North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Remarks

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence Committee
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JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much and thank you David for inviting me once again to address these committees.

I have done it before and actually last time I did it was just before the Warsaw Summit of NATO in July last year and now I'm coming back and I'm addressing you just before - actually only three weeks before NATO leaders, Heads of State and government will meet again in Brussels this time on the 25th of May.

And I'm pleased to be able to tell you that since I met you last time we have made a lot of progress when it comes to cooperation NATO and the European Union. First of all, I signed a declaration together with President Juncker and President Tusk in Warsaw in July and later on together with the High Representative Federica Mogherini we agreed in December on forty-two concrete measures on how to strengthen NATO E.U. cooperation. And we are strengthening the NATO E.U. cooperation based on the fact that of course not all E.U. members are member of NATO and not all NATO members are member of the European Union. So, we fully respect the autonomy of the decision-making processes in the European Union and in NATO.

We respect the differences between the two organizations but we at the same time understand that we have a lot to gain from working closely together, because even though not all members are the same we know that more than ninety percent of the people living in an E.U. country they live in a NATO country and we share the same security environments, we share the same instability to the South with ISIL, with turmoil, with violence in the wider Middle East region, in North Africa and we also share the same challenges coming from a more assertive Russia. So, therefore there are strong reasons for strengthening the E.U. NATO cooperation and that's exactly what we have done with the joint declaration and with the forty-two measures we now are implementing. And those forty-two measures are about how we can work more closely on cyber defense, on responding to hybrid threats, on operations, on exercises and in many other ways.

And the good thing is that we are really making progress and High Representative Mogherini will report to the E.U. Council in June. I will report to the NATO Council in June on the progress we are making and then after summer we will look into what more we can do to further build and strengthen our cooperation. The good thing is that we are not only

implementing concrete measures but we have also been able to change the culture, so now actually cooperation is the norm - is the normal thing in the relationship between NATO and E.U. Before it was more the exception.

So, I'm really pleased to start by telling you that we are making progress, we have lifted NATO E.U. cooperation to a new level. That was also my message to Ministers of Defense … the European … or the E.U. Ministers of Defense in Malta when I met them there last week and I told them that we have very visible concrete examples of how we are working together in the Mediterranean just off the coast of Malta. The NATO maritime security operation Sea Guardian provides direct support to the E.U. Operation Sophia dealing with the challenges we see in the Central Mediterranean. Last week we had four NATO ships, three NATO maritime patrol aircrafts and some other assets helping and supporting the E.U. Operation Sophia. We also work together in the Aegean Sea with NATO naval presence in the Aegean Sea helping to implement NATO … no sorry the E.U. Turkey Agreement stemming the flow of illegal migrants.

So, this is not only in words but also in deeds that we have been able to really strengthen NATO E.U. cooperation and I look forward to take that agenda forward. Then as I said we will have a NATO meeting, meeting of Heads of State and government on the 25th of May here in Brussels. That will be a short meeting but it will be a very important meeting because it will be the first meeting where the new U.S. President comes to Europe, comes to NATO and it will be also the first meeting of, with the new French President. So, I'm absolutely certain that the NATO meeting on the 25th of May will be a very strong … will send a very strong message about Trans-Atlantic unity, Trans-Atlantic resolve just by convening the meeting and having all the twenty-eight leaders together. Actually, it will be twenty-nine because we will also have Montenegro present because Montenegro is now in the process of becoming the twenty ninth member of the Alliance.

All Parliaments will have ratified that within a few weeks. The two main issues that will be addressed at the NATO meeting are both very relevant for E.U. and for of course all E.U. members regardless of whether they are member of NATO or not. Because we are going to address the Trans-Atlantic bond, burden sharing and the fight against terrorism I will just briefly go through those two main issues; I will not go through the whole NATO agenda. I will leave many issues to you to have time to ask me questions afterwards. So, I will not cover all issues but I will briefly then share with you some thoughts on these two main issues for the meeting in May. First on the fight against terrorism, terrorism is something which is a real threat. We have seen terrorist attacks in our capitals across Europe, in United States, in E.U. countries, in NATO countries and we see that these are attacks on our open free democratic societies and we have to fight back in many different ways and we need a wide range of measures in the fight against terrorism. It's about political measures, diplomatic measures, economic measures, domestic politics, international politics and many of the measures are civilian and have nothing to do with NATO and military capabilities.

But some of the measures we need in the fight against terrorism are military and we need also military element in the fight against terrorism. As we have seen in Afghanistan for many years but also as we now see in the fight against Daesh or ISIL in countries like Iraq and Syria. And NATO has played and is still playing a key role in that part of the fight against terrorism which is about the military means. We have played a key role in Afghanistan for many, many years. Our military presence in Afghanistan is our biggest mission ever and all NATO allies have participated, but also many non-NATO allies have participated; because they are partners they have participated in the Resolute Support Mission and before that the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. And many of the countries that are not member of NATO but member of E.U. have been in Afghanistan. So, this has been a joint struggle and we still have to be in Afghanistan.

We have ended our combat operations in Afghanistan but we continue to train, assist and advise the Afghan forces to enable them to stabilize their own country, enable them to fight terrorism themselves. And I think that if there was one lesson we have learned both from Afghanistan but also in a different way - but it is the same lesson we have learned from Bosnia-Herzegovina and from Kosovo - is that in the long run it's much better if we are able to train local forces to stabilize their own country, to fight terrorism themselves instead of NATO deploying big number of combat troops in big combat operations. So, building local capacity, training local forces is the key when it comes to NATO's contribution to fighting terrorism. We have to make decisions on our presence in Afghanistan in the coming years and we have to make decisions on how to step up our efforts to fight terrorism including when it comes to providing support for the Counter-ISIL Coalition, the U.S. led Counter-ISIL Coalition in Syria and Iraq.

NATO provides some support already. We train Iraqi officers but I think that NATO has untapped potential for doing much more, not to engage in combat operations but to engage in something which is actually even more demanding and will take more time and that is to enable the Iraqis, other countries in the region to stabilize their own country and to fight terrorism themselves.

So, we are working with many countries in the region to help them fight terrorism and stabilize the region. The other main issue and then this is on the agenda for the meeting on the 25th of May and it's also an area where there is a potential for more cooperation NATO E.U. You have many tools, NATO has many tools, none of us has all the tools in the tool kit but together we really are a formidable force when NATO and the European Union works together.

