



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS' EXTRAORDINARY ONLINE MEETING

7 January 2022

Policy Brief

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NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS EXTRAORDINARY ONLINE MEETING,
7 JANUARY 2022:
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Agenda

- Russia: military build-up in and around Ukraine and implications for European security; upcoming NATO-Russia Council meeting.

Additional issue

- Ministers also discussed unrest in Kazakhstan

Background

- The NATO-Ukraine Council meets on Monday 10 January.
- The NATO-Russia Council will meet on Wednesday 12 January, for the first time since July 2019.
- The NRC meeting is part of a series of dialogues involving Russia during the week of 10 January, starting with the bilateral US-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue in Geneva on Monday 10 January and concluding with the OSCE Permanent Council meeting on Thursday 13 January.

I. RUSSIA: MILITARY BUILD-UP IN AND AROUND UKRAINE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY; UPCOMING NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL MEETING

A. RUSSIA'S MILITARY BUILD-UP

- Ministers discussed **Russia's unprovoked and unjustified concentration of tens of thousands of combat-ready forces and military materiel** (incl. heavy capabilities and electronic warfare) **in and around Ukraine**. This is the second surge in 2021. In the spring, Moscow engaged in the largest massing of forces since 2014, leaving most of them in place.
- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg regretted that despite repeated calls, Russia has not taken steps to de-escalate. **Its build-up continues and** at the same time, **Russia has increased its harsh rhetoric**.
- **"Russia's aggressive actions seriously undermine the security order in Europe"**, the Secretary General stressed. He warned that in light of the capabilities being deployed, the rhetoric and Russia's track record, **"the risk of conflict is real"**.

B. DEFENDING NATO ALLIES

- **Allies reaffirmed their commitment to a dual-track approach to Russia**, i.e. maintaining strong defence and deterrence and remaining open for meaningful dialogue.
- The NATO Secretary General made clear that **Allies' priority was to deter any further Russian aggression and prevent conflict**.
- Russia must not misunderstand or miscalculate when it comes to **NATO's resolve to defend and protect all Allies**. **NATO will always take the necessary steps**, including by strengthening collective defence as necessary. Since 2014, NATO already implemented the largest reinforcement of its collective defence in a generation and Allies were constantly assessing the need to adjust their posture.
- The NATO Secretary General **firmly rejected any one-sided demands by Russia aiming to restrict NATO's ability to defend and protect all Allies**. "We cannot end

up in a situation where we have kind of second class NATO members, where NATO as an Alliance is not allowed to protect them in the same way as we protect other the Allies”, he stated.

C. SUPPORTING UKRAINE

- Mr Stoltenberg made clear that even if Ukraine is not covered by the Alliance’s Article 5 collective defence clause, NATO and individual **Allies support Ukraine and Ukraine’s right to defend itself**, incl. through **political and practical support**, e.g. capacity building, training, provision of equipment and advice. Through this support, **NATO is “increasing the threshold for Russia to use force against Ukraine”**.
- The NATO Secretary General reiterated Allies’ position that **“any further aggression against Ukraine would have significant consequences and carry a heavy price for Russia”**, including economic, financial sanctions and political sanctions.
- **NATO will not compromise on core principles of European security**, including the fundamental right of “all countries, regardless of their size or who their neighbours are, (...) to decide on their own path and their alliances.” – a principle which Russia itself has signed on to.
- Mr Stoltenberg also challenged Russia’s effort to paint Ukraine as the culprit: “The whole idea that Ukraine is a threat to Russia is to put the whole thing upside down”, he stated.
- The **NATO-Ukraine Commission is meeting on Monday 10 January**. In his press conference ahead of the meeting, the NATO Secretary General reiterated the key messages from the Ministers’ meeting on Friday and welcomed the opportunity for Allies to exchange assessments and coordinate with Ukraine ahead of the NRC meeting. He also reaffirmed the Bucharest Summit decisions regarding Ukraine’s membership prospects. Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine Olga Stefanishyna thanked Allies for supporting the principle that nothing should be discussed about Ukraine without Ukraine. Ukraine’s sovereign rights were not negotiable She condemned Russia’s latest escalation as an attempt by Moscow to shift attention away from its ongoing aggression and lack of progress in the Normandy format. Ukraine was committed to dialogue and diplomacy to prevent military escalation. It was also committed to democratic transformation as the best response to Russia’s aggressive actions.

D. UPCOMING NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL MEETING

- The **NATO-Russia Council (NRC) will meet on 12 January** for the first time in two years and a half – a hiatus due to Russia’s unwillingness to meet.
- The NRC meeting is part of a **series of engagements involving Russia**: it will be preceded by the US-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue in Geneva on Monday 10 January and followed by the OSCE Permanent Council meeting on Thursday 13 January.
- The NATO Secretary General welcomed Russia’s willingness to reengage in dialogue, noting that dialogue was even more important when tensions are high.
- He noted that the series of engagements scheduled for the week of 10 January “are an opportunity for Russia to demonstrate that it is serious about dialogue and diplomacy”.
- The NATO Secretary General reiterated the **key pillars of NATO’s approach to dialogue with Russia**:
 - NATO is committed to listen, engage in dialogue in good faith and to make every effort to find a diplomatic way forward. But Russia must also address NATO’s long-standing concerns.

- Dialogue must be based on the core principles of European security.
- No dialogue on European security can take place without Europe.
- Dialogue with Russia takes place in conjunction with consultations with Ukraine.
- NATO also consults with other key partners, including the European Union, Sweden, Finland, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.
- Asked about the possible outcome of the 12 January meeting, the NATO Secretary General noted that **Allies hoped this would be the start of a process** and that possible areas for further discussion included arms control, risk reduction and increased transparency of military activities.
- The NATO Secretary General will attend the EU Defence Ministerial Meeting in Brest immediately after the NRC.
- The NATO Secretary General made clear that **Allies are prepared should dialogue fail** and should Russia opt for further aggression against Ukraine.

II. UNREST IN KAZAKHSTAN

- NATO Ministers discussed the then-ongoing violent unrest and repression in Kazakhstan.
- NATO Allies and NATO are following the situation very closely and are concerned.
- They regret the loss of lives and urge an end to violence and respect for human rights, including the right of peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression.