

"Strengthening European security"

Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Warsaw

President Komorowski,
Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be back in Warsaw. When I visited Warsaw one year ago a document was handed over to me. A document prepared by students, scholars and security experts; a document that outlined some key principles for a new NATO Strategic Concept. I was very pleased to receive that document, and I can confirm that it was of great inspiration as I drafted the new Strategic Concept of NATO. And I am particularly pleased that NATO Member States supported the key principle, that the core function of NATO was, is, and will remain the territorial defence of our populations. This is the core function of NATO. But I am also pleased that NATO Member States put territorial defence in the context of our new and evolving security environment.

That we all realise that territorial defence in today's world also takes an improved capacity to deal with emerging security challenges like missile attacks, cyber attacks, terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, just to mention some of the new threats and challenges.

We need to adapt our alliance to effectively protect our populations against these new threats. That is also part of modern territorial defence.

And around this core principle all member states were - and are - united.

In that respect I would like to express my strong appreciation for the support from not only Poland but also the other countries present here today.

Eventually all NATO Allies backed these core principles. And I think we have elaborated a very strong foundation and a very strong framework for further development of what is the world's most successful defence alliance.

Just over two months ago, we saw a wave of change start to sweep through North Africa and the Middle East. In several countries across the region, people have taken to the streets to peacefully protest against autocratic regimes. We have all admired their courage as they called for freedom, democracy, and reform.

We welcome the fresh start in Tunisia and Egypt. We are outraged to see that in Libya, the Gaddafi regime continues to defy worldwide condemnation, with systematic attacks against its own people and a brutal disregard for fundamental rights.

But when I look at Central and Eastern Europe today, it gives me tremendous optimism for what I hope can be achieved in North Africa and the Middle East. The will of the people, not violence, will prevail. Because just over two decades ago, a wave of change also swept through this region. Your countries and your people made history. You broke free – you

broke down borders – and you broke down a system that had denied you freedom and fundamental human rights.

Europe's momentous transformation shows that long-term security and stability cannot be delivered through diktat and despotism – it can only be achieved through freedom, democracy and respect for human rights.

It was your continuing commitment to these values that drew Poland, together with Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the NATO Alliance. That was twelve years ago. They were later followed by other countries from Central and Eastern Europe. So I should like to thank the Krakow Institute of Strategic Studies, the Warsaw University Institute of International Relations, and the Euro-Atlantic Association, for having organised today's conference – an anniversary conference in a way – and for having invited me to participate. There is, indeed, much to celebrate.

But I have not only come here to celebrate. I have also come here to say thank you. I want to publicly thank Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and all the other Allies in this region for the tremendous contributions you have made – and continue to make -- to NATO. And not just the invaluable military contributions to NATO-led operations. But also the significant political contributions you have made to all aspects of NATO's agenda. Most recently, that political engagement helped to develop the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, agreed in Lisbon last November.

Today, I will focus on three of the priorities in that Concept, and explain how they will help us to strengthen European security. But first, let me point out that we have a very firm foundation on which to build. It includes three constant principles that have underpinned our Alliance since its very beginning over six decades ago.

The first of these is the principle of Collective Defence. Collective Defence was, is, and always will be a core task for the Alliance. And there should be no doubt, in any of our member nations, about that shared commitment.

Second, the principle of the transatlantic link. Twice in the last century, North America helped to bring peace to Europe. History shows us that Europe is safer and more stable when it works together with North America. It is a relationship that has brought significant benefits not just for Europe, but for North America too. However, it is a relationship that must not be taken for granted. It must be nurtured. It requires investment in terms of time and political will, but also in financial terms. The current development is a matter of concern, because we are witnessing a widening gap between the United States and Europe. Ten years ago, the US share of total Alliance defence expenditure was just under 50 %. Now it is closer to 75 %.

If this gap continues to grow, it may impede the interoperability of our forces, impair the effectiveness of our Alliance and imperil the influence of Europe.

The transatlantic bond is the cornerstone of European security. It should be strengthened and sustained.

The third principle is the commitment to shared values and to Euro-Atlantic integration. Today, Europe is no longer divided into East and West, or Old and New. At the same time, our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace is not yet complete. Several European nations

still aspire to join the European Union and our Alliance. NATO's door remains firmly open to those European democracies that wish to join, and are able to accept the obligations and responsibilities of membership.

These three principles lie at the core of our Alliance. And they provide a very solid base for all that we do. But we can – and must – do more if we are to be as successful in the future as we were in the past.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me give you three priorities for strengthening our security here in Europe.

