North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Speech

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Plenary Session (London, Queen Elizabeth II Center)
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(As delivered)

Dear Madeleine,

First of all let me just say that I also appreciated working with you, David, and it is a strange thing that you are no longer to be here leading these meetings, but it has been a really great honour for me also to be working with you for all the time, for all the years I served as Secretary General of NATO.

Dear friends, it is a great pleasure to see you again.

And let me start by expressing a special thanks to our hosts, the UK Government and the UK Parliamentary Delegation.

It is a particular honour to be here in London, in this important year of anniversaries.

NATO not only celebrates our 70th anniversary, 70 years since the creation of our Alliance.

But also 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

An important milestone for the Alliance and for the new democracies who joined NATO after the Cold War.

So we may have real causes to celebrate, but we have no reason to become complacent.

That is why I am delighted to have this opportunity to discuss with you today.

Not only about what we have achieved.

But more importantly, about where we are going.

NATO is the most successful Alliance in history.

For over seven decades, it has created an area of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

And prevented devastating conflict, which had marred so much of Europe’s history for so long.

London itself witnessed the heavy cost of war.

And the UK has always made a major contribution to European and transatlantic security.

A bold, outward-looking and responsible global power.

Which I know it will continue to be.

This city is part of NATO's history.

Our first home was less than a half hour walk from here, at 13 Belgrave Square.

Lord Ismay, our first Secretary General, helped turn NATO into a political, as well as a military alliance.

And in 1990, London hosted the meeting where NATO Leaders agreed to 'extend the hand of friendship' to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The UK has always been a highly valued member of our alliance.

It leads by example, spending 2% of its GDP on defence, and by investing in new capabilities and innovation.

Regardless of the UK's changing relationship with the European Union, the UK commitment to NATO remains unchanged.

If anything, it will only become more important.

So we are delighted to be 'coming home' to London in December, and grateful to the UK for helping us to close this year of celebration.

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As an Alliance, we face many challenges today.

The balance of power is shifting.

And our values are under pressure.

China is now the second largest economy.

And the second largest defence spender in the world.

The rise of China presents opportunities.

But opportunities that also come with risks.

Russia is not the partner we once hoped for.

It continues to threaten its neighbours, disregard international law, and interfere in our societies.

Instability in the Middle East and North Africa continues.

Despite the enormous strides we have made against Da’esh in Iraq and Syria.

Increasingly, the lines between peace and war are being blurred.

Our adversaries are using hybrid tactics to undermine our institutions, our values, and our democracies.

So the list is long.

And I am ready to answer your questions on all of these challenges.

But in my opening remarks I would like to focus on three of them:

Afghanistan,

arms control,

and disruptive new technologies.

These are all challenges NATO Leaders will discuss when they meet in London at the end of this year.

First, Afghanistan.

The day after 9/11, NATO invoked Article 5 of our founding treaty for the first and only time in our history.

This was not just an attack against the United States.

It was an attack against freedom and democracy everywhere in the world.

This is why NATO Allies and partners continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in Afghanistan.

To make the Afghan security forces stronger, so that they can fight international terrorism, and create the conditions for lasting peace in Afghanistan.

I commend the Afghan forces, and the Afghan men and women for what they have achieved, and I commend the Afghan people who exercised their democratic right to vote in the recent presidential elections.

NATO supported the peace talks.

We would welcome the resumption of these peace talks, but then Taliban must show willingness to make real compromises at the negotiating table.

Unfortunately, what we see now is that the Taliban are escalating violence, not ending it.

This demonstrates a lack of commitment to lasting peace, and it proves the need for firm and credible guarantees for any future peace deal.

NATO remains committed to Afghanistan and to ensure the country never again becomes a safe haven for international terrorists.

Second, Russia's challenge to arms control.

We have seen this most recently with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

For years, the United States and NATO pressed for Russia to verifiably destroy its treaty-violating SSC-8 missiles, and to come back into full compliance.

But instead, Russia took a different path.

It developed and deployed intermediate-range missiles in Europe for the first time in decades.

Missiles that are nuclear capable, mobile, very hard to detect, and can reach European cities with little warning.

All Allies supported the United States' decision to withdraw from the Treaty, because no treaty is effective if it is only respected by one side.

While we must respond to the presence of new Russian missiles in Europe, we will not mirror what Russia does.

NATO has no intention to deploy land-based nuclear missiles in Europe.

We do not want a new arms race.

We remain open for constructive dialogue with Russia, and committed to effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

And at the same time, we will continue to maintain credible deterrence and defence.

To keep our people safe.

That is the core purpose of NATO.

The third challenge I will mention is innovation, and the rapid pace of technological change.

Artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems, big data, and biotech.

Extraordinary technologies that are changing our lives.

That have the potential to revolutionise our societies, and to change the nature of warfare.

Throughout NATO's history, our deterrence and defence has depended on maintaining our technological edge.

We achieved this by investing more in research and development than our rivals.

But today, we can no longer take our technological edge for granted.

China, for example, intends on becoming the world's leading power in artificial intelligence by 2030.

Our security depends on our ability to understand and adopt emerging technologies.

And NATO plays a key role.

It coordinates defence planning among nations, ensuring Allies are developing and investing in the best technologies for our defence.

It creates common standards and procedures, ensuring we continue to work effectively together, including in this new domain.

And NATO can serve as a platform, as a forum for Allies and partners to consider the difficult practical, ethical and legal questions that will inevitably arise from these new technologies.

