for strengthened "support to stability and defence and related security capacity building in the partner countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and in the sub-Saharan area [...] and stand ready to support selected partners upon request".

## A CHANGING GULF REGION

In 2020, the Assembly's work had a strong focus on the dynamic changes underway in the Gulf region.

[Ahmet Yildiz](#) (Turkey) penned a report on [Security and Political Dynamics in the Gulf](#). He examines the region's fault lines, notably the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran; the implications of Iran's aggressive interventions in the region; the contentious rivalry between Qatar and other Gulf states; and the ongoing wars in Yemen and Syria.



In another in-depth report, [Faik Oztrak](#) (Turkey) focuses on [The Gulf Crisis and Global Energy Markets](#). Global energy developments, including precipitously falling oil and gas revenues and renewable energy trends, will have lasting impacts on the region, Mr Oztrak stresses. He also assesses how non-energy related developments interact with regional economic and political developments.



Both reports provide an initial analysis of the highly consequential reconciliation between several Gulf Monarchies and Israel.

Mr Yildiz notes that the dialogue between NATO and Gulf countries has improved significantly in recent years. He calls for further steps, but stresses that "NATO's involvement in the Gulf region must be carefully calibrated, given the regional sensitivities and divergencies." He also underlines that Allies cannot overlook human rights problems requiring strong international reactions, notably the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Mr Oztrak likewise urges a more proactive approach. In particular, he suggests that "Europe and the United States should work together to lower tensions in the Gulf".



#### CHALLENGES IN THE SAHEL REGION

In recent years, the Assembly has increased its attention to the worrying security situation in the highly fragile Sahel region.

In 2020, a report by [Ahmet Conkar](#) (Turkey) explores the [Development and Security Challenges in the Sahel Region](#). Social and political tensions in the Sahel have increased manifold because of, inter alia, economic, political, and social fragility, climate change, terrorism, mass migration, and the global pandemic. Indeed, the Sahel faces “a perfect storm in which insecurity and poverty become mutually reinforcing”, Mr Conkar writes.

These developments pose daunting security challenges not only for the Sahel but also for the whole Mediterranean region. “It is up to the countries of the Sahel to restore the bond of trust with their populations,” he writes, but “NATO itself should not shy away from looking closer at this regional hot spot and explore ways how to support international efforts in the Sahel in close consultation and cooperation with the countries in the region.”



#### A FOCUS ON LIBYA

In 2020, Libya continued to pose a unique set of security challenges to the broader Mediterranean region and even became a source of tension among Allies.

Throughout, then President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary) encouraged open and frank dialogue on these issues, issuing a [statement](#) on the situation in Libya and NATO's role. Notably, a meeting on 8 July provided an opportunity for members to exchange views on the situation in Libya and NATO's role in support of the UN-led process, UN arms embargo, and the Berlin process.



#### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

While much of the Middle East and North Africa initially managed to avoid large-scale COVID-19 outbreaks, the pandemic has since gripped the region.

As [Gilbert Roger](#) (France) writes in his report on [The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Middle East and North Africa Region](#), by late summer, "an epidemiological crisis had struck many of the countries of the region and the outlook has worsened both on the medical and economic fronts." Hit by a pandemic-driven global recession, national economies have been upended, with important implications for regional stability, he writes. Mr Roger warns "This is not simply a humanitarian challenge; it poses a genuine risk to social and political stability."

"The [Covid-19] crisis has hit a more economically and politically fragile region: weakened by economic stagnation, unstable energy prices, wars, civil unrest, the influx of refugees and displaced persons and the growing challenges of climate change. The MENA region is therefore highly vulnerable."

Gilbert Roger (France)





For several years now, NATO PA lawmakers have warned about the growing speed of technological change and the need for the Alliance to retain its military edge and lead efforts to regulate the military uses of new technologies. As NATO looks to 2030 and adapts to an increasingly competitive international environment, leading the technological race becomes even more urgent.

Photo credit: Courtesy of NATO

### THE CHALLENGE OF COMPETITION, DISRUPTION AND ACCESSIBILITY



In her report on [Defence Innovation](#), Canadian lawmaker [Leona Allesley](#) issues the stark warning that "NATO's technological edge is eroding rapidly while peer competitors augment their defence innovation efforts".



French lawmaker [Cedric Perrin](#) highlights certain Russian advances in his report on [Russian Military Modernisation: Challenges Ahead for NATO Allies](#). Thus, Moscow's electronic warfare capabilities surpass some Allied capabilities. "Russia's power to disrupt the existing global order is growing," Perrin warns, adding that Moscow "will continue to use its newfound power to try to reshape the international system to suit Russian interests." He outlines how Russia seeks to graft modern technology and methods on legacy structures; to fit US/Western military tools within Russia's military concept; and to develop asymmetric means to counter capabilities Russia cannot match.



At the same time, "the Allies should prepare for an increasingly assertive, if not aggressive, China – in terms of economic and military power, as well as technological leadership and cultural reach" warns now [President Gerald E. Connolly](#). His report on [The Rise of China: Implications for Global and Euro-Atlantic Security](#) alerts that "China's unrelenting rise has threatened to upend the geopolitical landscape of the twenty-first century".





