North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Address

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Plenary session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Fall session in Turkey
2016-11-21

(As delivered)

Mr. President, Dear Delegates,

First of all, I would like to say that, it is really an honour to be back here today and to meet with you, this time in the beautiful city of Istanbul. Last time, I think we met in Norway, in Stavanger.

And I will speak to you about the challenges and the tasks that NATO is facing and how NATO is responding.

But before I do that, I would like to thank the Turkish Parliament for hosting us and I would also like to thank the president, Mike Turner for the excellent way he has chaired this assembly and the cooperation I have had with him. And we have met many different times on many different occasions, but I remember very well when Mike attended the NATO summit in Warsaw, he spoke to the leaders, and when you did that I actually thought about the importance of having you representing the parliaments around the table with the Heads of State and Government in Warsaw.

And I look forward to working with the new president and I promise that I will continue to be in close contact with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

For many reasons but not least because this Assembly is a very important political body because the NATO Assembly is truly a transatlantic institution, binding NATO together across the Atlantic with representatives from the European NATO Allies, from Canada and the USA and Partner Nations. And the bonds, the partnerships, the friendship you create in this Assembly is important for the whole Alliance because it strengthens the transatlantic bond.

Secondly, this Assembly is important because you are representing the national parliaments. And I believe, I've said this before, but I will repeat it because it is so important, I have been a parliamentarian myself and I know the importance of parliaments in decision-making in the different NATO Allied countries. Because Parliaments decide on the guidelines, the framework for defence and security policies. No government can conduct in the long run, a policy which is against the will of the parliaments. So therefore, what you decide, what you

agree, is of great importance for what NATO can do and what NATO Allies are able to agree on.

You are key, for key decisions for NATO, like for instance, defence spending and that has been my main focus since I became Secretary General in 2014, is how we can increase defence spending among those NATO Allies which are spending less than 2%. And that is actually your main responsibility, to decide budgets and therefore, I know that to speak to you is of great importance to me because you are the representatives, representing those parliaments which are at the end, deciding defence spending in the different NATO Allied countries.

You are also key for another reason and that is because parliaments actually decide who is going to be member of NATO. And you know that we are now in the process of inviting, of enlarging NATO with a new member, Montenegro.

The Accession treaty is signed, what remains to be done is the ratification. And many nations have already ratified the Accession agreement for Montenegro, it has to be done in all 28 Parliaments, so I urge those Parliamentarians, I urge those countries who have not yet ratified the Accession agreement for Montenegro, to do so. This is a responsibility for you, Parliaments, and I speak directly to you: go back to your Parliaments, make sure that you ratify that Accession agreement as soon as possible. We will have a Summit of NATO next year. I really think it is something we should be able to deliver by the Summit next year, that we have the Accession agreement ratified by all Parliaments, so we can welcome Montenegro as a full member by the Summit in 2017, and that may happen early 2017, so you have to hurry up and ratify the Accession agreement.

So as you understand I attach great importance to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly because you represent Parliaments which are so important for our Alliance.

There is yet another reason why I believe this Assembly is of great importance, and that is just the plain fact that you represent different parties, different nations, different political opinions so the NATO Parliamentary Assembly is a platform for political discussion, for political exchange between different people, different opinions and I think this magnitude, this variety of opinions, are important in itself, because it reflects the important NATO fact that NATO is an Alliance of 28 democracies. There are disagreements, there are different views, there are different positions on many issues. But the strength of NATO is that we have always been able to agree on the core task, on your core responsibility, and to stand together on the message that we are here together, to protect each other, to defend each other and to stand together in the strongest Alliance of the world.

And that is also actually what we managed to do in Warsaw. At the Summit we made important decisions on collective defence, on projecting stability and on working together with the EU to strengthen our cooperation with the EU. And I will address briefly these issues and

then I’m more than happy to take questions on all the other issues and also elaborate more on collective defence, projecting stability and NATO during the Q&A session.

But before I do that I would just also remind us all of the fact that we are meeting here in Turkey, four short months after the failed coup attempt. This should be a sober reminder to us all, a reminder that democracy and freedom cannot be taken for granted. They must be vigorously defended. In September, I visited the Grand National Assembly in Ankara. Which had been shelled by tanks and bombed by F-16s.

I saw the damage that was done. And I met Members of the Parliament. From all major political parties. They rushed to the Parliament on the night of the coup attempt. And stood together in defence of their democratic institutions. It made a lasting impression on me. And I want to salute them today for their courage and dedication to democracy.

Democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law are NATO’s core values. And I personally attach great importance to them. As you do – Members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The NPA is a platform for democratic debate and open exchange of different views among parliamentarians from all our member states and Partner Countries. And given that we all represent different nations and different political parties, we again and again, have proven, that we are able to stand together in the Alliance on the main message of collective defence and the will to defend each other. And that is exactly what we did in Warsaw and we decided to strengthen our collective in response to Russia aggression.

Actions in Ukraine and ongoing military build-up of Russia, NATO has taken prudent and necessary steps. We are increasing our defensive presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. Including the deployment of four multinational battalions to the Baltic States and Poland.

Earlier this year, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States each committed to lead one of those battalions.

And I want to thank those nations for their leadership.

I also want to express my appreciation to the 13 other Allies that have pledged to join these forces. Our preparations for the four battalions are on track. We expect to deploy all four multinational battalions in early 2017.

This sends a clear message: NATO is united. We stand together as one. And an attack on one Ally will be considered an attack against us all.

NATO is also taking steps to strengthen our presence in the Black Sea region. There will be a Romanian-led multinational brigade. And we are working on additional defensive measures in the air and at sea as well.

Everything NATO does is defensive, proportionate and fully in line with our international commitments.

Before Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, NATO had no plans to send troops to the eastern part of our Alliance.

NATO's aim is to prevent a conflict, not provoke a conflict.

Moreover, we firmly believe and are firmly committed to a two-track approach to Russia.

Strong defence coupled with meaningful dialogue. When tensions run high, it is even more important to keep channels of communication open. With increasing military activity close to our borders, we must do everything we can to prevent military incidents or accidents. And if they occur, we must keep them from spiraling out of control. That is why we held two meetings of the NATO-Russia Council this year.

The other major theme of the Warsaw Summit was projecting stability. We know that if our neighbours are stable, we are more secure. NATO helps to build that stability in our neighbourhood, through capacity building, training, working with partners, and maritime security.

NATO has been on the front line in the fight against terrorism for many years. Including through our operations and military presence in Afghanistan. Which was launched in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States. And as you know, this is the first and the only time NATO has invoked our collective defence clause Article 5.

Our experience in Afghanistan has shown that having strong, highly trained local forces is vital to a country's security and stability.

Training local forces is one of our best weapons in the fight against terrorism. This year alone, we have trained hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan. And we recently decided to extend our training and capacity-building efforts into Iraq. That work will begin early next year. This training is an important contribution to the fight against ISIL. As is our AWACS surveillance aircraft. Now flying from Konya here in Turkey in support of the Counter-ISIL Coalition.

The situation in the Mediterranean remains serious. In response, earlier this month, we launched NATO's new maritime security operation – Sea Guardian. This operation will help protect the safety and the security of one of the world's busiest bodies of water. NATO ships, submarines and maritime patrol aircraft will perform core activities like surveillance, counter-terrorism and capacity-building of regional navies. And NATO is supporting the EU's Operation Sophia with information sharing and logistical support.