We must strengthen our defence. We must strengthen our cooperation with the European Union. And we must strengthen our partnerships with other nations.

First - stronger defence. The dramatic situation in Libya is a crisis on our doorstep that none of us predicted. That is why NATO must be ready, and united, to respond to the full spectrum of security challenges with collective defence or crisis management – and with the full range of capabilities.

Poland's armed forces, like those of many other Allied nations, are going through a phase of reform. All these national reform efforts are taking place against the background of a financial crisis. But if we are not careful, we will end up with weaker defence rather than leaner defence – and then the financial crisis would quickly become a security crisis as well. So we – nations and NATO as whole -- need to work our way through this crisis together – by finding ways to work better together.

Whenever I raise this issue, the immediate reaction is “yes, but”. Yes, we understand the need for modern means to cope with modern threats. But we can't afford them in the current financial climate. That is why I have proposed a new approach to strengthening our defence – what I call Smart Defence.

Smart Defence is not a mechanism. It is not a bureaucratic process. It is not a straight-jacket on nations. Far from it. Smart Defence is about ensuring greater security, for less money, by working together more flexibly.

It's about making it easier for nations to develop or acquire capabilities – alone, together as Allies, or even involving non-NATO countries. It's about using NATO to identify priorities, to coordinate, to share, and to actively seek opportunities for multinational defence cooperation wherever possible. All frameworks are good, as long as they deliver real capabilities that will help make Europe stronger and more secure.

Recently, France and the UK took steps towards closer cooperation to mutually develop critical defence capabilities. In the Weimar Triangle, Poland, France and Germany have undertaken to develop a joint battle group by 2014. And others in Central and Eastern Europe are exploring options for pooling and sharing so that groups of nations can do better with less. These are all welcome developments. They show what can be achieved when nations work together. And that, increasingly, Europeans realise that multinational cooperation is no longer a choice – but a necessity.

This leads me to my second priority, – strengthening NATO–European Union cooperation.

In July, Poland will assume, for the first time, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union – taking over from Hungary. I have fond memories of the time Denmark held the Presidency and I was Prime Minister. Because it was at the European Union Summit in Copenhagen in December 2002 that we completed negotiations for Poland's entry into the European Union in 2004, along with nine other countries, followed by Romania and Bulgaria at a later stage.

Poland's EU Presidency will give your country the opportunity to shape the EU's agenda for a crucial six-month period. And I very much hope that Poland will place strengthening the NATO-European Union relationship high on its list of priorities. The two institutions share 21 members – so it makes perfect sense that they should look to enhance their political consultations; work more closely on developing common capabilities; and coordinate their activity, be it military or civilian, in those places where they are operating alongside each other, such as in Afghanistan, in Kosovo, or in the Indian Ocean.

These are reasons enough for NATO and the EU to work more closely together. But in the current economic crisis, such institutional cooperation is not a question of “nice to have”. It's “need to have” in order to avoid duplication, improve efficiency and economize resources.

My third priority is strengthening our partnerships with non-NATO countries, and in particular with Russia.

We know that Euro-Atlantic security will not be complete if Russia feels excluded. We want Russia as a partner rather than as an outsider. Yes, we do have differences – including on matters of principle such as Georgia. But we also share many interests, ranging from Afghanistan and missile defence to counter-terrorism and disaster relief.

At the Summit in Lisbon, NATO and Russia agreed to deepen and broaden our cooperation, especially on missile defence. Our work is still at an early stage, but I am convinced that working with Russia on such a project can herald a new era of cooperation. And with the entry into force of the new START Treaty, I hope we will be able to achieve even more together. For example by reducing sub-strategic nuclear weapons, and agreeing on a strengthened conventional arms control that will further improve transparency, security and stability on our continent.

But none of this will be possible without you. We need all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to continue showing the same courage and the same sense of history as twenty years ago. Poland, our host today, has already set a great example, by initiating a genuine dialogue and cooperation with Russia. Differences remain, of course – at least for the time being. But starting to make peace with the past is often the best way of moving forward into the future. And I expect Russia to do the same.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have given you my three priorities for strengthening European security. Stronger defence. Stronger NATO-European Union cooperation. And stronger NATO partnerships, especially with Russia.

Poland has already played a major role in strengthening European security since it joined the Alliance 12 years ago. And as I look to your Presidency of the Council of the European Union

in the second half of this year, I believe you can play an even more important role. You have the opportunity to help bring NATO and the European Union closer together. And you can also help to bring Russia closer to Europe.

Such steps would surely strengthen our shared security in Europe.

Thank you.

Dziękuję bardzo!

Source – NATO Homepage: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_71564.htm