Both Moscow and Beijing are investing heavily in new, potentially transformative technologies. Former Congresswoman Susan Davis (United States) argues in her report [Hypersonic Weapons: A Technological Challenge for Allied Nations and NATO](#) that the Alliance “cannot afford to ignore the hypersonic progress of Russia, China, and other nations” because “[h]ypersonic weapons could, if unmatched, provide an adversary with the means to coerce NATO Allies and partners in times of crisis.” Ms Davis stresses that, while NATO does not want to engage in a new arms race, it needs to evaluate the implications of this new weapon type for NATO’s deterrence and defence posture.



Leveraging new technologies has become essential. In his report [Urban Warfare](#), Philippe Michel-Kleisbauer notes that “it is indispensable that the Allies promote the development of new technologies that improve situational awareness and command and control” in the increasingly important urban theatre. Robotics, autonomous weapons and augmented or virtual reality can improve force protection and combat effectiveness and ensure protection of civilians, he argued.



A key challenge is the wide accessibility of new technologies. “The innovation landscape is now very different from the time when the Alliance was founded”, writes Ms Alleslev. She warns that “the easy availability of commercial and dual-use technology allows malignant non-state actors, including terrorist and extremist militant groups, to rapidly weaponise these technologies.”

“Our adversaries are increasingly flexible and agile, leveraging their technological assets to generate chaos, destruction and disruption within NATO’s ranks [...]. Cutting defence spending during this pivotal period would be a severe mistake.”

Leona Alleslev (Canada)



## INVESTING IN NATO'S EDGE: UNITY, RESOURCES AND COOPERATION

In their recommendations on [NATO 2030](#), NATO parliamentarians urge Allied leaders “to step up investment and Allied collaboration in defence science, technology, research and development to maintain NATO’s scientific and technological edge, especially in emerging and disruptive technologies and new domains of warfare, consistent with Allies’ international obligations”.

“The good news is that NATO nations are, on aggregate, second-to-none in research and technology” affirms Ms Alleslev. “NATO Allies need new and better ways to leverage the creative potential of their research institutes, technology companies, and scientists”, she urges. Assembly rapporteurs generally agree that NATO’s Science and Technology Organization (STO) can help foster advances in the Alliance.

Assembly members also agree on making unity their first line of defence to meet old and new challenges and protect the very values and institutions Allies hold most dear.

Investing in capabilities is another key priority. The resolutions, which Ms Alleslev and Mr Perrin authored, as well as the Assembly’s declaration on NATO 2030, stress the need for NATO Allies to maintain, and even surpass, the current commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence, of which 20% should be dedicated to major equipment investments. “Through continued investment into the Alliance’s modern armed forces, Allies will present a common credible defensive front capable of maintaining the Alliance’s leading edge in defence and deterrence,” states Mr Perrin, adding that “financial pressures stemming from the COVID-19 crisis should not weaken commitments [...] at this time of heightened international tension”.

Mr Michel-Kleisbauer also urges Allies to find common approaches to ethical and legal issues related to the military applications of AI and autonomous systems. That could lead to the adoption of internationally binding standards and help prevent proliferation.

On this and other aspects of technology, Allies can benefit from enhancing cooperation with key partners, as the visit of the Sub-Committee on Technological Trends and Security to [Sweden](#) highlighted.



A photograph of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly building, a large modern glass and steel structure. In the foreground, numerous national flags of NATO member states are flying on tall poles. The sky is clear and blue. A dark grey semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

## NATO'S OPEN DOOR POLICY: CELEBRATING MILESTONES, CONFRONTING CHALLENGES

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly remains steadfast in its commitment to the Alliance's long-standing Open Door policy. In 2020, NATO and the Assembly celebrated a number of milestones. However, NATO aspirants continued to face internal and external challenges, including Russian occupation of parts of their territories and outside meddling undermining their democracies.

The Assembly's [NATO 2030 declaration](#) urges Allies "to reaffirm their commitment to NATO's Open Door policy [...], to support the Euro-Atlantic integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine, and to help strengthen their resilience against foreign interference."

Photo courtesy of NATO

NATO



## NORTH MACEDONIA: NATO'S 30th MEMBER

In March, the Republic of North Macedonia became the 30th member of NATO and the NATO PA. [Addressing its parliament](#) in February after the historic vote to ratify the North Atlantic Treaty, then President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary) stressed that "You have truly earned your place through determination and active commitment to Euro-Atlantic security. [...] Your 29 friends and Allies will stand by you and have your back no matter what."

"It is clear the people in the Western Balkans look to the Euro-Atlantic institutions for their future [...] It is equally clear that it is [...] in the common interest of NATO and the EU, to anchor the Western Balkans firmly into our Euro-Atlantic community of nations."  
Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary)

Photo courtesy of the Parliament of North Macedonia



## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Invited to join NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress has remained deadlocked ever since.

In his report [Key Challenges to Maintaining Peace and Security in the Western Balkans](#), [Jean-Charles Larssonneur](#) (France) examines the Euro-Atlantic engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO's commitment to long-term peace and stability in the country. As the country must pursue further reforms, Mr Larssonneur suggests "it is time for the international community to work with the three constituent peoples of [Bosnia and Herzegovina] to help the country get out of the political impasse that results from the current constitution."