This cooperation with EU in the Mediterranean is just one example of the benefit of closer cooperation between NATO and the EU.

The two organisations have transformed Europe. Building the foundation for peace, security and prosperity. And I'm pleased to say that NATO-EU cooperation is now closer than it has ever been. This was underscored by the Joint Declaration that I signed with President Tusk and President Juncker in Warsaw in July.

There is momentum in the NATO-EU cooperation. And we must take this opportunity to further strengthen and to do more in the field of NATO-EU cooperation.

We are exploring ways to work together.

To counter hybrid threats, enhance cyber security and coordinate exercises.

As you all know, the EU is considering options for strengthening European defence.

And I welcome that initiative. Because it offers a way for European Allies to deliver more capabilities and increased defence spending. Doing so will strengthen Europe, the EU and NATO. It's important to make sure that those efforts are complementary, transparent and mutually supportive.

And that non-EU Allies are closely involved.

Because they make essential contributions to European security. A stronger Europe will mean a stronger NATO. And it will reinforce the transatlantic bond. A bond that has served the vital security interests of NATO members on both sides of the Atlantic.

With that in mind, I welcome the incoming Administration in Washington. And I look forward to working with President-elect Donald Trump. The partnership between Europe and the United States has been rock-solid for almost 70 years. A partnership that has always received bi-partisan support in the United States. And better burden-sharing will make the transatlantic bond even stronger.

After years of sliding defence spending, we have seen a shift. At our Wales' Summit in 2014, Allies committed to spend 2% of GDP on defence within a decade. That commitment is already bearing fruit. In 2015, we stopped the defence cuts and we saw a spending increase across Europe and Canada. I expect further increase of 3% for European Allies and Canada this year. So we are moving in the right direction but we still have a long way to go. And defence spending to reach 2% target really matters.

Let me illustrate by the following example: if all European Allies and Canada were to meet the 2% spending target, that would mean an extra 100 billion dollars. 100 billion dollars' worth of improvements to our capabilities.

That's roughly the equivalent to the combined defence budgets of the two largest defence spenders in Europe: the United Kingdom and France, every year.

This is where all of you come in. I'm confident that NATO can count on your continued support. Just as we have relied on the support of the NPA over the past six decades.

Since the founding of NATO in 1949, we have helped to secure the peace and provide the foundation for freedom and prosperity. Supported by our citizens and their elected representatives. And dedicated to continued peace and security for our people and for future generations.

Thank you for your support and thank you for your attention and I'm looking forward to work with all of you to strengthen the transatlantic bond and to strengthen NATO.

Thank you.

MALE MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary General thank you.

FEMALE MODERATOR: Speaking foreign language.

MALE MODERATOR: For the past two days here in our annual session you've kindly agreed to take questions and this is our opportunity to get information directly from you that we take directly back to our Parliaments. To remind everyone of the procedure I will announce those who've been called on to ask questions in groups of three so that you'll be prepared. Anyone who would like to ask the Secretary General a question please let the gentlemen know to my left they'll be keeping track and please let, raise your hand so that the staff and the Secretariat can identify you and pass your names on. There will be a two limit, two minute limit for all questions and of course we cannot guarantee that everyone will ask their questions, we have just slightly over an hour where the Secretary General has agreed to take questions. Our first group of three will be Ennse of Estonia, Ricardo of Spain and Gilbert from France and so you can begin with your question.

Q: Thank you Mr. President it's well known that Russia is increasing, can quickly increasing its military power in the western part of the country. In response to the Russian war preparations have been approved during the Warsaw Summit last July, for the Eastern members of the alliance I mean Baltic States and Poland it will be realized by sending four NATO battalion task forces into our countries, I mean one into each one. United States has promised to send additional one armoured brigade into Poland, but if we compare the balance of power between Russia and Baltic States its evident that three Baltic States even with NATO battalions are not able to create some deterrence and protect themselves appropriate way in case of aggression. The next year budget in Estonia has passed four readings in our Parliament, third and last one will be this week. We're going to spend 2.13 percent from our GDP for increasing our self defence capability. I know our neighbours are doing the same but as a small countries we are not able to create significant military power especially medium and long range air defence effective coast (sic) defence, navy to keep (inaudible) and protected maritime and air communication lines across the Baltic Sea in case of crisis. We need more NATO forces on the ground and in the Baltic Sea. Mr. Secretary

General you are the leader of NATO what is your opinion on the approach, how would it be better to solve security problems in Baltic area in framework of deterrence? Thank you.

MODERATOR: This is a very large room and the acoustics are somewhat difficult I would like to ask everyone when they do ask their questions to try to be as close to the microphone as possible. I will turn it to Ricardo from Spain.

Q: Thank you. I shall speak in Spanish.

TRANSLATOR: Mr. Secretary General you said that the EU-NATO relationship is stronger than ever, friendship has never been as major. For EU countries who are also members of NATO are promoting a package of measures to revitalize European defence and to strengthen it, to make it more realistic and more credible. They're providing the EU with strategic autonomy. These four countries believe it's necessary to have efficient capacity to plan and conduct operations in the area of defence. Some countries consider this as a threat. That this is a break from the past from NATO. I think that it's an opportunity just like you do. How can we overcome that reluctance? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Gilbert, France.

Q: Secretary General.

TRANSLATOR: Secretary General, I would like to ask a question concerning the collective defence of Europe. As you know the German and French Defence Ministers met in, took in last September, a certain initiative and fortunately, the Spanish and Italian Defence Ministers joined that initiative in favour of a strong robust European Defence. It's not a question of creating European army within the European Union or is it a question of duplicating what NATO does, but the objective is on the country to strengthen the collective defence capabilities and the capabilities for projecting stability in Europe. Secretary General, so we are in the presence of an equation which makes the defence, more European defence does not mean less defence by NATO but a more effective defence and that is what you said in your remarks. You, so do you consider that this project is not falling in line with the conclusions of the Warsaw Summit? And could you indicate with us what is in your opinion, what are your opinion that the results that this initiative initiative should aim at achieving.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much. Actually I will start with the two last questions because they are very much inter-linked because they both address the issue of stronger European defence and the debate and discussions and the process inside the European Union now addressing how to strengthen European defence. And I welcome that initiative, I welcome that debate and I strongly believe that a stronger Europe can contribute to a stronger NATO and that is also the clear message from the European leaders that I have met. The discussion is still going on but the message is that this is not about creating an alternative to NATO, but this is about strengthening the European pillar inside NATO. That was exactly what, for instance, the German Defence Minister, Ursula

