North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Joint press point

with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Dmytro Kuleba
2019-10-30

(As delivered)

Thank you so much Deputy Prime Minister Kuleba. It is a great honour and pleasure to be back in Ukraine and to visit this beautiful city of Odesa.

Knowing that this is the capital of the Ukrainian navy makes it even more important for me and the North Atlantic Council to be here today. And I also welcome the fact that I'm here together with the whole North Atlantic Council ambassadors, representing the 29 members of the Alliance and North Macedonia, that will soon become our 30th member. And the visit today sends a clear message that NATO stands in solidarity with Ukraine. We support your sovereignty and your territorial integrity and we will provide and we are providing both political and practical support.

We support your efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and we provide practical support to help you implement reforms and modernizing your defence and security institutions.

We help you with command and control, with cyber, with logistics, and later on today we will also visit the naval academy here in Odesa where NATO Allies are providing support in strengthening and improving the quality of the naval education here in Odesa.

And all NATO Allies clearly condemn the aggressive actions of Russia in the Black Sea, seizing Ukrainian ships and sailors.

And this spring we decided to step up our efforts, especially in the area of helping you to strengthen your navy or maritime capacities. With joined exercises, with information sharing, surveillance. And also by inviting young Ukrainian cadets to train on NATO ships. So we will continue to stand with you. We highly appreciate the close partnership with Ukraine and I look forward also to visit the naval academy here in Odesa later on today.

So once again, thank you so much for hosting me and the whole North Atlantic Council, that demonstrates the close partnership between Ukraine and NATO.

MODERATOR: We'll now take a few questions from the media.

QUESTION [Reuters]: I have a question to Secretary General Stoltenberg. Could you comment on the current situation in the town of Zolote, the second phase of forced disengagement there? Is this really a bilateral disengagement or is it a unilateral pullback of Ukrainian forces, in your opinion?

JENS STOLTENBERG: We welcome all efforts to reduce tensions, to withdraw forces and to make sure that we have a peaceful resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We have seen some progress in Stanytsia Luhanska and we welcome also other efforts to follow that example. But we know there is a long way to go, because there are still ceasefire violations. And we also see that OSCE monitors are not allowed to freely operate and some of, for instance, their drones are . . . are hindered in doing the work they should do. But I welcome the renewed effort and renew— . . . renewed energy from President Zelensky to try to find a peaceful solution and NATO supports those efforts. But of course, NATO also states very clearly that Russia has a special responsibility to implement the Minsk agreements and that they must withdraw all their troops, all their officers from eastern Ukraine and stop destabilising eastern Ukraine.

MODERATOR: Ukrinform, next question.

QUESTION: [Ukrinform] This is a question to Vice Prime Minister Kuleba. Will an application for MAP be submitted to NATO during the NAC meeting in Kyiv?

DMYTRO KULEBA [Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration]: Ukraine proceeds from the premise that the MAP application, which was filed in 2008 during the Bucharest Summit, remains valid. If you take a look at the decisions of the Bucharest summit, you will see that it is written down there that NATO noted and supported the applications for MAP from Georgia and Ukraine and tasked their foreign ministers to develop further steps to develop this issue. Therefore, we believe that there is no need to resubmit the application. Instead, we should focus on practical issues, primarily on the issues of interoperability between Ukraine’s military and the armed forces of the Allied countries. Therefore, answering your question, I can tell you that no application for MAP will be submitted in Kyiv during the meeting with the North Atlantic Council. And we believe that the issue of granting MAP should be of technical nature, rather than political.

QUESTION [Radio Liberty]: A question to Mr Stoltenberg. Lately, among the experts and in the expert community, as it were, there has been reports that NATO and Ukraine are reformatting their relationships and coming up with a new format for cooperation, how could you comment on that? What kind of reformatting are we dealing with here? And what is the essence of this new step?

JENS STOLTENBERG: We have a longstanding partnership with Ukraine and we are constantly strengthening, adapting, the partnership with Ukraine. And this spring we decided to further step up our cooperation in different fields, but including to do more in the maritime domain. We already have the National Annual Programme, we have the Comprehensive

Assistance Package and we have the NATO-Ukraine Commission, which are all important tools in our partnership with Ukraine. And now we are launching a new initiative, which is aimed at coordinating and bringing together all these different work strands in a more coherent and even more consistent way. And let me also briefly add that the partnership is not a one-way street. Ukraine is also contributing to NATO missions and operations, fighting international terrorism in Afghanistan. And also Ukraine is part of our NATO Response Force and also that Ukraine is looking into the possibility of also contributing to our mission in Iraq, training Iraqi forces.

QUESTION [Demirören]: Hello, I'm from Turkish news agency Demirören. I think my questions, maybe not directly but indirectly, deal with the security issue of the Black Sea region. I would like to ask my first question, both to Mr . . . to Deputy Premier Minister, Mr Dmytro Kuleba, and to Secretary General of NATO, Mr Stoltenberg. How do you evaluate Turkey's policy towards Syria and Russia's increasing influence in Syria? And my second question will be to Mr Stoltenberg: how do you evaluate, can NATO take over an initiative in Syria?

DMYTRO KULEBA: Thank you for the question. Ukraine and Turkey are strategic partners. We have an efficient cooperation in a number of spheres, including military and technological one. We proceed from the fact that Turkey has certain interests in Syria. But for both Ankara and Kyiv, the relationship between Turkey and Ukraine is not a lesser priority.

JENS STOLTENBERG: For NATO, the Black Sea region is of great strategic importance. And three of the littoral states are NATO members: Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria. And then we have two close partners, Georgia and Ukraine, which are also littoral states. So NATO and partners are already present in the Black Sea region. And we have increased our presence there. And their presence today of four NATO vessels demonstrates the increased NATO presence in the Black Sea region. And the NATO vessels also demonstrates NATO's support to Ukraine. When it comes to the situation in northern Syria, it is well known that there are different views among NATO Allies. At the same time, we agree that it is important not to jeopardise the progress we have made in the fight against our common enemy, ISIS. And also that Turkey has legitimate security concerns and that Turkey is hosting more refugees than any other Ally. We have recently . . . recently seen some reduction in violence and we need to build on that to support all efforts to find a political solution to the crisis in northern Syria.

MODERATOR: Thank you, media. The briefing is over.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2019/10/30/joint-press-point