In November, Allied legislators also held an online [Rose-Roth](#) webinar to discuss progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans. Much of the discussion focused on overcoming the political stalemate in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



## UKRAINE

In June 2020, Ukraine lifted its Euro-Atlantic integration process to a new level by becoming one of NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partners. President Zelenskyy strongly [welcomed](#) the decision and noted that "Ukraine will now be able to further develop the interoperability of its armed forces with those of NATO."

The [Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council](#) (UNIC), the Assembly's dedicated forum for cooperation with Ukraine, met in Brussels in [January](#) and online in [July](#). Members took stock of NATO-Ukraine relations and reaffirmed the Assembly's support for Ukraine and its Euro Atlantic aspirations. In January, the Assembly also organised a training programme for the new Ukrainian parliamentary delegation on defence and security issues.

In her report [The Black Sea Region: Economic and Geo-Political Tensions](#), Ausrinė Armonaitė (Lithuania) also calls on NATO to enhance support for Ukraine which, in turn, must remain focused on genuine democratic and market reforms.

In 2020, the Assembly and the Ukrainian delegation had also looked forward to holding the NATO PA's spring session in Kyiv. However, the COVID-19 pandemic [prevented](#) this. Instead, the NATO PA will gather in Kyiv in 2022 to hold its first-ever session in the country.



## GEORGIA Georgia began and ended 2020 in serious political crises.

In March, after months of negotiations, the government and opposition in Georgia came together in a political agreement paving the way for important parliamentary elections in the autumn. In a [statement](#), then President Mesterhazy urged all political factions to "build upon this agreement to strengthen confidence, reduce polarisation, and bolster the Georgian people's trust in their democracy."

International observers, including a NATO PA delegation, issued a mixed [assessment](#) of the first round of elections in October. Speaking the day following the election, Assembly Vice President [Osman Askin Bak](#) (Turkey) noted that "We observed a competitive election in which fundamental freedoms were generally upheld and most procedures were followed. It was, however, far from flawless."

Ahead of the second round, then President of the Assembly Attila Mesterhazy [called](#) on the Georgian authorities "to investigate and address all incidents in a rigorous, transparent, and fair manner" but also pointed out "that any complaints regarding the administration of the elections should be settled through the relevant existing mechanisms."

The elections nevertheless opened a new crisis as main opposition parties refused to recognise the results. In November, during an online [Rose-Roth webinar on the South Caucasus](#), Assembly President [Gerald E. Connolly](#), (United States) stressed that overcoming the political impasse in Georgia "is crucial for Georgia's democratic future and for its Euro-Atlantic integration. And this can only be achieved by creating the conditions for dialogue and trust between majority and opposition."

In her [Black Sea report](#), Ms Armonaitė also called for enhanced support for Georgia while the country pursues further reforms.

Photo courtesy of the OSCEPA





## INFORMING ABOUT NATO IN AN AGE OF DISINFORMATION

A majority of citizens in NATO member states remains poorly informed about the Alliance. The growing dissemination of disinformation and propaganda, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, compounds the problem. This, in turn, directly affects public support for NATO. To overcome this challenge, the Alliance needs to boost efforts to better inform the public about its role in safeguarding the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. The NATO PA's members serve as vital links between NATO and the citizens of its member countries. It has long been committed to informing citizens about NATO's vital role.

The Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security (CDS) leads the Assembly's efforts on information and communication about NATO. It undertook a number of activities on this topic in 2020.



Between 2017 and 2019, under the leadership of former Assembly President Prof. h.c. [Dr. Karl A. Lamers](#) (Germany) and in cooperation with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, an Assembly Working Group on Education and Communication about NATO developed recommendations and suggested activities through which the NATO PA and its members could help enhance national communication and education efforts.

Through his Peace-Foundation, Dr Lamers invited students to submit essays on how NATO and its member states can develop a coherent strategy towards China. The three winners of the Dr Karl A. Lamers Peace Prize were announced at the NATO PA Annual Session.

In a report on [Enhancing Information and Education about NATO](#), [Angel Tilvar](#) (Romania) welcomed the innovative steps taken by NATO, the NATO PA, individual member states and partner countries to better educate and inform the public about the Alliance. At the same time, "much remains to be done today to better inform and educate the general public about NATO's crucial role [...] and, thus, ensure support for the organisation", he points out.

Disinformation and propaganda have proliferated during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Communication and information efforts play a critical role in ensuring that these hostile, inaccurate, and often dangerous narratives are debunked using facts grounded in truth," Mr Tilvar writes. "As such, they foster trust in Allied and partner governments and in NATO and contribute to the Alliance's response to this crisis."

"The aim of disinformation campaigns is to sow doubt among citizens and erode their faith in our democratic institutions and liberal values. Countering this pernicious threat requires better cooperation, education, and communication."

Angel Tilvar (Romania)



In a report on [The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Civil Dimension of Security](#), Assembly Vice-President [Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam](#) (France) emphasises that "the increased diffusion of disinformation and conspiracy theories during the pandemic poses a genuine threat to the Allies and to all democracies". To better control the informational narrative, she suggests that "NATO should continue building its response capacity to the pernicious threat of disinformation in the context of the pandemic and thereafter".



At a time of major geopolitical shifts, explaining NATO's ongoing relevance and fundamental role is even more important. In its [recommendations on NATO 2030](#), the Assembly thus called on Allied governments to seize this opportunity to "engage the Alliance's publics" and "to increase public awareness and understanding of NATO, to reach out to new generations of Europeans and North Americans, and to help build grassroots solidarity among Allied societies".

Photo courtesy of NATO

Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in reaching out to the public, communicating about the Alliance, and countering disinformation aimed against it. Throughout the year, members of the Assembly contributed to informing their constituents and, in particular, the youth about NATO's role and missions.

At a November event co-organised with the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association, then NATO PA President [Attila Mesterhazy](#) (Hungary) engaged with the next generation of Euro Atlantic leaders. They exchanged views and ideas about the key issues facing the Alliance today and in the future, including the importance of transatlantic relations, strategic competition with Russia, and China's rise.





## WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY: ACHIEVEMENT AND CHALLENGES IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

In October 2020, the world celebrated the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This historic milestone put women, for the first time, at the centre of peace and security policies. Through its adoption, nations recognised the specific impact of conflicts on women and acknowledged their essential role in ensuring sustainable peace.

The Assembly has long been a steadfast champion of the resolution's core principle that women and men are equal partners in the pursuit of peace and security. Its members have played a significant role in advocating for and advancing the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.



In 2020 again, they demonstrated their continuous commitment to this central tenet. In her report [Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda](#), [Ulla Schmidt](#) (Germany) welcomes the considerable progress achieved in the past 20 years in furthering gender equality and women's rights in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. However, she also underscores that "more efforts are needed to further the implementation of the WPS agenda". Indeed, "Fully translating existing policy frameworks and mechanisms into further concrete actions remains challenging", she adds.

In a [resolution](#) authored by Ms Schmidt, the Assembly reaffirmed that "the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 and the WPS agenda, and the advancement of gender equality more broadly, should constitute constant guiding principles in the development and execution of all policies and activities in the area of peace and security". This resolution, as well as the Assembly's [declaration on NATO 2030](#), call on Allied governments and parliaments, as well as NATO institutions, to take concrete steps to fully implement their WPS-related commitments.

"The implementation of Resolution 1325 – and more broadly the WPS agenda – should not be only at the top of the international community's agenda when the anniversary of its adoption is celebrated, but rather be a constant preoccupation for policymakers in all aspects of their work."

Ulla Schmidt (Germany)



In a [resolution](#) presented by Leona Alleslev (Canada) on defence innovation, Assembly parliamentarians express their concerns with regard to the under-representation of women in the science and technology fields. The resolution underlines that "encouraging the participation of women is likely to bring new ideas and perspectives to research, development and implementation".



In 2017, the Assembly revised its Rules of Procedure to further mainstream gender into its activities and "strongly encourage [delegations] to seek gender diversity". The NATO PA Secretary General produces a progress report on this matter every year. In 2020, the third [Review of the Assembly's Consideration of Gender](#) finds that gender-related issues were consistently mainstreamed into the Assembly's activities, reports, and resolutions during the 2019 review period. It notes that five delegations had a woman as their leader as of February 2020, compared with only two in March 2016. However, the review also highlights that women remain under-represented in national delegations, accounting for only 15% of all members. Similarly, the proportion of female elected officers in the Assembly decreased from 25% in 2018 to 19% in 2019. In a significant development, in November 2020, the Assembly elected a [new Bureau](#) including a majority of women for the first time.

To highlight the progress made and remaining challenges in the implementation of the WPS Agenda, the Assembly hosted a dedicated webinar in October 2020 which brought together 91 lawmakers from across the Alliance and partner parliaments. They had [in-depth discussions](#) with Clare Hutchinson, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for WPS, Vice-Admiral Louise Dedichen, NATO Military Representative for Norway, and Cristina Finch from the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) – a long-standing partner of the Assembly. In discussions on NATO's accomplishments, Ms Hutchinson stressed that "countries where women are empowered are vastly more secure". Co-chairing the event with the Assembly's then President Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary), Ulla Schmidt emphasised that "Allied parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in this effort".



To mark the anniversary of Resolution 1325, the NATO PA published a series of [interviews](#) with Mr Mesterhazy, Ms Schmidt, and Ms Hutchinson. Sharing his perspective on the challenges ahead, then President Mesterhazy stresses that "commitments are not sufficient if they are not followed by tangible results".



## THE ASSEMBLY'S PARTNERSHIP WITH SWITZERLAND:

### SUPPORTING DIALOGUE, OUTREACH AND ASSISTANCE

The NATO PA and the Swiss government enjoy a long-standing cooperative relationship aimed at supporting the Assembly's outreach and partnership activities. Since its inception in 2000, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) has played a central part in this cooperation.

Through their joint programmes, the Assembly and its Swiss partners have provided tools, training and expert assistance to implement and refine parliamentary oversight of national security sector institutions.

This diverse toolbox for dialogue, outreach and assistance, involving parliamentarians from NATO and partner countries, offers a valuable complement to NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme.

In 2020, cooperation continued apace despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ROSE-ROTH WEBINARS ON THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Two [Rose-Roth](#) seminars were planned for 2020 but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Instead, the Assembly, supported by the Swiss government, held online webinars focused on developments in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus – two traditional priority areas for the Rose-Roth programme.