von der Leyen recently stated that this is about creating a stronger European pillar inside NATO and that is of course something I welcome, because I, NATO, have called for a stronger European defence for decades and that has always been the message from the United States and the other non-E.U. allies that Europe has to invest more in defence and strengthen its defences. The only thing we have to avoid is that when Europe starts to strengthen its defences it is done in a way which is complimentary to NATO, not competing with NATO, and that has been clearly stated that that is the aim to not compete but to compliment and therefore I welcome that many European leaders have so clearly stated that this, as you also said, Gilbert from France, that this is not about a European army, this is not about establishing shape like command structures or about the European Union starting to do collective defence, but it is about strengthening Europe's ability to provide defence as as as a part of NATO, for those 22 allies that are both, NATO allies and European Union members, at the same time. Let me also add that, this is in one way obvious, because we have to remember that especially after Brexit, EU is important but, compared to the rest of NATO, especially when you take into account United States, of course NATO has capabilities and strength which is not covered by the European Union. Eighty percent of NATO's defence spending will come from non-EU allies after Brexit, eighty percent and three out of four battalions which we are going to deploy to the eastern part of the alliance, to the Baltic countries and Poland, will be led by non-EU allies. So it goes in a way of the United Kingdom, after Brexit, Canada and and the United States. So I think it's obvious that we cannot decouple European security from North America and we cannot decouple the security of the European Union members from the rest of Europe, because there are some some European nations which are not members of the European Union and I regret that this for one of them, not being there and then, but then you have and they also contribute to the security of Europe. So that was a long answer to your two questions. Then Estonia, Enns. I think we have understand the following that the four battalions they are important because they are multi-national, they are led by Canada, U.K., United States and Germany but they are also then, so there will be support and other nations contributing so they will be truly international battalions in the three Baltic countries and Poland. And by being multi-national battalions they are sending a very clear signal that an attack on one ally will trigger the response from the whole alliance. But we don't believe that the battalions is the only element in creating the necessary deterrence and defence for the Baltic countries and Poland and for the rest of the alliance as well; because there are only one building block in the comprehensive response. We have the four battalions but then we have (inaudible) and then of course we have national defence forces like, for instance, in Estonia and I welcome that Estonia is one of the countries which are spending already more than two percent of defence and to know that Poland is also doing that already and then the two other Baltic countries, Lithuania and Latvia, are very close to meet the two percent target, they will meet it in 2017 or 2018. So the battalions are important but, of course, also the home defence forces are important and they are becoming stronger and stronger in this Baltic countries and in and in Poland but then we also have the new small headquarters the NFRU's which are not so big but they are critical for coupling the national home defence forces with the NATO forces and to plan, exercise and facilitate re-

enforcements if needed. And then we are strengthening our ability to re-enforce. We have tripled, as Mike Turner, President Mike Turner said in his speech, we have tripled the size of the NATO response force to 40,000 and at this core we have the VJTF Spirit Force ready to move within days. So, if needed we can re-enforce quickly to strengthen our deterrence in the Baltic region. So we have to understand all of this together and and NATO is able and will continue to be able to provide credible deterrence and, as you know, the the reason to have a strong defence the reason to have a credible deterrence is not because we want to fight a war but it's because we know that credible deterrence is the best way to prevent a war, we don't want to provoke a war, but we know that firm credible deterrence is the best way to prevent a war.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Our next group of three: we'll begin with Julio from Portugal, Ojars (sic) from Latvia and then Correan (sic) of Armenia. Julio, you have the floor.

Q: Thank you President. First of all I would like to compliment to the speech of the Secretary General and we believe in a strong security efforts linked to a strong Trans-Atlantic relation and I could congratulate the Secretary General for his talks with the new Administration of United States in order to (inaudible) and deepen this relation in order to prevent our security. I have only two questions related, first of all about the Middle East and it is: how is NATO capacity building a force in Iraq as part of support or measure for DAESH campaign and this is related also to announce the Russian permanent presence in Syria. Is this mean something to the movements of NATO? And last, but not least, how NATO responded to the increasing militarization of the Arctic, at least there is a kind of a militarization made by Russia, so what is the response or what is the strategy of NATO about this? Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Ojars.

Q: Thank you Mr. President. Secretary General as you made in your remarks, clearly Europe has to do more than strengthen its contribution to defence and to NATO but it seems that (inaudible) EU or European contributions to NATO and especially the European response to Article 5 after 911, has not been sufficiently recognized in the United States. This was particularly noticeable during the Presidential election. Can NATO's public diplomacy do more to convince our American friends of Europe's ongoing commitment to NATO, NATO'S collective defence? Our strategic communication program is focused on deliberate dis-information on Russia's borderlands, but would you agree that we must also combat inadvertent misinformation about what's happening within NATO in our own countries? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Correan (sic), Armenia.

Q: Secretary General, firstly on November 18th at German Marshall Fund you stated the strategic geographic allocation of Turkey bordering Russia in the North and the Black Sea, Georgia and then bordering Iraq and Syria to the South. Perhaps you missed to mention

Armenia as a bordering country. As you know the border with Armenia has been closed by Turkish government since 1994. This is one of the security challenges in our region. Do you have any plans to raise this issue with Ankara so that to help open the last closed border in free Europe? Secondly, in the light of political military developments and crisis situation in the Middle East, what is the vision of NATO on stopping the movement of foreign fighters to the Middle East? Free movement of mercenaries from the region forms a potential possibility of emergence of network of foreign fighters that would be difficult to detect and defeat. What's your view on the possible mechanisms to stop the flow of foreign fighters and increasing security guarantees for refugees in the Middle East and migrant hosted temporarily in some of front line States in the region? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary General.

JENS STOLTENBERG: First on Russia in Syria and Russia in the Arctic that was two of the questions from Julio. We have seen a significant build-up of Russia in Syria and we have seen it on land with especially air forces but also with ground troops and we have seen it in the territorial waters outside Syria and in the Eastern Mediterranean, and we have seen that they have conducted air strikes again and again against many different targets in Syria and we have seen that they have used both planes based in Syria but also missiles from the Caspian Sea, but now also planes from the aircraft carrier group Kuznetsov. So, they are using many different capabilities in and around Syria to attack targets in Syria, and they do this together with the Syrian regime and Syria and the Assad regime is, they are responsible for indiscriminate bombing of Aleppo, of other cities in Syria and we have seen the consequences, civilians are killed, innocent people are killed, and critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, are attacked and the humanitarian tragedy in Syria becomes even worse because we have seen a surge in the air attacks against Aleppo and other cities in Syria. This is something that has to stop because this is only adding to the human suffering in Syria. We all know that it's not easy but it is the only possible solution to the conflict in Syria is to continue to strive for a political solution, for a negotiated solution, and the first step is cease-fire, cessation of the hostilities and the free access and safe access of humanitarian aid to those most affected in Aleppo and in other cities. And then, based on that we need, a negotiated, lasting political solution because the bombing, which is conducted by the Syrian and the Russian air forces, is just adding to the human suffering in Syria.