The other main issue at the Summit, no we don't call it a Summit, the meeting of Heads of State and government in May is the Trans-Atlantic bond and burden sharing. And as you know NATO made a decision in Wales in September 2014 to stop the cuts in defense spending, to gradually increase and then to move towards spending two percent of GDP on defense within a decade. And the good news is that we have really turned a corner because

after many, many years of decline, reduction in defense spending across Europe and Canada in 2015, the first year after we made the pledge for the first time we saw a small increase - at least we didn't see a decrease - we saw a small increase in defense spending total Europe and Canada.

In 2016 the second year after we made the pledge we saw actually a significant increase in defense spending across Europe and Canada, 3.8 percent in real terms, close to or around $10 billion U.S. dollars and that is a significant increase. So, we are moving in the right direction, we still have a long way to go. The picture is still very mixed, some allies are very close to 2 percent, some allies have already reached 2 percent while other allies still have a very long way to go, but we have started to move in the right direction and I welcome that very much. Burden sharing for us is not only about spending, burden sharing is also about capabilities. We need more modern capabilities to be able to provide strong and credible deterrence.

The reason to be strong is not to provoke a conflict but to prevent a conflict and we need also contributions to NATO missions and operations, some of them working closely with the European Union. All of this will be addressed at the meeting of Heads of State and government in May. Part of burden sharing in, or the Trans-Atlantic burden sharing is also NATO E.U. cooperation and therefore I would like to once again underline that stronger European defense is something I welcome. Stronger European defense is good for the European Union, it's good for Europe and it's good for NATO.

As long as we make sure or the European Union makes sure that what the E.U. does is complementary to NATO, not competing with NATO, and that has been clearly committed from many, many European leaders that strengthening European defense is about more defense spending, it's about more exercises, it's about developing new capabilities, it's about more cooperation, but it's not about establishing a European army, it's not about establishing new command structures which are duplicating

NATO command structures and actually therefore I welcome what I see because I see a real effort by NATO and the European Union to work together, not compete and it would have been meaningless to have a competition between NATO and the European Union because as I said more than ninety percent of the people living in the European Union live in a NATO country so that would actually mean that we have to compete with ourselves and that's not a very good thing to do.

So, my message to you is that NATO is adapting, NATO is responding to a more demanding, challenging, dangerous security environment. We do that by implementing the biggest adaptation of the Alliance we have seen for many, many years but we do that not least by stepping up our cooperation with the European Union because we know that together we are stronger, together we are better able to respond to a more challenging international environment which we share regardless of whether we are the European Union or NATO.

Thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Thank you Jens Stoltenberg for your presentation. I would now like to first of all give the floor to the Chair of our Sub-Committee on Security and Defence Anna Fotyga and after that the Chair of the Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Ms. Eva Kaili.

ANNA FOTYGA (Chair, Sub-Committee on Security and Defence): Thank you Chair. Dear Secretary General thank you for coming and thank you for your constant will to engage in exchange of views with us. We really value your presence here, allow me to thank you on behalf of all the members of Security and Defence Sub-Committee of the European Parliament. I would like to start also by offering the expression of our grief and concern because of, of today's terrorist attack that happened in Kabul and that apparently was aimed at headquarters of the Resolute Support Mission in Kabul in which eight Afghani civilians perished as well as numerous military and civilian members of the mission wounded including three American soldiers. So our deepest sympathy to families. Yes we often mention the, the security issues here in Europe but we have also to remember that Middle East and broader Middle East, in particular Afghanistan, are places of, of huge violence and therefore the contribution of NATO forces as well as EU civilian mission that is deployed there are of great value. Actually I would like to pose my own question as well and asking you to elaborate on current situation in Afghanistan as well as necessary changes to mandate of, mandates of the mission in order to successfully cope with this. Allow me also to ask about your reflection and plans concerning the eastern flank of NATO. And thirdly during recent interparliamentary meetings focused on the security and foreign affairs that happened in Malta with presence of parliamentarians of all EU member states as well as considerable European parliament delegation led by Chair of [inaudible], we were able to follow Frederica Mogerini remarks on necessity to enhance our operations in the Mediterranean and in particular to try to go, really go after human traffickers. So those who benefit from smuggling of migrants to Europe. Could you please reflect on this as well and elaborate on possible enhanced cooperation between NATO and the EU in this respect. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Anna Fotyga and now Eva Kaili please.

EVA KAILI (Chair, Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly): Thank you. Dear Secretary General, dear colleagues on behalf of the European Parliament Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly I want also to welcome you in this meeting. I greatly appreciate your interest in the regular exchange of views with members of the European Parliament and in times of such turmoil on our continent and worldwide MEPs make a substantial contribution to parliamentary diplomacy and the role is indispensable in pursing interests and also presenting our values of our citizens in security and defence policy. As you have clearly underlined many times and also in your speech NATO and EU are both facing uncertainties, really complex, as never before maybe in our neighbourhood but also in global scale. We have the southern neighbourhood, especially in EU, in turmoil from Libya to Syria to Iraq. Instability in the Western Balkans and recently more instability I would say and also

new complex threats as hybrid warfare and cyber war. We have Russia's unpredictability, we have Turkey's rhetoric that is also an ally in our NATO alliance. We also have the Brexit which means that we will not have an ally in EU, as UK, but we will have UK in the NATO alliance. We also have migration flows and terrorism that face no borders. So these, these complex challenges need some joint answers of course and we need to enlarge our partnership so, to aim and ensure compatibility, developing joint capabilities and as you very well mentioned to avoid duplication where it's not necessary of actions and structures of course, to make the spending more effective. In this context I would like also to inform our colleagues here that we look forward to the June report on the implementation of the Warsaw Declaration on EU NATO Cooperation and the common set of 42 proposals. We will also try to participate more actively with proposals at the NATO PA in Georgia, so EU will table a text for the first time. So I think we try to have a more established relation and to cooperate better and as you suggested sometimes cooperation is now the norm and not the exception. I would like also to stress our role of parliamentarians in NATO and providing security for citizens by promoting Atlantic solidarity and as you said spending, increase our spending to make substantial impact on the positions that we take. I would just like to have like two, three questions of very short. One particular question is cyber defence. It's of our common concern, there are no borders there as there are no borders of terrorism so we need to exchange information. Under one of the seven objectives of our cooperation we expect to exchange concepts of integration of cyber defence. I would like to ask you if you could inform us of what progress can be reported here on this goal from a NATO perspective. Also the progress of exchange of information between the allies and if you expect any surprises also on the 25th of May. I think these would be my main questions for the time being and the rest we're going to discuss in Georgia. Thank you very much for being with us today.