### THE WESTERN BALKANS

Ahead of a pivotal EU meeting on enlargement, over 130 participants from Allied and partner nations discussed progress on Euro-Atlantic integration in the [Western Balkans](#) with Olivér Várhelyi, the European Union Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, James Appathurai, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, and Ambassador Philippe Brandt, Head of the Swiss Mission to NATO.





## THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

In the second webinar, over 30 lawmakers from 16 Allied and partner nations explored political and security developments in the [South Caucasus](#). The discussions with renowned experts and Ambassador Brandt came at a timely moment, shortly after parliamentary elections in Georgia, which led to a serious political crisis, and the ceasefire agreement signed between Armenia and Azerbaijan following large-scale military hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.



"Switzerland has always actively supported the Rose-Roth Programme as a unique platform of dialogue for enhancing the cooperation between the parliaments of NATO Member and Partner States as well as for the promotion of our common democratic values."

Ambassador Philippe Brandt, Head of the Swiss Mission to NATO

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ROSE-ROTH SEMINARS

## PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE



Authors:  
Dr. Gražvydas Jasutis  
Dr. Teodora Fucior  
Dr. Mindia Vashakmadze



## PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Over the years, DCAF and the NATO PA have published a number of “best practice” surveys on how parliaments in NATO members and partners address issues specific to the defence and security sector.

In 2020, the Assembly and DCAF worked together to put a spotlight on parliamentary oversight of military intelligence. In a joint survey, NATO PA delegations provided answers to a series of questions regarding the role and functions of their parliaments and parliamentary committees on this crucial, yet understudied matter.

The survey served as a key resource for the analysis presented in the joint publication [Parliamentary Oversight of Military Intelligence](#).

Ahead of its publication, 49 lawmakers from 24 Allied and partner nations, together with DCAF parliamentary staff and renowned experts, explored ways to strengthen parliamentary oversight over military intelligence agencies in a webinar on 15 December.



“DCAF and the NPA hope that this study [Parliamentary Oversight of Military Intelligence] will support efforts to advance oversight over military intelligence, and by extension, ensure that military intelligence agencies work in accordance with the principles of the rule of law and respect for human rights.”

Ambassador Thomas Guerber, DCAF Director



“The one constant throughout NATO’s history and the key to making this the most successful alliance in history has been an internal commitment to shared, common values. The principle of democratic control of the armed forces and the security sector is a crucial part of these values.”

NATO PA President Gerald E. Connolly

## WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY

Ahead of the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on [Women, Peace and Security](#) (WPS), the Assembly held a special webinar on the progress made and remaining challenges. DCAF's head of the Gender and Security Division, Cristina Finch, joined Clare Hutchinson, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for WPS, and Vice-Admiral Louise Dedichen, Norway's Military Representative to NATO, during an event bringing together 91 participants from 14 Allied and partner nations and the European Parliament.



"Parliaments can and must play a critical role in actively monitoring their nation's implementation of the WPS agenda, including the development and implementation of National Action Plans."

Cristina Finch, Head of the Gender and Security Division, DCAF

## PARLIAMENTARY TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR UKRAINE

As one of its last physical meetings before the pandemic hit, the Assembly organised a [parliamentary training programme](#) in Brussels for members of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, with the support of the Swiss government. Such programmes aim to provide experience and expertise on security issues particularly to members of parliament serving in the Foreign Affairs and Defence and Security Committees.



**RECOMMANDATIONS DE POLITIQUE  
GÉNÉRALE DE L'ASSEMBLÉE  
PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN – 2019**

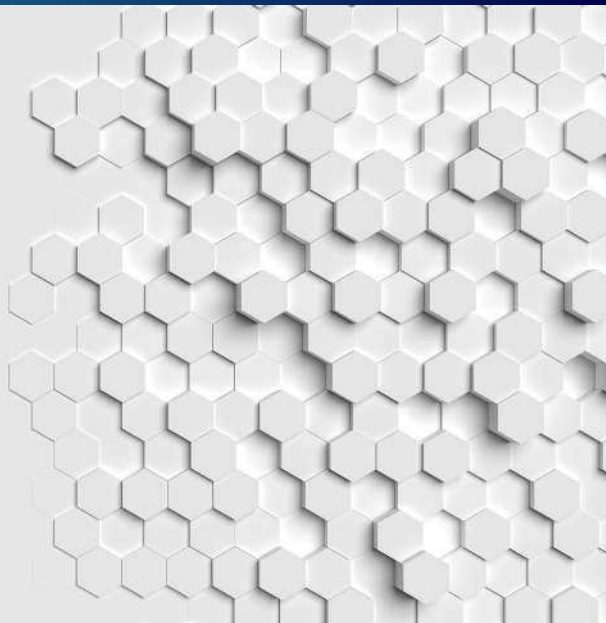


## NATO PA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2020, DCAF also published a compilation of the [Assembly's policy recommendations](#) from the previous year to showcase the political debate on key topics within the Alliance.



# THE ASSEMBLY'S BUDGET AND FINANCES 2019-2020



## FUNDING SOURCES

Most of the Assembly's funding comes from contributions from the parliaments or governments of member nations. National contributions are determined according to the same budget key used for the NATO civil budget (see the repartition below). The Assembly also receives a subsidy from NATO.