Then on the Arctic. We have seen some more Russian presence in the Arctic. At the same time I think it is important to underline that the Arctic is still an area where we have low tensions and where we have a high degree of cooperation between NATO allies like like Norway and Denmark and and also the United States and Canada with Russia and under the umbrella of the Arctic Council, but also bi-laterally, there is a lot of cooperation and opportunity, for instance, the Norwegian fleet and also the Norwegian armed forces there is cooperation with the Russian north fleet and with the Russian military authorities at the Kola Peninsula related to, for instance, search and rescue and I will very much urge all the NATO allies in the Arctic region to continue to of course maintain military presence in the Arctic, but,

at the same time, continue to strive for low tensions and a high degree of cooperation, that is important for all of us. I think it also illustrates that, even in times with high tensions where tensions are running as high as now, we are able to also, in some areas, have a pragmatic working relationship with Russia as many NATO allies have with Russia in the higher North (sic). Then, oh yes, from Latvia:

I had the pleasure of speaking to President-elect Donald Trump on Friday and he expressed very strong support for the NATO alliance and he expressed a strong commitment on continued strong NATO or US support for the NATO alliance and US support for the security of Europe and collective defence. So, I look forward to work with him and I'm absolutely certain that also with the new Administration, we will have an Administration in the United States which is absolutely committed to the NATO alliance and he also stated, as he has stated in the election campaign, that he will strengthen further US defence capabilities and increase defence spending. But, of course, he also pointed out during the election campaign and in the phone call he and I had on Friday, the importance of increased defence spending among European allies, and that's something I absolutely, what should I say, understand, because actually all European allies and Canada we have decided, we have pledged, that we will stop the cuts and increase and aim at two percent within the decade and we were together around the table in Wales in 2014 and we promised Americans and others, who are already spending two percent, that the others will also reach two percent and we reiterated that pledge in Warsaw in July. So we, of course, we have to deliver, it's very hard to tell the Americans but also, for instance, in London and other countries which are spending two percent, that some allies are not going to meet the pledge are not going to make good on the promises we all made together. So, so we have to deliver we have made the pledge and we are a collective alliance, collective defence and if we expect Americans to make good on their promise to defend us, the Europeans, then of course we Europeans have to make good on our pledge to them to have a fair burden sharing. So that is something we have to work on all of us and that's actually a responsibility for you and me to make sure that happens. [applause] Thank you.

MODERATOR: Our next group of three begins with Soan (sic) of Slovenia, Irena of Ukraine and then Rosa of Lithuania. We'll begin with Soan of Slovenia.

Q: Thank you President. I wanted to raise a question about the necessity of an European army but seeing as my colleagues from France and Spain already asked that to you and you highlighted some points in your speech I withdraw the question, thank you.

MODERATOR: Irena of Ukraine.

Q: Thank you. Good day (inaudible). Thank you Secretary General for your comprehensive description of NATO's present and future policy. Today in Ukraine, in the third anniversary of the revolution of (inaudible), Ukrainians defended, they depended on European future and immediately after that Russia started aggression, occupied Crimea, undermines stability of

the eastern territories of Ukraine, now Ukraine allocates five percent of its GDP for defence. We Ukraine, highly appreciate as it from the very beginning NATO and NATO Parliament Assembly supported Ukraine and continued to do so, it's very important for us. During the last two days we have extensively discussed defence and deterrence in NATO's eastern and south eastern flanks in response to Russian aggression, in this context I would like to underline again that aggressive Russia is our number one security challenge, the (inaudible) Ukraine and NATO should unify efforts. Thus I would like to ask Ukraine is interested in maximum active partner's role in NATO future defence on the eastern and southeastern flank including in the Black Sea as non-member State. Do you see such role for Ukraine?

MODERATOR: For our speakers please remember that the acoustics in the room and please get very close to the microphone. We're going to turn to Rosa of Lithuania.

Q: Thank you Mr. President. Mr. Secretary General my question will be on NATO decision making process in crisis. When we rely on rapid reaction as deterrence reacting fast in an early phase of crisis is crucial as it is much more difficult to regain lost territory then not to allow to occupy it, so my question is whether the steps NATO has taken so far to streamline NATO decision making and to delegate some decisions to NATO military authorities as efficient in the face of a crisis or whether we still have some issues that we need to streamline and another critical aspect of course is the speed of the decision making process in our capitals. Can we be certain that if a crisis arises there will be no delays caused by national decision making procedures? Should certain allies take steps to review these proceedings on the national level? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you. First I forgot to answer the question from Romania and

MODERATOR: Armenia.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Armenia, ya, sorry ya. Armenia yes, and then because the first question was about borders and border issues between Turkey and Armenia and and that's a bi-lateral issue so I think it is it's an issue and and something that has been, that has to be raised on the bi-lateral level between Armenia and and and Turkey. The other question was related to foreign fighters and NATO is of course very concerned and very focused on the challenges and the threats related to homecoming or returning foreign fighters and that is one of the reasons why we have agreed and decided to do more when it comes to intelligence, improve the way we share and and work on intelligence but also to improve the mechanisms. We have, when it comes to sharing intelligence especially related to foreign fighters because that is a challenge for many NATO allies and as you know we have decided to establish a new division inside NATO headquarters which is dedicated to intelligence and there will be a new Assistant Secretary General, which main responsibility will be intelligence, reflecting the increased focus we are now attaching to intelligence especially related to countering terrorism and and foreign fighters is a part of that. Then Ukraine, Irena on Ukraine NATO provides strong political and strong practical support for Ukraine. We provide strong political

support stating again and again that we will never accept the illegal annexation of Crimea and we continue to support the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Ukraine. We also provide political support for Ukraine when it comes to the Minsk process and the only way to a peaceful lasting solution is the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and and safe and full access for the OCE observers, so they can monitor the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. And Russia has to stop supporting the separatists in Eastern Ukraine. We also provide practical support with our different trust funds helping build defence institutions and many NATO allies also provide direct bi-lateral support for instance when it comes to training and I visited Ukraine last year where I attended a big exercise on civil disaster management, NATO exercise that was hosted by Ukraine with NATO allies and partner countries. And of course you asked whether we would do more, yes we are constantly looking into what more we can do with Ukraine to strengthen our partnership to work more with Ukraine and and I met President Poroshenko recently in NATO headquarters and we are working on the implementation of the substantial package to make sure that we, in many different fields, are stepping up our cooperation and our support for Ukraine. Then Rosa from Lithuania, as you said, we have streamlined our decision making and we are also developing the plans the different kinds of contingency plans we have to make sure that we can make decisions and then rapidly implement plans and this is of course very closely connected to the increased readiness of NATO because as I said, having tripled the size of the NATO response force and having established a NATO Spirit Force, we are able also not only to make decisions and to have the plans but we also have capabilities which can be used on very short notice and we are also increasing our situational awareness, we will soon have new drones deployed in Sicily, alliance ground surveillance drones and around that whole system of of, as I say, managing or processing the information that the drones will gather or or collect and all of this better early warning, better intelligence, is also helping us to make the right decisions in time because we are more prepared, we have more time for notice when when we have better intelligence and better surveillance and we are stepping up and delivering concrete results in this areas. Then we are also doing exercises and that's also way to improve our decision making procedures and to challenge and to what should I say, prepare us also for difficult decisions which have to be made quickly in times of crisis. I would also like to say that we have examples for instance related to the military operation in Libya where NATO was able to make decisions very quickly to take the command and the control of the Libya operation back in 2011. We decided to invoke Article 5 just a few days after the attack on the United States in 2001 and the Aegean activity, which is not a combat operation, we were able to make the decision and to deploy ships in the Aegean, I think it was within 48 hours so there are different examples on how NATO, in very different tasks and missions, can make quick decisions when needed. Decision making is key to our deterrence and defence. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Our next group of three will begin with Richard from the UK, Ouvin (sic) of Norway and Raqli (sic) from Georgia. Richard you have the floor.