MODERATOR: Alright thank you Anna Fotyga, thank you Eva Kaili. Colleagues we have exactly one hour's time, til half past four, we have in the moment around about 25 requests to speak. So first of all it's two minutes maximum and believe me I will be extremely strict. It's two minutes and two minutes is two minutes and two minutes is not two minutes and 15 seconds. The second point is as I agreed with Jens Stoltenberg, we will go through as many colleagues as possible, when he says give me a break, then we'll do a first break so he can actually answer some of your questions. By the way two minutes is maximum, there's no need to take two minute's time. We start with the EPP and the first speaker is Mikhail Gahler.

MIKHAIL GAHLER: Thank you very much and welcome again to our committee. One of the reasons why I am among those who propagate complementary but also autonomous military structures in the EU framework is the fact that one of our full NATO members, Turkey which was already referred to, which is not an EU member, has a veto right like all NATO members within NATO and that is why I think in order to escape that potentially we should be able as EU to act autonomously in case needed, especially when certain geographical sites where we deem it necessary to intervene and Turkey might not deem it, might provoke such a veto. Now the question is, have you already got any indications, I mean Turkey is developing the

way it does, very unfortunate, but does it have an impact on its behaviour in daily business in the headquarters? There's one thing, the other thing, we know already of many officers apparently who have asked for political asylum because they don't know what will be their fate once they return home. You as NATO can of course not grant that but is there activity with member states who are willing to host them or to accept them so that we can be sure that nobody goes from a NATO structure right into prison coming back? Last question and it's about this sometimes alleged, well parallel or double structures, looking at the missions that we have had at the Horn of Africa as EU and as NATO and what we've got in the Mediterranean now, Sophia and what NATO is doing, wouldn't it make sense to, prior to such engagement to agree that either one or the other would do it? Because indeed I could imagine that it would be more efficient to have it done by either one. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Two minutes exactly, wonderful. Knut Fleckenstein for the Socialists.

KNUT FLECKENSTEIN: [Speaking with interpreter]. Thank you Chair, General Secretary. I don't have a question. I wanted to underline two points though from our point of view. The first is the division of tasks. It's not, we don't want to be in competition with one another, what we want to do is to work as good partners with NATO. First of all on the basis of the new challenges that we're faced with we want to take on additional challenges as they arise. And secondly we want to do what we can to ensure that NATO member states work more efficiently, by working with us. What's particularly important to me is what you said in relation to burden sharing. I think that almost everybody here in the room realise that we need to do more than we have done so far. I think it's very important also that we focus on that, on those things that we can do in addition. And spending more money on the military is not sufficient. What we need to do is to be more efficient as well with what we have. There's no point having German aircraft for example that aren't able to fly, and so efficiency and also more money, more resources will be necessary. Final point with regard to burden sharing, we often like to say that we need to take into account what we do in the civilian area. So aid, that sort of thing, development aid and so forth and so for me 2 % is not an important thing to focus on. What we need to focus on is what we are doing.

[Inaudible]: Mr. Secretary General, I'm very pleased to hear that the kind of three D's of the past, duplication, decup and discrimination are no longer an issue and that the two organisations, the EU and NATO, can cooperate against the common threats from ISIS to a more assertive Russia. I'm also very pleased that Montenegro is about to join NATO. I'm relieved that the US President Trump no longer regards NATO as obsolete but I am concerned that he thinks is an honour to meet the DPRK President Kim Jong-un who is about to threaten nuclear war against Japan and the west. I'm proud that my country, Greece and Estonia have now surpassed the 2 % defence spending and I hope that others will follow. On the issue of Brexit the UK as has been pointed out will remain a major NATO member state post Brexit and in a recent paper I wrote I'm hoping that the UK will adopt the Norwegian model which you must be familiar with as a former Prime Minister and remain very plugged into CSDP and CFSP activities post our departure from the European Union. In fact in a

paper I wrote I have actually called for the UK to adopt a mirror equivalent to the Swedish Military Doctrine which as a non-NATO but EU member state has promised it would honour NATO's article five to protect its neighbours in the event of attack, even though it's not as it were a member of NATO. So I would favour the United Kingdom adopting a political declaration to honour articles 42.7 and 222 of the Lisbon Treaty even after its left the European Union so that the two organizations and the member states which are members of one and not the other and vice a versa can remain extremely good friends and close allies. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Charles. And now we come to Mrs. Valkmans (sp?) from the Liberal Alder group.

MRS VALKMANS: Thank you. [Speaking with interpreter]. Thank you Chair, I'm going to speak Dutch. Thanks for your presentation. I'm very happy that you said right at the outset that cooperation between the EU and NATO is the norm now rather than the exception which is what it was before and I think that's a very good thing to take stop of, it's something we support here in the EPP. I have a couple of points to make. One, when the new American President was elected the world was shocked by the statement that within Europe we wouldn't be able to count on America in NATO. But there doesn't seem to have been much evidence of that thankfully. I'd like to hear what you have to say with regard to the President's statements and how you're going to deal with that at the NATO summit. Second point, how are we going to deal with Russia? Russia remains a neighbour of Europe, we have difficult relations with Russia at the moment and so I'm wondering what the NATO strategy is with regard to the future and Russia? Thirdly, Turkey. Yesterday the European Parliament in [inaudible] we approved a report in which it says that the EU cannot join, Turkey cannot join the EU, but what's the future of Turkey within NATO? And final question, last but not least, the European citizenship question. The last euro barometer shows that the citizens regard security as being a priority and NATO has a role to fight, play in the fight against terrorism and I'd like to hear what you, how you see the EU's role in that with NATO?

MODERATOR: To Mrs. Lusing for [inaudible].

MRS. LUSING: [Speaking with interpreter] Thank you. My first question concerns the EU headquarters, the military will be called the military planning unit, that does not involve executive operations. Earlier many NATO countries and the EU were against such a headquarters and I have the impression that no longer seems to be the case and my question is are you of the opinion that the support would continue if plans were to emerge to extend the duties to military operations? I have one question concerning the common projects, there are 42 projects that are being planned, you spoke, can you hear me? There are 42 common EU NATO projects and you said that many of those concern the Mediterranean and you've talked, given us some examples, projects that we know about. My question is are there further projects and in what regions could we work together in a maritime environment? The next question is to what extent does cooperation between the EU

and NATO affect neutral countries of the EU such as Ireland? So if you, if you become more closely integrated with the EU how does that affect those neutral countries?