Over the past 20 years, special contributions have been made at various points by the United States Agency for International Development, DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, the governments of Switzerland, Norway, Luxembourg, and Denmark, as well as NATO to support the Assembly's Rose-Roth outreach seminars and training programmes.

## THE ASSEMBLY'S BUDGET

The annual budget presented below is used to cover the International Secretariat's operating costs. National delegations are responsible for funding the participation of their members in Assembly activities.

The Assembly's budget amounted to EUR 3,994,781.00 in 2019 and EUR 4,045,125.00 in 2020. Execution of the budget led to a surplus of EUR 4,605.97 at the end of 2019.

### CONTRIBUTIONS 2019 FROM MEMBER COUNTRIES

Based on the NATO Civil budget key

MEMBER COUNTRIES	KEY%	CONTRIBUTION	MEMBER COUNTRIES	KEY%	CONTRIBUTION
Albania	0.0841%	€ 3,315	Lithuania	0.2379%	€ 9,378
Belgium	1.9506%	€ 76,896	Luxembourg	0.1569%	€ 6,185
Bulgaria	0.3390%	€ 13,364	Montenegro	0.0270%	€ 1,066
Canada	6.3763%	€ 251,365	Netherlands	3.1985%	€ 126,091
Croatia	0.2776%	€ 10,943	Norway	1.6472%	€ 64,936
Czech Republic	0.9788%	€ 38,586	Poland	2.7683%	€ 109,131
Denmark	1.2157%	€ 47,925	Portugal	0.9725%	€ 38,338
Estonia	0.1157%	€ 4,561	Romania	1.1384%	€ 44,878
France	10.4986%	€ 413,874	Slovakia	0.4784%	€ 18,859
Germany	14.7638%	€ 582,016	Slovenia	0.2109%	€ 8,314
Greece	0.9801%	€ 38,637	Spain	5.5534%	€ 218,925
Hungary	0.7041%	€ 27,757	Turkey	4.3819%	€ 172,742
Iceland	0.0597%	€ 2,353	United Kingdom	10.4581%	€ 412,277
Italy	8.1400%	€ 320,894	United States	22.1387%	€ 872,748
Latvia	0.1478%	€ 5,827	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>€ 3,942,181</b>

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AT 31ST DECEMBER 2019

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	2019		2019
<b>ANNUAL BUDGET</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Contributions		Chapter 1 - Personnel Costs	€ 2,976,770.18
Contributions from Member Countries	€ 3,942,181.00	Chapter 2 - Operational Costs	€ 357,455.61
NATO Subsidy	€ 52,600.00	Chapter 3 - Sessions	€ 363,358.24
		Chapter 4 - Missions, Seminars, External Relations	€ 326,760.70
	€ 3,994,781.00		€ 4,026,544.73
<b>Financed by Provisions and Prior Year Surplus</b>			
Update of the budget	€ 0.00		
Use of provisions	€ 22,000.00		
<b>Funding Outreach Programme</b>			
Swiss Ministry of Defence	€ 15,000.00		
	€ 37,000.00		
<b>TOTAL BUDGET FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>€ 4,031,781.00</b>		
<b>Other Income</b>			
Investment Income	€ 1,204.58		
Interest on Term Deposits	€ 691.95		
Gains (Losses) on Exchange	€ -2,579.31		
Other Income	€ 52.48		
	€ -630.30		
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>€ 4,031,781.00</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>€ 4,026,544.73</b>
		<b>EXCESS OF RECEIPTS OVER EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>€ 4,605.97</b>

## FUNDING AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## BUDGETARY PROCESS AND AUDIT

The Assembly's Treasurer, a parliamentarian who is an elected officer of the Assembly and who ensures that the budget is consistent with the Assembly's political objectives, is responsible for drafting the Assembly's budget. The Treasurer submits the draft budget to the Standing Committee and the full Assembly for consideration and adoption. The Secretary General implements the budget under the oversight of the Treasurer.

The Assembly's finances are audited by the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN). In its audit, IBAN considers whether, in accordance with the Financial Reporting Framework adopted by the Assembly's Standing Committee, the information in the financial statements fairly presents the financial year-end position, the financial performance, and cash flows for the year as well as whether accounts are properly supported by underlying records and source documentation. In addition, IBAN also considers whether transactions are in compliance with budgetary authorisations and applicable NATO PA regulations.

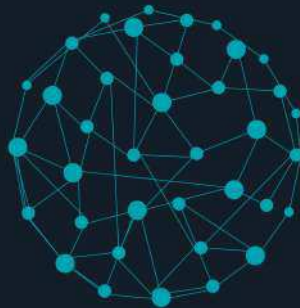
Because the audit takes place in the spring of the following year, the figures below are the audited financial statements for 2019. The 2020 audited finances will be made public on the NATO PA website after adoption by the Plenary Assembly.