Q: Thank you President. I'm only half joking when I suggest that the questions these sessions could perhaps first be allocated to delegations from countries that are spending two percent on defence. The a, a matter has been raised with us by Commanders at NATO headquarters, that people of real calibre are allocated to them from alliance countries but not, but those Commanders not given the flexibility to use those people as they would wish for the tasks that they are given. Could I ask you to look at this to see whether greater flexibility could be given to Commanders to be able to use Staff Officers sent and and in how they're deployed? Thank you Secretary General for your plea for the, for actions to meet the aspirations of the Wales Summit for two percent to be spent, to make this easier a greater credibility could be given if the good work that you've done on transparency of NATO's funding and finances could be continued and we'd like to hear an update from you on this. I know great progress has been made but we continue to be concerned that greater transparency on the on the funding on the finances of NATO continues. And finally just to say to you that if European countries are looking for examples of how cooperation between European countries and defence matters work, could they look at the arrangement the Lancaster House Agreement between France and the United Kingdom, which is now deep and resilient and most importantly, increases the capacity of both countries to operate in the defence field therefore making our joint investment in defence go further.

MODERATOR: Ouvin (sic) of Norway.

Q: Thank you Mr. President. I'd like to thank the Secretary General for an excellent briefing but I would like you to go a little deeper into the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the roll of NATO. Russia continues to increase their military footprints in Syria, civilians are suffering and now we heard that the last operating hospital in Aleppo are attacked. Russian military operation in support of the Syrian regime has had many occasion also challenged allied operations against ISIL. The buildup of Russia forces in the area and its capacity for (inaudible) access and aerial (sic) (inaudible) could pose a future challenge far into allied territory. The question is what measure should be undertaken by NATO in order to address this challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean and NATO's southern border? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Raqli (sic) Georgia.

Q: Thank you Mr. President. Mr. Secretary General thank you for your insightful and comprehensive presentation. Dear colleagues, recent Parliamentary elections in Georgia once again underline country's democratic maturity and I'm proud to state that the election process in Georgia by all international relation missions was assessed positively. We will remain committed to core values of democracy and continue to be a reliable aspirant country. We are confident that Georgia's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions on the right track and we are determined to achieve this goal. Secretary General as you are aware Georgia is actively engaged in strategic discussions on the Black Sea security issues and from your point of view how this process can contribute to Georgia's resilience, defensibility and security? And finally I would like to know that next year NATO's PA spring

session will take place in Georgia and we would be honoured to host all of you in Tbilisi and Mr. Secretary General you personally. Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you so much. First some responses to the questions from Richard from United Kingdom. First on flexibility for NATO Commanders to be able to use the different Staffs or Officers which are assigned to them from different NATO allied countries. Well I, I think, you are pointing out an important thing or an important task or issue and, and and we have decided and we have just started to implement functional assessment of the NATO command structure, where we are actually looking into how is the NATO command structure functioning today and is there any need for changes that will be in the way the next step and of course this may be one of the elements that can be addressed as part of the process we have just started to address the functional assessment of the NATO command structure. Let me then add on a more personal note that I think that we have to admit to following; that nations very much like to control what they are sending to NATO, and sometimes there is a conflict between efficient, what should I say, management of the resources, and national control because if every nation wants maximum control, and each Officer and each person they are sending to NATO of course it's not so easy to manage the command structures. So, again I think this is partly what I do, we do at the NATO headquarters but I think it's also what you do in your different capitals trying to convince the nations that more flexibility, which will then, which will then mean some reduced control from capitals will actually, in the long run, benefit all of us. So, I will look (into the question of flexibility but I also, also on this issue depend on your support addressing or raising this issue in the different capitals because at the end it has to be capitals that allows us to have more flexibility at NATO headquarters. Then then two percent of the UK is one of the countries that meet the guideline of two percent. That's of great importance because UK then is able to finance many important capabilities for NATO but, UK is also an example for all the other allies that it is possible to reach the two percent target and and two percent defence spending is an issue I raised in all my meetings in capitals since I became Secretary General. I've continued to do so, I'm encouraged by the fact that we have stopped the cuts but we have a very very long way to go so there's no no way we can relax and I met with Prime Ministers, I met with Defence Ministers and Foreign Ministers but in some capitals I also asked to meet the Minister of Finance because the problem is never the Minister of Defence. He or she is always in favour of increased defence spending and normally also Foreign Ministers are and Defence Ministers and so on and so…and so I think it is important to also address those who are responsible for the budget, Prime Ministers and Ministers of Finance and I can tell you that when I was Minister of Finance in Norway back in the 1990's I was actually responsible for cutting defence spending and I was quite proud of that because I increased the budget surplus in Norway by cutting defence spending in Norway in the 1990's but then when I was Prime Minister I was actually responsible for starting to increase defence spending in Norway after the Russian attack on Georgia, the aggression against Georgia in 2008. And the reason why I tell you this is, that in one way it's completely understandable and I understand because I was part of it myself that when tensions went down after the Cold War it was in a

way natural that defence spending went down, but when tensions started to increase again then we have to be able to increase defence spending. So if we cut defence spending when tensions are decreasing, we have to be able to increase defence spending when tensions are increasing. So, and I've done both, both I have as a Norwegian politician both cut but also increased Norwegian defence spending as a response to changes in the security environment. Then briefly on financial transparency, that is of great importance. We are constantly working on that, all nations are involved. Nations are directly involved in the development, screening, approval and monitoring of all of NATO's spending plans and on the 4th of May the North Atlantic Council approved a new set of NATO financial regulations and a new set of financial regulations govern the financial administration of all NATO bodies and the aim is to provide even more transparency and involve nations even more because that is key for the involvement of nations and when we ask for more funds we of course we have to be transparent. Then very briefly you mentioned cooperation between France and UK and in general I welcome cooperation between NATO allies, because I think that that can increase the effectiveness and the way we utilize the funds which we allocate to defence and we have to spend more but we also have to spend better and in the speech I gave on Friday I allocated, I addressed also the need to do something with the fragmented European defence industry because the European defence industry is very fragmented and that adds costs to defence investments in Europe and I had some examples, and I try to remember it is like in the United States they have one armoured infantry fighting vehicle, one type but of course they have many many of them, in Europe we have nineteen different. In in in the United States they have three different types of of no they have they have they have three different types of naval frigates; in Europe we have twenty nine. So of course this adds a lot to the costs of Europe and and defence spending in Europe so we need more cooperation to reduce costs and get more out of the investments we make make in our armed forces. Then Ouvin (sic) from Norway, on Russia in Syria and how we respond and all the turmoil in Syria, well we are responding in many different ways. First we have increased NATO presence in Turkey, Turkey being the NATO ally bordering Syria and Iraq, bordering all the turmoil in Iraq and Syria. We have assurance measures, we have AWACS surveillance flights, we have more port visits of NATO ships and we have also Spain and Italy they have deployed missile batteries augmented Turkish air defences with patriot batteries and with something called Samp/T batteries in Turkey. I would like to see more assurance measures from NATO to Turkey as a response to all the instability and actually there are some gaps which are not filled. We made the decision to increase our presence in Turkey, we have implemented some of the measures but we still have a way to go so again I urge you to go back to your capitals and ask whether your nation can do more to fill those gaps. All NATO allies support the US coalition or the counter ISIL coalition fighting terrorism and ISIL in in Syria and of course we have increased our situational awareness, we are increasing our maritime presence in the Mediterranean with Sea Guardian and and this is also partly response to the increased presence of Russia in the area. Then Georgia, Georgia is a very close partner. We have increased NATO's presence in Georgia. We are helping with reforms, we are helping with building security operations and we have also established the new joint training centre, I

inaugurated that, I think it was late year and and we have the whole North Atlantic Council visited Georgia recently and I'm very much looking forward to attend the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Georgia next year, I think it is in May, and and that's just yet another example of how we are working closer together with Georgia as a very close partner. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Our next group of three we'll begin with Hans of Netherlands, Iva of the EU will follow and then Siabush (sic) of Azerbaijan, beginning with Hans.