[Inaudible]: [Speaking with interpreter] Thank you, I'll speak Swedish. I'd like to ask two questions. The one has to do with the cooperation on migration in the Mediterranean. Because you can't stop migration with military means, that's impossible. So are we, are we going to try to do something about migration? I mean we're actually rescuing people in the Mediterranean, that's what we're doing and maybe that's not NATO's main task. But in any case I'd also like to ask a question about the 2 % goal. Of course Sweden is not a member of NATO so we don't have this 2 % goal but all the countries do. But the question is what do we get out of this 2 %? I think we have to look at what we get for them, not how much we put in the system. But as a colleague said there are a lot of plans but maybe we can't do much about them if we don't have enough stuff. So maybe we've just bought new equipment but we don't have the necessary quality for our defence. So what is best? That's the question. And we've talked about pooling and sharing and there are a lot of different projects that might even save money for European defence and for the defence systems of different member states rather than just escalating all the time. So it's not just quantity, the 2 %, but let's look at quality, it's quality we need in our defence not just quantity. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Nobody from the EFDD group has requested to, EFDD, you're not EFDD Mr. Shafhouser or have you changed your party again, I don't think so. So we now come to the ENF and the speaker, first speaker is Mr. Borgasio. Now I've been informed there's, there are some problems with the Italian booth. Mr. Borgasio you can speak in Italian and it will be translated but obviously you can't listen in Italian. So Mr. Borgasio, two minutes.

MR. BORGASIO: [Speaking with interpreter]. Thank you. Secretary General you said that there was a NATO priority about the need to block the irregular migrant flow and combat terrorism. I hope that this combat will be waged as well as properly and I'd like to ask, since you know the Mediterranean area well you will know that it's lately become a kind of highway or motorway for illegal migration and traffickers and over the last few weeks we've had very negative explanations coming out of the Italian judicial system, but they're saying that no NGOs have, or rather there are NGOs who are actually linked to these traffickers, they're using electronic interception devices. So that is a link and there's also therefore a link of terrorist infiltration. You should know that the departure of the majority of these illegal vessels depart from the Libyan coast which is totally controlled by Jihadi's. So it's very high time that NATO wages war on the, combat on these, these individuals and that's information coming from the public prosecutors office of Catania which is an independent authority.

MODERATOR: Mr. Borgasio, thank you for actually doing this in French. And now one more and then we've got a first round of all speakers, Mr. Eppidais for the [inaudible].

MR EPPIDAIS: [Speaking with interpreter]. Thank you very much chairman. Secretary General you said just now that NATO would like to have a very strong relationship, enhanced

relationship with the European Union, at the moment the members of the European Union, at the moment only Greece and Cyprus are facing a threat, a real threat from Turkey and you know that President Erdogan has recently threatened Cyprus and also Greece and this is concerning of course, the drilling for natural gas in the sea near these countries and has actually mentioned that this might be a [inaudible]. So it's very logical to think therefore that these countries, Cyprus and Greece, must have very high defence spending but what are the reasons behind all this? Why should these countries be threatened in this way? We have to have very strong defence on the part of NATO and the European Union. At this moment therefore what plans are in place to defend us from this kind of threat? What contingency plans exist in order to combat this particular threat? And what kind of enhancement should we have for our forces? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. So that was a first round. General Secretary it's up to you how long you may wish to answer, just a slight reminder there are a few other colleagues who would still like to speak but it's of course up to you.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much and thank you for all your questions. I will try to at least address the main issues but it may be that I'm not able to answer all the questions because we need also some time for further questions. But then first to Anna, thank you for expressing sympathy for those who lost their lives and those who lost their loved ones during the terrorist attack this morning in Kabul and it just underlines the difficult situation in Afghanistan and for me it just underlines the importance of NATO continuing to be there, not in the combat operation but by helping, training, assisting, advising the Afghans so they can deal with these kinds of terrorist attacks as they did this morning. There has so far not be any concrete proposals to change the mandate of the Resolute Support Mission. It's about train, assist and advise, not about combat operations. But we have to make decisions on the force levels and the duration of our presence later on this year - either in May or in June.

Then you also asked about fighting migration and that was also addressed by many of you so I'm actually now answering not only Anna but also others. Migration requires a response from nations and from many different international organizations. The UN, the UN High Commission for Refugees, the EU, individual nations and it's not for me to in a way answer on behalf of all those institutions and all those nations. What I can do is to say something about how NATO can contribute to helping the international community, EU and nations to cope with the migration and refugee crisis. And we have to remember that this is a humanitarian tragedy. Thousands have lost their lives and, and it reflects how difficult the living conditions are in many countries outside Europe. But NATO is helping partly by addressing the root causes. The reason why we are helping to stabilize Afghanistan, the reason why we are helping to right terrorism in Iraq, working with partners like Tunisia and Jordan is to help to stabilize the whole region and thereby also reducing the causes for the migrant and the refugee crisis. If we are able to create stability, peace, security, then there will also be less people fleeing their countries. Partly because less people have to flee from

violence, from war but also because stability, security, peace is a precondition for economic development. So even those who are not leaving their country because of war but, but who are leaving their country because of poverty, by addressing the root causes, by creating more peace and stability we also provide the ground for economic prosperity and thereby also addressing the causes for many people leaving their country. So I'm not saying that NATO is the answer but I'm saying that NATO is part of the answer and we are contributing in different ways and we are working together with the European Union on doing exactly that.

Then Ms. Kaili, I would like to say that I first of all very much appreciate the work you are doing in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Because the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is important for NATO. I have myself have been a parliamentarian for many years, since 1991, and I know the importance of parliaments. Because parliaments decide the laws, they decide the framework for security and defence policies and they decide the budgets. So there's no way we can have a strong adaptive defence and security policy without the support from parliaments and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is a link between the national parliaments and NATO. So I thank you so much for the work you are doing there.

Hybrid. Well we are working on hybrid together with the European Union. We are working on exercises which are going to be related to hybrid, we are addressing cyber defences which is related to hybrid and of course everything which is related to sharing information, improving situational awareness is also about addressing hybrid threats.

You asked me about whether I expect any surprises on the meeting of heads of state and government on the 25th of May. I don't expect any surprises but that's the problem with surprises is that we don't expect them. So I'm not able to tell whether there are going to be any surprises but hopefully we're going to plan the meeting in a way that there are no surprises. But you never know when you have 28 heads of state and government, they do as they want.