## THE ASSEMBLY AT A GLANCE



269 MEMBERS



30 MEMBER STATES



92 ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND PARTNERS

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE NATO PA'S WORK



### FIVE MOST VIEWED 2020 WEBINARS

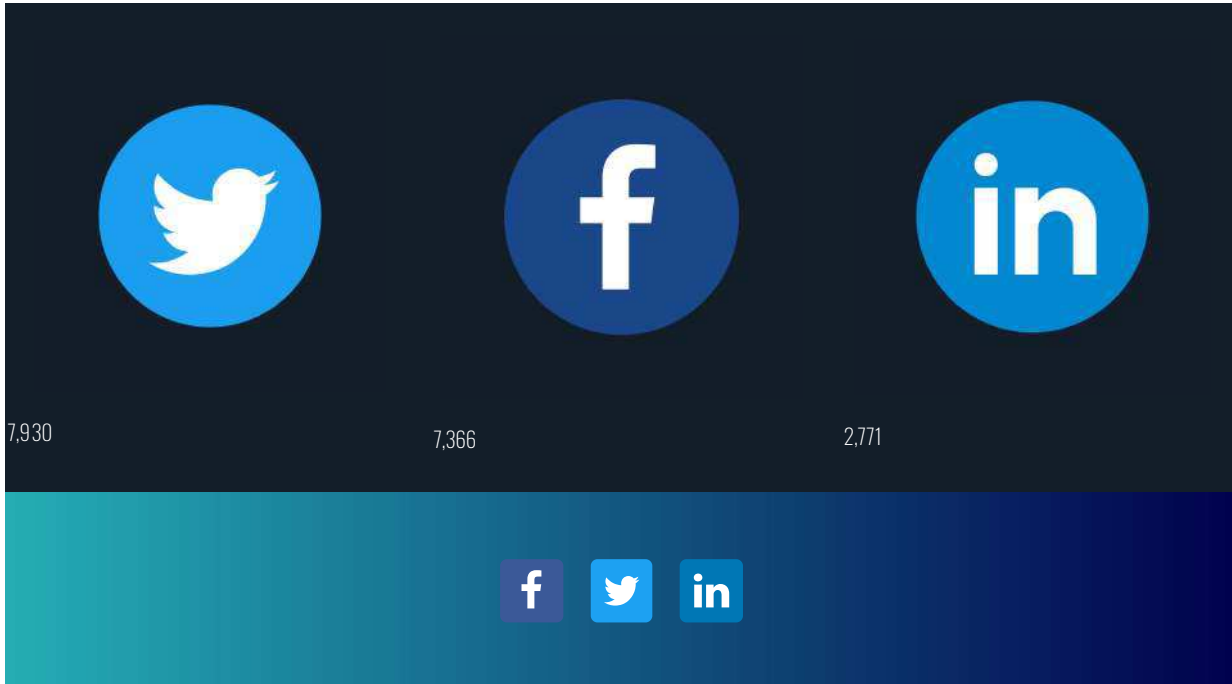
1. [NATO's Response to the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
2. [Political Upheaval in Belarus](#)
3. [Crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh](#)
4. [Rose-Roth webinar on the South Caucasus](#)
5. [Parliamentary Oversight Over Military Intelligence](#)

### FIVE MOST POPULAR WITH MEMBERS & PARTNERS

1. [NATO's Response to the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
2. [Crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh](#)
3. [Parliamentary Oversight Over Military Intelligence](#)
4. [Webinar with NATO Deputy Secretary Mircea General Geoana](#)
5. [Rose-Roth webinar on Euro-Atlantic Integration in the Western Balkans](#)

2020 WEBINARS PLAYLIST

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## GERRY CONNOLLY

Satatum voloration pos volorem aut inuscip santur sa endignis etus, corruptatia aut fugiatis aut occullu ptatem que num exped quia volorerestia nectem a sequia et autatis. Nostiam es egi aleris noxim me vernica vividi menius simissolis etiquam.



## RUXANDRA POPA

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*"The best way to predict the future is to create it."*



Satatum voloration pos volorem aut inuscip santur sa endignis etus, corruptatia aut fugiatis aut occullu ptatem que Nostiam es egi aleris noxim me vernica vividi menius in etiquam. Nostiam es fugiatis aut occullu me vernica patquodiu in simissollis noxim me vernica etiquam.

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**IBLY LEADERSHIP**



Satatum voloration pos volorem aut inuscip santur sa endignis etus, corruptatia aut fugiatis aut occullu ptatem que Nostiam es egi aleris noxim me vernica vividi menius in etiquam noxim me vernica patquodiu in me vernica etiquam.

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*Litatiorem atus  
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cerrum nobit  
quaestibus*

Satatum voloration pos volorem aut inuscip santur sa  
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### Funding-Sources

Most of the Assembly's funding comes from contributions from the parliaments or governments of member nations. National contributions are determined according to the same budget key used for the NATO civil budget (see the repartition below). The Assembly also receives a subsidy from NATO.

Over the past 20 years, special contributions have been made at various points by the United States Agency for International Development, DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, the governments of Switzerland, Norway, Luxembourg, and Denmark, as well as NATO to support the Assembly's Rose-Roth outreach seminars and training programmes.



The annual budget presented here is used to cover the International Secretariat's operating costs. National delegations are responsible for funding the participation of their members in Assembly activities.

The Assembly's budget amounted to EUR 3,994,781.00 in 2019 and EUR 4,045,125.00 in 2020. Execution of the budget led to a surplus of EUR 4,605.97 at the end of 2019.

#### Budgetary-Process-and-Audit

The Assembly's Treasurer, a parliamentarian who is an elected officer of the Assembly and who ensures that the budget is consistent with the Assembly's political objectives, is responsible for drafting the Assembly's budget. The Treasurer submits the draft budget to the Standing Committee and the full Assembly for consideration and adoption. The Secretary General implements the budget under the oversight of the Treasurer.