Q: Thank you Mr. President, thank you Mr. Stoltenberg. My question and my remarks are directed at both the Secretary General as well as to our President. Mr. Stoltenberg you said that this political body, this assembly, that we have now together here in Istanbul is the political platform for discussion and political views, also differentiating views and you reminded us, you said it's a sober reminder that we've seen here with the failed coup attempt, a reminder to all of us how easily democracy can be lost and I agree with you, our delegation agrees with you but from that perspective I think from both the speeches of the President and the Secretary General we have missed a reminder also to what is happening since the coup. We've all expressed our solidarity with the Turks, the population that was brave enough to take to the streets, we've all expressed our solidarity to members of Parliament that are now incarcerated, but I think that was lacking from both of your speeches, no reference to any of those elements. Democracy also requires a little bit of spine and backbone if you want to stand firm for the values that we all share. We can express our solidarity over and over again and we have done so extensively, my country immediately after the coup, all the way up yesterday putting flowers to the great municipality of Istanbul, but it's also time now that we express our concern for ten elected members of Parliament that are in jail or house arrest [applause] on unclear charges that there's more journalists in jail in this country than in China, newspapers are being closed almost on a daily base and a 100,000 people were put either out of jobs and many of them are in jail as well. We cannot have free speech muzzled, free press being tied and think that we can still defend the free world. Our delegation regrets very much that from both speeches of the Secretary General and our President those references were lacking and I would like them to give the floor or the opportunity to do that right now. [applause]

MODERATOR: Before we go on to the [applause] before we go on to the next speakers I do want to respond Hans. I don't expect you to have total recall of my comments which of course I have in front of me in writing and as you at least others will recall, I specifically called out the issues of the concerns that we voiced in all of our hearings concerning the emergency measures, specifically stated our concerns of judicial processes, and specifically stated our concerns that judicial proceedings be based upon public and clear evidentiary findings and that these were the statements of all of our delegates in all of our hearings and meetings and that they were also the issues that we challenged the Foreign Minister, the Chief of Staff of Defence and also the Minister of Justice. So, I wouldn't want a mischaracterization of my comments to go without an answer I certainly hope that the rest of you recall that I addressed Mr. Erdogan directly when I raised those issues of concern from from our body because I

would not want him to have been misunderstanding that our welcome did not come with concerns.

Q: Okay, I'm very happy to give you the opportunity to reiterate that then.

MODERATOR: I will then turn it to Iva of…Iva of the…

Q: Thank you. Secretary General, here okay, both NATO and EU are confronted with many very real common security challenges not only the war zones that are close to our allies borders, but also threats that have no borders, blind terrorists attacks, uncontrolled migration and trafficking, refugee crisis and even cyber-attacks. We have indeed to work closer together and control and defend our borders, our people, our democratic values and as you well mentioned, freedom of speech. I would like to mention that you point out correctly that stronger EU makes a strong NATO now more than ever, and thank you for your efforts to work closer with our EU Higher Representative Mogherini for that. I would also be interested in hearing what is your evaluation of our existing common active operations and what are the new concrete actions that you might have been planning and developing notably in the fields of counter hybrid threats, coordinated exercises, cyber and capacity building of our partners and more specifically if you could in the Mediterranean Sea and Syria. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Siabush (sic) of Azerbaijan.

Q: Speaking in foreign language.

TRANSLATOR: Esteemed Secretary General I will be making my remarks in Turkish, therefore I ask that you put the headphones on for interpretation. Thank you very much for your remarks and also responding to questions. There is an important issue today that Russia's invasion has been spoken about, Armenia has invaded Azerbaijani territory over and over again is there any difference between a Russian invasion and an Armenia invasion because they are both invasions and thirdly you talked about Syria. Today all the terrorists in Syria are being placed in Azerbaijani soil by Armenia, they're being brought in to our territory and their support Armenia support to terrorism is known in the entire community and the participants have witnessed this today and yesterday as well. Armenia is also creating an army an armed force that is affiliated with Russia but they're also participants to the NATO PA, you need to choose a side, this invading army if they create an army with Russia and also come in to the NATO PA and sit here and ask you questions what is your take on this? Armenia spoke against territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia they have they make claims territorial claims against Turkey and Georgia and they've invaded Azerbaijan territory twenty times. I…[applause]

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you again. First on the question from Mr. Hans from the Netherlands, well as you stated and as I stated in my speech the coup attempt in July was a very dangerous and serious attack on democratic institutions in Turkey, they were defended by the people of Turkey but also by politicians, by Members of Parliament from all parties and

as I said in my speech I visited the National Assembly, the Parliament of Turkey in September and it made a lasting impression on me to see the damage on the National Assembly caused by the bombing of a F-16 during the night of the coup attempt. And of course we from NATO and I, expressed my solidarity with the people of Turkey defending the democratic institutions in July against a coup, and Turkey has the right to prosecute those who are behind those responsible for the failed coup attempt. I have stated in meetings that of course here in in in in Ankara earlier that this has to be done in accordance with the rule of law and when I met with the leadership in Turkey during my visit in September they assured me that that will be the case and they also told me that they would establish close cooperation with the Council, with the Council of Europe because the Council of Europe is the body in Europe which is responsible for the Convention on Human Rights and I welcome the cooperation and the contact that has been established between the Council of Europe and Turkey in the aftermath of the failed coup. So, working with the Council of Europe to ensure that the rule of law is implemented in accordance with the Convention is something I think is important and something I welcome and I have spoken several times with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, I spoke with him yesterday and he confirmed that they are in close contact with Turkey, working with them and and addressing how the process after the coup attempt can be conducted in a way which is in accordance with the rule of law and which is in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. So, I would like to see this cooperation continuing because I think that's an important tool to address the importance of the rule of law and human rights in the wake of the failed coup attempt and I will continue to stay in contact with the Council of Europe on this issues. Then ya, and also actually I in my speech I also underlined that I personally attach great importance to the core values of NATO which are democracy, rule of law and individual liberty and since the Council of Europe is responsible for the Convention of Human Rights I think that's a good platform for addressing exactly those issues and I welcome the cooperation between Turkey and the Council of Europe on these issues. Then Iva, on on on cooperation with the European Union, you raised many different issues but let me just briefly underline that yes stronger Europe is good for NATO, twenty two European Union members are also members of NATO and of course a stronger defence in these countries will contribute to stronger NATO. At the same time I have underlined it again and again that of course it is important how this is done because we should avoid a situation where we see that there are investments in parallel structures or competing structures. For instance command structures which are competing with NATO, that will be unnecessary duplication and therefore I welcome very much that it has been clearly stated from the EU that this is not about building command structures which are competing with the NATO command structures and that in a way will be meaningless because then we will start to compete with ourselves it's because twenty two NATO allies are EU members competition between NATO and the European Union is absolutely unnecessary because that will be to compete with ourselves. And second this is not about building a European army and this is not about the EU starting to do collective defence but based on this and also based on that this is, what should I say, done in a transparent and inclusive way with non-EU allies I welcome. And this has been clearly stated from EU and I also welcome the very close