Then, Mikhail Gahler, NATO EU cooperation and the importance of NATO being able to act autonomously. Yes EU, I said it, EU but also NATO actually. No but, and of course we are two independent organizations, we have autonomous decision making procedures and we can make our own decisions but we are in a way also very much linked because we share the same neighbourhood, we share many of the same members and even those who are not member of both organizations they are partners or closely linked. I for instance, I come from Norway, we are not member of the European Union but we work very closely with the European Union. And Sweden, Finland, being not member of NATO, they are partners of NATO as is also Austria for instance. So, and Malta. So, so we are a big family, very closely interconnected, we need to respect autonomy and the, as I say the differences between the organizations but also how, how interlinked we are. Then I would just add because this is relevant for several of the questions asked is that, is that of course EU can do a lot and EU has many tools that NATO doesn't have. Diplomatic, economic and many other kinds of tools that we don't have. At the same time I think that when it comes to collective defence,

especially of those European NATO allies that are member of NATO, there is no way you can expect that EU can take over that responsibility and that has also been expressed by the European Union actually, that the European defence cooperation is not going to replace the collective defence which NATO is providing to European NATO allies. And just to illustrate is that especially when UK leaves the European Union then actually around 80 % of NATO defence investments will be non-EU. Three of the four battalions we are deploying in the eastern part of the alliance to provide deterrence will be led by non-EU allies in Europe, meaning Canada, United States and UK. And, and you can have different views about NATO allies but, but it's obvious that for instance Turkey is important for the security of Europe being a big ally on the southern flank. Albania is part of our efforts to stabilize the Western Balkans which is important for the whole of Europe and then in the west you have UK outside European Union and Canada and United States. And in the north you have excellent countries like Norway and Iceland. So meaning that being European countries not being member of the European Union. So my message is that yes we are autonomous organizations, we are, we need to respect the differences but collective defence of NATO allies is something which is the core responsibility of NATO. That was a bit long answer but I think I reflected on several other questions.

Then Mr Fleckenstein, NATO partners, and then the question of burden sharing and efficiency. That was also raised by some other of you, it was raised not only by you, the question of efficiency. I totally agree and therefore the message is that we have to spend more and better but we have to remember that it's not either more or better. What we agreed in 2014 was to both increase defence investments and to spend better and we need actually both and I understand very well that many politicians would like to spend on education, health, infrastructure instead of defence and when I was Minister of Finance in Norway in the 1990s, I actually reduced defence spending in Norway because that was after the Cold War, after the end of the Cold War and all European allies reduced defence spending and when tensions are going down, I think it's absolutely understandable that defence spending is also going down but then, we have to be able to increase defence spending when tensions are going up and now, tensions are going up and therefore as Prime Minister of Norway, I was responsible for increasing defence spending again in Norway. So yes, it's okay to reduce when tensions are going down but then you have to be able to increase when tensions are going up.

Then, I had a question on Brexit and the Norwegian model. First of all, I don't know exactly what to say about the Norwegian model because to be honest, I fought strongly for in favour of Norway joining the European Union back in 1994. We had a referendum in Norway and as you know, Norway is the only country in the world that has negotiated an accession treaty with the European Union not only once but twice, first in '72 and then in '94 and then voted it down in a referendum not only once but twice and I was on the losing side both times. So I'm actually not in favour of the Norwegian model. I've been fighting hard against it trying to be a member of the European Union but I didn't succeed so that's the reason why I was so eager

coming here because this is the closest I've come to a kind of individual membership of the European Union but of course given that we are not a member, then of course the Norwegian model, the EA Agreement, provided a good solution for Norway but I think also for the European Union integrating us very much with the cooperation in the European Union.

Then, on Trump and the US elections. First of all, it has been a very consistent message from President Trump in all my conversations with him that the United States remains committed to the Transatlantic Bond and to NATO. That was his message when I spoke to him just after he was elected, that was his message just after he was inaugurated as President in January and that was the message when I met him two weeks ago in the White House. I think we have to understand that NATO is an alliance of 28 democracies that will elect people from different political parties with different political views on many issues but the strength of NATO is that we have been able again and again to prove that despite these political differences, we have always been able to agree on the core task of NATO and that is that we stand together, protect each other and recognize that we are stronger together than alone. A strong NATO is good for Europe but a strong NATO is also good for the United States. Two World Wars and the Cold War have taught us all that stability in Europe is also important for the United States, Canada, North America and we have to also remember that the only time NATO has invoked Article 5 is after an attack on the United States and hundreds of thousands of European soldiers have fought alongside American soldiers in Afghanistan and more than 1,000 have lost their lives in the military operation that was a direct consequence of an attack on the United States. So as Europeans, you should know, we should remind the world about the fact that yes, NATO is important for many European NATO allies but NATO is also important for North America.

Then Russia, very briefly. Russia, that's about defence and dialogue. We are increasing our presence in the eastern part of the alliance, not to provoke a conflict with Russia but to prevent a conflict with Russia and I have stated again and again that my experience as a Norwegian politician is that there is no contradiction between strength and dialogue. Actually, if you are strong, if you are predictable, if you are together with allies in NATO, you can talk to Russia and that's exactly what we did in Norway. We have a common border with Russia, we have a big sea border, land border. We were able to develop I'll call it a pragmatic working relationship with Russia, not despite Norway's membership in the alliance but because of NATO's membership in the alliance. So as long as we are strong, as long as we are united, we have to engage in a political dialogue with Russia. Russia is our neighbour, Russia is here to stay, Russia is not going to go away and we need to try to get tensions down, to improve the relationship with Russia and that's the reason why I also welcome that NATO has been able to reactivate the political dialogue with Russia because we need to strive for a more constructive relationship with Russia.

Briefly on Turkey, Turkey is an important ally, not least because of its geographic location bordering Iraq, Syria, bordering Russia in the Black Sea, being key for the way Europe is dealing with the migrant and refugee crisis. Turkey has suffered many terrorist attacks, a

brutal coup attempt in July last year and of course, Turkey has the right to protect itself and also to prosecute those who are behind the failed coup. But then I expect all NATO allies to adhere to our core values which is democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and I have discussed this in many European NATO capitals including in Ankara because those values are important for the alliance and they're important for me as Secretary General. You're right that some NATO allies have asked for asylum, some Turkish officers have asked for asylum, that's for individual NATO allies to decide, to assess the request and decide whether it should be granted. Asylum is not a NATO task to make those decisions.