The Assembly's finances are audited by the International Board of Auditors for NATO (IBAN). In its audit, IBAN considers whether, in accordance with the Financial Reporting Framework adopted by the Assembly's Standing Committee, the information in the financial statements fairly presents the financial year-end position, the financial performance, and cash flows for the year as well as whether accounts are properly supported by underlying records and source documentation. In addition, IBAN also considers whether transactions are in compliance with budgetary authorisations and applicable NATO PA regulations.

Because the audit takes place in the spring of the following year, the figures below are the audited financial statements for 2019. The 2020 audited finances will be made public on the NATO PA website after adoption by the Plenary Assembly.

#### Understanding-the multifaceted impact of the covid-19 crisis

Bitatio atus blabo  
plate cer nobit qua

Et voloris nossi  
nonsectaquid es perore  
sequi corum re dolum  
audigen dendel intiam  
fugiaspe earciamus.



2019 crisis

Litatioem atus  
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nobit quaestibus

“Do or do not;  
there is no try.”



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Nostiam es  
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## Winter - Spring

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- The February visit to Washington, DC by then President Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary) is the first opportunity to follow up on the London Leaders' meeting.

WINTER/SPRING

Alliance values, NATO adaptation, and role of parliamentary diplomacy in the spotlight, as President Mesterhazy wraps up his first visit to Washington D.C. [Read more](#)



Photo courtesy of the OSCE PA and the Helsinki Commission

WINTER/SPRING

The power and purpose of parliamentary diplomacy  
Inter-Parliamentary Initiatives and the U.S. Contribution  
Helsinki Commission Hearing



Video courtesy of the Helsinki Commission

- The Assembly's annual joint meeting with the North Atlantic Council and top NATO officials in February offers an early opportunity for an exchange of views on the main issues on the Alliance's agenda in 2020.

WINTER/SPRING

In Brussels, North American and European legislators affirm enduring commitment to transatlantic link.

[Read more](#)



Photo courtesy of NATO (top right), Brussels, February 2020

SUMMER

## Summer

- In July, the Assembly President discusses priorities for NATO 2030 and the Assembly's role with the NATO Secretary General.
- Between July and September, the Assembly conducts a survey of its delegations' priorities, which provided the groundwork for the Assembly's input.

SUMMER

NATO PA President reviews Alliance priorities with NATO Secretary General. [Read more](#)



Photo courtesy of NATO (Right: Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg) Brussels, July 2020

## Autumn

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- In October, the Standing Committee – the Assembly's governing body – meets with the Group of Experts appointed by the NATO Secretary General to assist him in this reflection process. [Read more](#)
- Later in October, Assembly members engage in a wide ranging exchange of views with the NATO Deputy Secretary General on NATO 2030.

NATO2030: Lawmakers discuss partnerships, disruptive technologies, and resilience with NATO Deputy Secretary General Geoana.

[Read more](#)



Photo courtesy of NATO, Brussels, February 2020

AUTUMN

- At its online annual session in November, the Assembly also discusses NATO 2030 and other key priorities directly with the NATO Secretary General.

AUTUMN

NATO PA backs process to forge a stronger, more united Alliance. [Read more](#)



Photo courtesy of NATO (right), Brussels, November 2020

AUTUMN

- At the annual session, the Assembly adopts a declaration, put forward by the then President, laying out its recommendations for NATO 2030. [Read more](#)

AUTUMN

66th Annual Session, held online for the first time on 18-23 November 2020



[Click here to view the Annual Session playlist](#)

## AUTUMN

- At the end of November, the newly elected Assembly President, Gerald E. Connolly (United States) and his predecessor Mr Mesterhazy lay out their common views on NATO 2030 during an event organised by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF).

## AUTUMN

Readying the Alliance for tomorrow's challenges: NATO PA leaders discuss NATO 2030 with NATO Assistant Secretary General at GMF public event. [Read more](#)



Video courtesy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels, November 2020

### Key Assembly proposals for a transatlantic strategy on China

- improve information-sharing and joint analysis on China and China-Russia relations;
- adjust NATO's strategic documents, including its Strategic Concept, accordingly;
- enhance resilience to Chinese disinformation and cyber activities;
- enhance mechanisms to assess risks linked to third-party investments in strategic sectors;
- examine the possibilities for a closer dialogue with China on military transparency, freedom of navigation and disaster response, inter alia;
- establish a NATO-certified Centre of Excellence on the Indo-Pacific;
- closer coordination with the EU and like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific.



## ROSE-ROTH SEMINARS

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A central part of the Assembly's work is the Rose-Roth Programme of partnership and cooperation - initially with Central and Eastern European countries but subsequently throughout the Euro-Atlantic region. This programme seeks to assist partner countries, mainly in the Balkans and the South Caucasus, through a challenging transition process, which involves the implementation of difficult political and economic reforms.

The Rose-Roth Programme involves a series of seminars focused on regional and topical security issues and training programmes for parliamentary staff and members of Parliament. The aim is to enhance parliamentary awareness, build contacts and provide experience and expertise. Particular attention is paid to promoting the principle of the democratic control of armed forces and to the development of effective parliamentary oversight of defence and the military.



Congressmen Charlie Rose and Bill Roth