cooperation between my staff and the staff of the European Union and Federica Mogherini and the personal involvement I and Mogherini have together and also the cooperation I have with the Presidents Tusk and Junker on exactly these issues. So I'm confident that we can do this in a good way for EU for Europe and for NATO and that's what we are working on now. And that will be on many different issues but including on the hybrid threats, cyber, we are increasing our presence in the Central Mediterranean so we will start to also support the operation Sophia and so on and High Representative Federica Mogherini and I, we will present a long list of concrete proposals by December, both to the European Union and to NATO, so we can agree on a practical way to expand our cooperation. This cooperation will be based on the principles which are long time established for NATO EU cooperation it will not change anything about related to the integrity and the autonomy of NATO and the European Union and it will be in full respect of non-EU allies and, coming from Norway which is a non-EU ally, of course I attach great importance to that we respect also the interests of those NATO members that are not members of the European Union. Then on our Armenia and Azerbaijan I have stated clearly that NATO do not play a role in the negotiations aiming at solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We are supporting the efforts in the OSCE framework, the Minsk group to address this conflict. We take interest in this process and encourage all sides to continue their efforts to aim at the peaceful resolution of the conflict, peaceful resolution of conflicts is a core value for NATO and it's one of the core commitments that all partner countries commit to when joining the PFP and NATO will continue to support the Minsk group process. NATO Armenia relations and NATO Azerbaijan relations should not be conditioned on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, so this is NATO position and then we will continue to support the efforts to find a solution within the OSCE framework.

MODERATOR: Our next series of questioners will begin with Lorenzo from Italy, Omar from Israel and then Osmond from Turkey. We will begin with Lorenzo.

Q: Speaks foreign language.

TRANSLATOR: Thank you Chair. Mr. Secretary General one of the problems where our countries most involved in recent years is having to face the refugee crisis and relief operations inside the Mediterranean, this year we will being assisted 170,000 people there have been more than 5,000 dead in our Mediterranean. Navy and our Coast Guard are very active in this area and we also express our appreciation for the support operations to the EU operation with the Sea Guardian. In recent months we sent 300 personnel to set up a field hospital in Libya and to provide medical assistance to the Libyan forces, obviously one fundamental point is to consolidate the new Libyan government. There are different positions on the part of some countries in this area. It is equally important for NATO to become an actor in this area in order to ensure that the Libyan government is united and therefore consolidate the formation of a stable Libyan government, so I would like to ask you to do what you intend to do in the coming months in order to guarantee greater strength and consolidation and unity to the European government. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Omar of Israel.

Q: Secretary General you talked about the importance of deterrence in the measures NATO is taking. I have two questions; first we are experiencing the brutal expansion of DAESH in the Middle East. DAESH to called on large areas in Iraq and Syria but in danger is additional regimes in moderate countries such as Lebanon and Jordan. Does NATO take such potential threats into consideration to assist such countries if needed? The second question, we are experiencing as well the acceleration and increase of Russian presence in Syria and among others building air and marine Russian bases there. Apart from strengthening the presence of NATO in Turkey, which you already mentioned, is NATO considering in order to deter Russia to strengthen its presence in Lebanon and Jordan? Thank you.

MODERATOR: Osmond of Turkey.

Q: Speaks in foreign language.

TRANSLATOR: Thank you very much Mr. Chair and distinguished Secretary General. I'd like to reiterate that I take great pleasure in having hosted the NATO PA General Assembly in Istanbul and Mr. Secretary General came to Ankara in September and made consultations about the coup attempt of July 15th and for that reason I'd like to thank him personally. He's had meetings with all political parties in the Assembly and I accompanied him and availing myself of this opportunity I'd like to thank NATO for supporting us in our struggle against terror. My comment would be about I mean it would be a response rather to the head of the delegation from the Netherlands remark about journalists in prison. The duty of Members of Parliament is to serve the people and propagate laws in the Assembly and an MP is a Member of Parliament's task is not to assist terrorist or propagate for terrorists it's not to traffic arms to them or to call on them for an uprising. No Parliamentarian is above the law. Everything that is being conducted here is being done, so within the frame of the Constitution and law, no Parliamentarian can say that they do not recognize the laws of that country or that they won't give statements to those judges or not accept the ruling of those courts. If these were to occur in your country what would your assessment be for these Members of Parliament? No one is above the laws of the country, as is no Member of Parliament. Right now those called in for a statement including the head of the main opposition party Mr. Kilicdaroglu, Mr. Barcelli, and other MP's have all given their statements. These Members of Parliament have expressed that they do not recognize the laws of this country, that is why the necessary adjudication within the frame of law is what they will be facing; a duty of a Member of Parliament is to serve the people that has elected them it's not to propagate for terrorism or call for an uprising. That's why the files pertaining to them need to be examined while one needs to know what they're being charged with well before taking the floor. There have been those who have been released after their statements. When a Member of Parliament attends the funeral of a terrorist that kills your people in your country what would you do, what would be the peoples reaction that is what you need to understand. All the actions taken after the failed coup attempt of July 15th is within the frame of the law and what we've seen in the

remarks here we've listened to your criticisms and we will make the necessary consultations with the relevant Ministers and the [applause] National Assembly as well in light of those comments.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you so much. First to Lorenza from Italy who asked about the refugee crisis and first of all I think we all have to remember this is really a profound humanitarian tragedy and people lose their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean and we have seen a record high number of people losing their lives these years, in this year so so I think we have to remember that this is an ongoing tragedy. The response to this strategy requires a wide range of measures and of course NATO do not possess all the tools. Many of them are about economic tools, diplomatic tools, political tools so this is a responsibility for all international community and especially, of course, the countries in Europe which are most affected. But NATO is working together with other international organizations, especially the European Union, in addressing the refugee crisis in different ways. First of all, we help to address the root causes and when NATO is so focused on what we call projecting stability to stabilize countries in our neighbourhood, that it is also important for addressing the root causes of the refugee and migrant crisis. So our presence in Afghanistan is a way to address root causes to help stabilize Afghanistan but for instance when we work with other countries in the Mediterranean region and the Middle East that is also about addressing the root causes so for instance when we work with Iraq, a partner nation in fighting ISIL, training Iraqi Officers that's also one of many ways to try to stabilize the region and thereby also reducing the number of people that are forced to flee their country. We have increased our presence in the Mediterranean; we have our presence in the Aegean Sea which I think has been a successful contribution to cutting the lines of illegal migration. We have seen the numbers of illegal crossings of the Aegean has gone dramatically down and NATO is playing a key role providing practical support to the Greek and the Turkish Coast Guard and FRONTEX and now we are also deploying assets, capabilities to the Central Mediterranean in support of the EU operation Sophia. So I believe that we can do more but we are already stepping up our efforts in different fields related to the migrant and refugee crisis. Then Omar from Israel, we are not doing much in Lebanon but we are very present in Jordan. Jordan is one of our close partners. We support Jordan in different ways through our partnership with them we help build defence institutions, we train, we have defence capacity building measures and all recognise that Jordan is a kind of island of stability in a sea of instability and I strongly believe it is important to support Jordan now and prevent Jordan experiencing more difficulties, so prevention is much better than intervention and that's the reason why I think it's important in general to support countries in North Africa and the Middle East which are stable to prevent them moving into more dangerous waters and become instable or unstable States themselves. So we will continue to work with Jordan and and Jordan is also contributing to different NATO operations and missions and we are also working in fighting terrorism and DAESH in many different ways by supporting the efforts of the counter ISIL coalition and by building local capacity, training local forces in different countries in the region because I believe that's the most efficient tool in the fight against extremism and terrorism. Then