There's an EU planning headquarters or unit which is now going to be established. I think it's not for me to comment on the mandates of that office but what I can say is that I welcome, that is has been clearly expressed that this is not duplicating NATO headquarters and it's a very different kind of office or unit than the NATO military headquarters we have.

Then, the question was whether we are able to respect neutral countries. Yes, absolutely. I think that one of the important characters or strength of NATO is that we have been able to work with neutral countries for many years. Sweden and Finland, they are very close partners of NATO as is also for instance Austria. They participate in exercises, they contribute to our response forces together with us in Kosovo, in Afghanistan. So we are absolutely able to work with neutral countries. Malta recently expressed exactly the same, so partners are very often neutral and we are able to cooperate with them, totally respecting their neutrality.

You asked me about military means and migration. No of course, military is not the first response to migrants but military means can help for instance the European Union dealing with the crisis in Aegean as we are doing with our military naval presence in Aegean helping implement an EU-Turkey deal and we have actually very successfully ... significantly reduced the number of people crossing the Aegean Sea and we are helping Operation Sophia and we are addressing the root causes with our presence for instance in Afghanistan.

The 2%, well, again I agree with you, we need to be focused on the output, not only the input but we need more and better spending, not either more or better, we need 2% spent in a good way.

We are addressing the whole complex issue of migration, refugees in many different ways. Again, we need many tools, measures which are not military means and measures outside the European, sorry, outside NATO but NATO is helping with our presence in the Aegean in the central Mediterranean but also by improving our intelligence sharing, the way we collect and share intelligence, which is part of our response to the terrorist threat and we are going to discuss what more we can do when we meet on the 25th of May.

EU-NATO and Greece and Turkey, I'll just say that Greece and Turkey are two NATO allies, we value them both, they are cooperating in NATO and they are also showing that they can work together addressing concrete challenges like, for instance, the way they are working in the Aegean Sea. One of the reasons why we have succeeded in the Aegean Sea is that

Turkey and Greece, two NATO allies, have been able to work together, of course, in the NATO framework and with the European Union.

I'm not able to be more brief than this but this is at least an answer to some of the questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you again, Jens Stoltenberg for the first round. Now I would suggest that we have 11 minutes' time for a second round and I'll try and take into account as many speakers as possible and then we'll have a second final round with the NATO General Secretary. So we start again with the groups and the first one is Arnold Dejean (sp?). Two minutes maximum.

Q: One minute will be enough Chairman. Secretary General, the climate of instability makes the role of NATO as a dissuader of violence, a very important one, it makes that clear. Concerning the challenges to our south, terrorists and failed states and so forth, with regard to that, I see it more difficult to see what NATO's role might be there. So what partnerships are you thinking of with regards to the challenges in the south. Concerning the terrorist challenge, I believe that the role of the military as regards to terrorism is a very marginal one and really, it's the police, the justice and the intelligence community that need to do most of the work. So I'm in favour of the principle of something being done by NATO with regard to terrorists but I don't really know specifically what that might be. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Arnold and now, Mr. Bostinaro (sp?) from the SND.

Q: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary General, I will start by saying how fundamental is the NATO contribution for the security of our region, central and eastern Europe. It's unique and irreplaceable and this should be stated clearly and loudly. The second, our countries do their very best in order to reach that level of defence spending, to reach the target of at least two points and it's our modest but important contribution to the NATO defence in general. Now, two short questions related to my region. I'm Romanian by nationality. Number one, how you assess the security situation into the Black Sea and its impact on EU-NATO positioning and the second, how serious, it's related to the first question, how serious is the risk Russia to build up access to access denial alias into the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea? Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. David Campbell Bannerman.

Q: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Secretary General, there is a real agenda now to create an EU single army. It's was in President Juncker's state of the union speech last year but surely this is a threat to NATO, especially given the fact that major players like Germany are spending somewhat below the 2% target, GDP target, I'm sure Mr. McAllister will sort that out but there is a real risk of diverting resources of duplication and confusion undermining our collected defence, especially and also the danger of driving away United States and Canada and the United States, I believe, is spending something like 70% of active operational spending and surely NATO should actually be actively opposing an EU single army rather than just standing

on the side because is this not just a case of shuffling around the same assets and just relabeling them under the EU army? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. For the Greens, Rebecca Harms.

Q: Thank you. So I recently visited [inaudible] and there was NATO soldiers now in duty in Lithuania and so we discussed a lot of challenges they face together with other NATO soldiers in the east of Europe now and to be honest, I would like to understand better what our problems with numbers of soldiers with equipment, with capabilities facing the developments in Russia over the last years, massive investment in the Russian Army. So can you be a bit more precise on what are the needs where is the lack of investment, where we should do more and I think I can tell you from my visit also soldiers are thinking about it.

MODERATOR: Thank you. For the ENF, Mr. Shefhouser [? sp].

Q: Well, a note to Secretary General that you talk about French prospects which are favourable for your next summit. You know that our political force is in favour of leaving NATO. It represents the top party in France, it could win and why would we leave NATO? Because we think we need a multiple (inaudible), that NATO is often a weapon for mass destabilization and not for stabilization and it demonstrated this in difference conflicts, Iraq, etc, etc, and everything that is going on right now and I'd also like to emphasize (inaudible) if there were a conflict between the United States and Russia, the battlefield would be Europe. It will neither be on Russian or American territory, given their respective nuclear arms. So, what we want is France, which is a power in a multipolar world and we want to achieve this capacity that Russia has right now which would be a partner with not too many means, I mean Russia has half of the GDP of France. So it's not the means they have and still, they've got a (inaudible) capacity which is extraordinary. So those are our intentions and sooner or later, this will lead to a change in NATO, that was the point of view of General De Gaulle who was always a partner despite everything when it was necessary, and we'll also be partners. But this means that there has to be a profound change in your organization. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Merci. Right, we've got four minutes left now. We'll now divide the speaking time just between the speakers of the EPP and the SND and to raise for gender balance, it's ladies first.