Osmond from Turkey well as you said we met in September and you you made it possible for me to visit the Parliament and as I've already stated that has made a lasting impression on me to see the damage caused by the failed coup, the bombing and and the shelling of the Parliament and I also saw damage on other government buildings and that was a stark reminder of how serious this failed coup attempt was. But I would also like to underline that it was during that visit in September that you informed me and the Turkish leadership informed me they are establishing, and they have established, cooperation with the Council of Europe addressing the issue of rule of law and the European Convention on Human Rights and I welcome that and I've been in contact with Thorbjorn Jagland Secretary General of the Council of Europe and he has assured me that they are working closely with Turkey on these issues and I and I think that is of great importance. Thank you.

MODERATOR: We're coming to an end so we're going to ask that each of the next questioners limit their time to one minute so that the Secretary General can be on schedule. The first questioner will be Mike from the U.K., Mohammad from Algeria and Rob from the United States. Mike.

Q: Thank you Mr. President my question relates to Russia and the way in which Russia is exploiting the internal divisions both between our member States and also interfering in our internal election processes. What measures is NATO collectively going to take to deal with cyber warfare and the way in which Russia is exploiting technologies and new ways of undermining us and, in that context, isn't it time we also made absolutely clear that Article 5, is a serious commitment and that all our political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic should understand what Article 5 means?

MODERATOR: Mohammad, Algeria.

TRANSLATOR: Mr. Secretary General NATO strategy to fight against DAESH in Libya. What should NATO do to also protect Libya's neighbours in maintaining peace on their soil? Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much. First of all I would like to say to our colleague Mr. Turner thank you for your term as President for what you have done for this assembly we're very proud of your efforts on our behalf and for the Secretary General thank you for what you are doing for NATO we're very proud of the efforts that you are putting forward there. I think everyone here is aware that there is a very real concern in the United States including our Congress about the strength on durability of European allies' contribution to these particular efforts. Mr. Secretary General as you know the US is continuing to enhance its commitments to deterrents in Europe chiefly through the European Reassurance Initiative. We are well aware of the very important European contributions thus far but I would just like to underscore the importance that these continue and become stronger as time goes on especially given the different view-points at the threat posed by Russia. Mr. Secretary General how confident are you in the sustainability of unified deterrence efforts over the long term?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Let me start with the last question and I am very confident because we have seen again and again that NATO is able to adapt. For forty years NATO was focused on collective defence during the Cold War from 1949 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in ’89. Our main task was to counter to balance and to respond the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and then after the end of the Cold War people started to ask do we need NATO anymore, is there any relevance of an alliance which was established to respond to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact after the end of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and we saw that NATO was able to adapt and to respond to a very different world and we saw the importance of project stability beyond our borders and we started to do that in the Balkans, helped to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and also to stop the the atrocities against people in Kosovo and then we went into Afghanistan and we have played a key role in managing crisis and projecting stability in our neighbourhood. Then after 2014 and the Russian aggression against Ukraine, we have adapted again and now we do both collective defence in Europe and we manage crisis and project stability beyond our borders and we do both tasks at the same time. And we have also proven that while we have a long way to go when it comes to defence spending, but after years of decline, we have turned a corner and started to increase as a response to a changed and more demanding security environment. So I am quite optimistic when it comes to NATO’s ability to adopt because we have been able to do that again and again throughout history in response to a changing security environment when the world change NATO is changing and and there are differences, there are different views. We represent different nations, different cultures, different political traditions but again and again and again we have proven that we are able to come together and agree on what matters for NATO and that is our will and our commitment to defend each other and that is great to see. And I and I very much welcome the very strong statement also from President-elect Donald Trump that he will be committed to European security and to NATO and to Article 5, and as I stated many times my responsibility is then to make sure that those allies are not investing enough in defence step up and do that and and I have already stated how much importance I attach to that issue. So I am optimistic NATO will continue to deliver the (inaudible) on defence and collective defence. Then Algeria on what NATO does to stabilize neighbours of Libya well first of all we have so many close allies as well as partners in the region. We have something called the Mediterranean Dialogue where we have partners throughout North Africa including Algeria and Tunisia and then we are working especially close with Tunisia. We have started different programs there to help them improve their special operation forces. We have helped them to develop intelligence services and we also work with the other countries in the region to help them strengthen their defence capabilities and we will continue to work with them both in a political dialogue but also as part of a defence capacity building efforts with many countries in the region. So we are focused on what we can do and NATO allies can do to stabilize and to support neighbours of Libya. Then then Mike asked me about Russia and Russia is what should I say interference in NATO allied countries. We have seen increased presence of Russia in many different ways in different NATO allied countries. We have seen them conducting propaganda and we are aware of that, we see it and my answer is that our response to propaganda is not propaganda but our response to propaganda is

facts because we believe that in the long run the truth will prevail so we are increasing our cooperation, we are increasing our work when it comes to strategic communications. That's a NATO responsibility but of course most of all it is a responsibility from for the different NATO allied countries to counter and to take part in debate and discussions countering false accusations and statements from Russia and Russia inspired institutions and organizations. But we should always be what should I say very clear on the message that we believe that open democratic societies are more resilient, are able to resist propaganda from other countries, we should never limit the scope and the room for open democratic debate because that is actually the key to our resilience and that's one of the core values we are defending. On cyber we have seen many or several NATO allies reporting about cyber-attacks and for instance the United States have stated clearly that they deem that this or assess that this that Russia is behind and we take this very seriously. Again the first responder is to different nations but NATO is helping to improve our cyber defences, we are doing that in many different ways. We are developing the cooperation, we are we have made a decision at the Warsaw Summit to have a cyber defence pledge which is a road map different concrete measures to strengthen the cyber defences and NATO is of course focused on how we can defend our own cyber networks but also how we can help nations which are under a cyber-attack to defend their networks and their systems. Of course so we have teams which are ready to be deployed on a short notice to help respond to cyber-attacks. Cyber-attacks is something we take very seriously, we decided also at the Warsaw Summit to establish cyber as a domain in line with air, sea, land and cyber because this is something which we have to understand is an integrated part of almost any conflict now and in the future. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary General I want to thank you for taking our questions. Our time with you has come to a close. We appreciate your making yourself available to the Assembly and your close work and your work in NATO to strengthen all of our security. Thank you. [applause]

And that is also actually what we managed to do in Warsaw. At the Summit we made important decisions on collective defence, on projecting stability and on working together with the EU to strengthen our cooperation with the EU. And I will address briefly these issues and then I'm more than happy to take questions on all the other issues and also elaborate more on collective defence, projecting stability and NATO during the Q&A session.

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