Q: Thank you Chair. Thank you Mr. Secretary General for coming here. As you said after a long period, we saw positive change in the military spending of NATO members and as also my colleague mentioned, Romania just joined the small club of members that allocate 2% of GDP as well as other countries that are following this trend as he also mentions and that would mean additional financial resources which allow us to better focus on the new threats like those mentioned here already, hybrid threats and cyber-attacks. My first question, have you considered for a higher proportion of the new resources to be guided towards addressing these new threats knowing that the vast majority of our military spending are still dedicated to the traditional capacities and the new established European Centre of Excellence for

countering hybrid threats in Helsinki have a budget of only €1.5 million. My second question is related to how do you see the EU and NATO cooperation and concrete strategies on common interest issue, the changes which are taking place in Turkey, which are pushing this country further away from the common values which we both share within EU and NATO and we don't want to see Turkey outside NATO or something else and I don't even want to think of a future where Turkey is no longer a NATO member. The Black Sea is a Russian lake and the game plane changes fundamental from the Bosphorus Strait to central Asia or from the Middle East to the EU and NATO eastern border. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. SND.

Q: Yes, Secretary General, what's the point of continuing to do so-called maritime security missions be it by NATO, by the EU, in Libya if nobody is addressing, never was addressing, the crucial question of security sector reform and DDR. This ought to have been a priority. There was a time when the Prime Minister of Libya, Ali Zeidan, came to beg the UN, to beg NATO, to actually do that and nothing happened and of course, it's much more difficult now. Isn't that totally useless and then on Turkey, I mean, I am from Portugal. Our country was a dictatorship and NATO didn't mind but this was in the days of the Cold War. Don't we mind if Turkey is now going in the way of a dictatorship?

MODERATOR: Thank you. If you keep it to one minute, then I can cover all the colleagues who still want to speak.

Q: Thank you for the floor. Secretary General, a moment ago you have said that you would welcome a greater autonomy of European defence. That's what I like to hear. Two years ago when you were here, there was some kind of jealousy on the part of NATO, which has now gone away but my question is what would be the division of labour when it comes to defence of Europe and why don't we need to challenge ... face up to the Russian challenge?

MODERATOR: Thank you. Mr. Vigel (sp?).

Q: Mr. Secretary General, you recently supported the creation of the new government in respect of Parliamentary democracy rules in Macedonia. I think your support was very, very well received in Skopje. So I am asking you is there anything what can be done, what you can do, in order to help Macedonia become a NATO member? It is totally absurd that because of the so-called name issue, one country who has difficult problems, who is the cornerstone of the stability in the region, cannot become a member of NATO and they wish it. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Now we have Mr. Killan. (sp?)

Q: Thank you very much. Two questions. The joint EU-NATO declaration from last December underlines cooperation between NATO's strategic Communication Centre of Excellence and the EU's STRATCOM. What concretely has been done in this field and could they look

forward even to more cooperation like sharing expertise and information on a regular and structured basis? Second question, several European countries are developing now cyber-offensive capabilities, building up designated cyber-units. NATO has declared that it will only develop defensive capabilities. How will NATO tackle this issue in the future? Can we see NATO starting a debate on also developing offensive cyber-capabilities and wouldn't it be time to also set up a cyber-component command next to land, air and maritime component commands and last, when can we see joint EU-NATO cyber-exercises? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Q: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Secretary General. I would just like to join my colleagues in asking about the biggest role that Turkey is playing especially in Western Balkans and what would you say and what would you do in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina where, I mean they played, NATO played an important role in ending the war but the time has changed and we have different players in these countries. How would you address the issue of non-democracy in Turkey in these countries when you are asking for applying the principal of democracy and respecting the human values because it's a bad example that is being set and I know that NATO is there playing a crucial moral role but European forces are training Bosnian army which are participating in all these peace operations, so please can you expand a bit more on this Turkey role and what will you do in addressing publicly these issues? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. The final three speakers.

Q: Thank you very much. Welcome Mr. Secretary General. Two questions. First, after the Warsaw Summit and the change of US administration, how good do you see the cooperation between the two and what would be the biggest challenges in deepening that cooperation? The second one, congratulations for bringing Montenegro to the family and how would you assess the security situation in the Western Balkans because some internal development is bringing the countries not to be politically problematic but to become a security risk and we should do something more than express our most serious concern. Thank you.

[MODERATOR]: Thank you.

Q: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Secretary General, I hear the fact that you welcomed the EU defence to be stronger in the future and of course, avoiding any kind of duplications and full complementarity and of course trying to avoid unnecessary spending of the European citizens' money. As long as 22 countries are members of both organizations and both organizations are promoting and defending the same values, don't you think so that it might be time for the two organizations, NATO and EU, to engage in negotiations in order to achieve a comprehensive practical operational agreement in order that the European Union should have access to NATO capabilities for European Union missions, especially on three fields, on command structures, on space capabilities and on long range capabilities of transportation of troops and equipment. This would be an excellent example for the citizens

of the Occidental world, a world that is defending and promoting the same values in these challenging times. Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Some of my colleagues asked questions on individual countries in the Western Balkans. I would be pleased if you were able to share with us shortly your consideration on the Western Balkans region. Thank you.

MODERATOR: My dear colleagues, that was 26 people who contributed to this exchange of views. General Secretary, you now have the challenge of answering all these questions as extensive and as brief as possible at the same time but since you didn't get enough questions, one more question from me. Albania is also a NATO member state and Albania is going through a phase of a serious political crisis now for months. Any comments from your side from NATO on the situation in Albania? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you so much. I think the most efficient thing I can do now is to address some of the issues because actually some of you raised the same issues. So I'm not referring to all the names but I'm trying to address at least the different issues.

So I start with Romania, which was mentioned by at least two of you. First of all, Romania is really making progress because Romania declared that they will reach the 2% target, spending 2% on defence, this year, and it just underlines that it is possible for European-NATO allies to reach the 2% guidelines so I welcome Romania. Then, the question was also on countering hybrid threats, yes we are doing a lot. The increased readiness of our forces is about countering hybrid threats because then if we are under hybrid attack, we have little warning time so we have a high readiness of our forces. Our enhanced Forward Presence is part of our response to hybrid threats. The work we do on cyber, which was mentioned by several of you, is very much related to hybrid threats. We are significantly increasing our cyber-capabilities, increasing our cyber-defences enabling us to protect NATO cyber-networks but also help nations. We have developed teams that can be deployed to help protect cyber-networks of nations which are under cyber-attacks and we do more exercises and we are also now in the process of establishing cyber as a military domain alongside air, sea and land. So we are really modernizing and adapting NATO cyber-defences and helping nations to do the same. NATO has not engaged in developing offensive cyber-capabilities but of course, some NATO allies have that kind of capabilities. Now actually I answered many of the questions just by addressing hybrid and cyber as part of that.

Then, how do I see NATO-EU cooperation? Well, as I said, compared to what we did before, we have really reached an excellent new level of cooperation. We still have untapped potential, still we can do a lot but compared to what we did before, we are doing much, much more now and just last year, we've been able to reach two formal arrangements between NATO and the EU on cyber and on our Aegean activity and that is more formal arrangements between NATO and the EU during the last year than the previous ten years, so we are really making a difference in the cooperation between NATO and the EU.

Then, many of you addressed Turkey and as also some of you stated, Turkey is important for Europe, for the whole of Europe because they are on the front line fighting ISIL-Daesh in Syria and Iraq. Their counter-ISIL position, they have bases, they use Turkish infrastructure in the fight against ISIL-Daesh and some of you were also concerned about the situation in the Black Sea. Of course, Turkey is key for the Black Sea and for our response to the significant Russian military buildup we have seen in the Black Sea, especially in Crimea. So it is important for Europe, for NATO to have Turkey as a committed ally and Turkey is a committed ally addressing both the instability to the south, terrorism in Iraq and Syria but also responding to a more assertive Russia in the Black Sea region. And again, democracy, rule of law, they are core values for NATO. I have addressed these issues, these values, in many NATO capitals including in Ankara. NATO is a security alliance but we are standing up for some core values and [inaudible].

Then I was asked about Libya. I totally agree, I think it was Miss Gomez (sp?) who talked about Libya and I totally agree with you that we need to build security institutions because just to train forces if they don't have a structure to be put into, then actually we could just add to the instability, so we need a modern Minister of Defence, which is securing democratic political control, civilian control, over the armed forces, not vice versa. We need joint chiefs of command, we need intelligence services and NATO is now in dialogue with the UN recognized government, the government of national accord and Prime Minister al-Sarraj. I spoke with him a couple of weeks ago. His experts are meeting with NATO experts to see what we can do to help them building these kinds of defence institutions. It's not easy, it's a long way, but I agree with you that at least we should address this important issue of building institutions. It sounds a bit bureaucratic but it is extremely important.

Then, I was asked about the division of labour or responsibilities between the EU and NATO. Well, I can only speak on behalf of NATO members including NATO members who are also a member of the European Union but they have clearly expressed that for those EU members that are a member of the European Union, collective defence is not the task for the European Union. That is the main and core responsibility for NATO and it goes in a way without saying because the strength of NATO's collective defence is of course the unity between Europe and North America and you can say many things about North America, Canada and the United States but they are not members of the European Union, so the way we link North America to this part of Europe is with security arrangements, the guarantees we have in NATO and this has also been expressed by the European Union so this is not a problem and I think it's important in a way to be clear on that because then we are able to have a very pragmatic and constructive cooperation on many other issues, the 42 measures and many other areas where we now are strengthening the cooperation. And as I mentioned, especially when the UK leaves the EU, then of course 80% of NATO's defence spending will be non-EU, three out of the four battalions we have in the east will be led by non-EU countries. So there is an absolute need for NATO for collective defence in Europe.

Then, I'm back to the question of partnership in the south and NATO's role in fighting terrorism. I agree with you that many of the measures we have to implement in the fight against terrorism have nothing to do with NATO. It's police, it's civilian intelligence, it's border control, it's the ideological fight; political economic measures has nothing to do with NATO but that doesn't mean that NATO plays a marginal role. NATO's role is of great importance and in no way marginal. I think to tell hundreds of thousands of NATO soldiers that have been fighting in Afghanistan that they played a marginal role is completely the wrong message. No, no, the only reason why we are in Afghanistan, the reason why we are in Afghanistan, is because of a terrorist attack against the United States. The reason why we went in Afghanistan was to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. So the reason why we are in Afghanistan is to fight terrorism and that's what we're doing. So, we have to understand that NATO's biggest ever military operation, this operation which is directly linked to the fight against terrorism and you cannot tell those people who have been serving there that they played a marginal role. They played an extremely big and important role and they helped build an Afghan army of 350,000 police and soldiers which are now able to take over responsibility for security in their own country. We have ended our combat operation; they are doing the hard work countering the terrorist organizations. So I'm only saying that and also when NATO helps the coalition fighting ISIL, in training Iraqi officers or AWACS support with our planes to the air operations, then, of course, that's about fighting terrorism and it's not a marginal role, it's an important contribution to the fight against terrorism. So, yes there are many tools, many of them have nothing to do with NATO but some are military, NATO plays a key role and it's an important role and I would like us to play an even bigger role.

The last thing about this I'll just say that what we do in Western Balkans and that's sort of linked to the Western Balkans [sic] has also something to do with fighting terrorism because I recently visited Bosnia-Herzegovina and they tell me how important it is to stabilize the whole Western Balkan region to fight foreign fighters, to provide the necessary tools to address terrorist threats and NATO has been key in developing a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovian army, we are present in Kosovo with our KFOR forces and we are working with partners in the region and of course, we are concerned about the situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The democratic processes should be respected, the majority has the right to decide who is going to form a government and we are also following very closely the developments in Albania meaning that we, of course, would like to see a solution to the political problems they are faced with now with the boycott of the Parliament; and Albania is a highly valued NATO ally.

I think that's at least most of the questions. Actually, one last one and that was from Miss Harms on why we need more NATO. Well, we are very specific on that in NATO so we are requesting different allies to provide different capabilities and it's very concrete but overall, I can say that what we need is a heavier armed forces meaning more armour, more artillery, more of the heavy stuff, which we were not so focused on after the end of the Cold War, they

were mainly focused on light expeditionary forces as we had, for instance, in Afghanistan or in the Balkans. We have to be more faster, able to move our forces more strategically, we need more intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance, also to be able to have better situational awareness to address, for instance, hybrid threats and of course, we need such a simple thing as more exercises to increase the readiness and the preparedness of our forces. I can mention many more but there are a lot of capabilities where we have to invest more because we live in a more dangerous world.

Okay, I think that's the end of my answers. Thank you so much.

MODERATOR: Secretary Stoltenberg, on behalf of all my colleagues present, let me thank you very much for your presence here today and for providing such thoughtful and interesting debate. I think our discussion has once again proved the value and the necessity of keeping close contacts between the European Union and NATO and to further more deep cooperation whenever this is possible. I look forward to continuing our exchange of views at one of our next meetings. All the best for you and once again, thank you so much for coming.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you

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