For example, how to deal with the advent of entirely autonomous weapons systems that can locate, identify and kill with no human interaction?

How do we ensure effective arms control when the challenge is not counting warheads, but measuring algorithms?

Or how to do we respond to the increasing use of off-the-shelf drones for surveillance, or to attack and disrupt civilian infrastructure?

So there are many challenges which are connected to how NATO is responding to the development of new and disruptive technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every one of these challenges depends on NATO maintaining strong deterrence and defence.

And every one of these challenges requires your support as parliamentarians.

Every single day.

I was, as I told you before, a parliamentarian for 20 years.

So I know the difficult debates that must be had.

Particularly when it comes to deciding budgets, and allocating resources for defence.

When other domestic priorities, such as health or education, are more pressing.

But our security is the foundation for everything else.

We cannot take it for granted.

Especially as our world becomes more unpredictable, and as our security challenges grow.

In recent years, NATO Allies have made progress,

More Allies are meeting the 2% guideline.

Defence spending has increased across European Allies and Canada for five consecutive years.

And by the end of next year, those Allies will have added one hundred billion extra dollars for defence spending.

So we have really turned a corner.

And I thank you whole-heartedly for that progress, for continuing to make a strong case for investing in our shared security.

Your experience and expertise is essential as we navigate the complexities of our modern world.

Afghanistan, arms control, new technologies and many more challenges besides.

They require the wisdom that only our democratically elected parliaments can offer.

And perhaps even more important, is your role as the direct link between the almost one billion people we protect.

We must continue to demonstrate that working together is always better than going it alone.

NATO is an Alliance of values.

Of liberty, democracy and the rule of law.

For 70 years, it has kept our people and our nations safe.

And with your support it will keep us safe for many more years to come.

Before taking your questions let me just say a few words about the ongoing situation in Syria.

The situation is of great concern.

I met with President Erdoğan as well as Minister Çavuşoğlu and Minister Akar in Istanbul on Friday.

I shared with them my serious concerns about the ongoing operation and the risk of further destabilising the region, escalating tensions, and even more human suffering.

Turkey has legitimate security concerns.

No other Ally has suffered more terrorist attacks.

No other Ally is more exposed to the instability, violence and turmoil from the Middle East.

And no other Ally hosts so many refugees from Syria.

Nevertheless, I expect Turkey to act with restraint and in coordination with other Allies so that we can preserve the gains we have made against our common enemy – Da'esh.

A few years ago, Da'esh controlled significant territory in Iraq and Syria.

Working together in the Global Coalition, we have liberated all this territory and millions of people.

These gains must not be jeopardised.

An imminent concern is that captured terrorists must not be allowed to escape.

The international community must find a coordinated and sustainable solution to deal with foreign fighters held in Syria.

With that I am ready to take your questions, and as I said in the opening I'm ready to also answer questions about all the other issues I didn't mention in my opening remarks.

So, many thanks

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: I will announce those called to ask questions in groups of three, so that you will be prepared. Anyone who'd like to ask the Secretary General a question should let me know as soon as possible. As I explained in the Standing Committee, it's highly unlikely that I will be able to call more than one member from each delegation, because of the limited time that we have. I'm now going to set a time limit of one minute for questions, to ensure that as many delegations as possible can participate. The Secretary General has said that the list that we have, which is now closed, if we don't get to those already on the list, he will respond in writing, and I think that's a very generous offer. So,

Secretary General, we have three first questions from Richard Benyon from the UK, Gerald Connelly from the US and the Miguel Angel Guttierrez from Spain.

Question: Secretary General, thank you for your kind words about the United Kingdom and welcome to London. Can I cheekily suggest two items that should be on the agenda for the NATO Leaders' meeting in December here in London, first one you've mentioned at the end there. Not an issue that's popular with constituents, but one that I think really is important, which is about the jihadist fighters and the tragic circumstances sometimes around families and children of those in conflict zones. And it is really important, I believe, that nations like ours should take responsibility for the human detritus of conflict and I really hope that this is an issue that is going to be tackled, because it has been highlighted under the circumstances in north east Syria. And the second is around Magnitsky legislation. We've had Bill Browder here talking to us about the ability to tackle those who do wrong and human rights abuses through our legal system and I hope that that would be on the agenda.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you. Sorry, I'm going to be strict with everybody. If I'm not, we won't get through the questions. Gerry?

Question: Thank you Madam Chairman and welcome Mr Secretary General, and we were delighted to have you before the United States Congress, as the first Secretary General to address. Real quickly, would you address the internal as well as external challenge that faces the Alliance? There's backsliding in some quarters in terms of those shared values you mentioned that we certainly believe are a part of the Alliance. What can NATO do to try to ensure that we are committed to those shared values and we don't see erosion from within? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Miguel?

Question: Thank you Madam President and Secretary General. I would like to speak in Spanish. [interpreted] Thank you, Secretary General. I would like to ask you a question. At the Parliamentary Assembly, for a long time, we've been working on the significant development for those countries in the EU that are in the southern borders of the EU, the challenges that countries south of the Mediterranean mean for us and the Atlantic Alliance. We've done our homework, we've reached agreement, as President Madeleine Moon said, with the African Union that is represented here, and today we will be reporting on the MENA region situation, and I think the Assembly has played its role. What role will the rest of the Atlantic Alliance be carrying out now and will you convey to the other Allies whether you are going to highlight and give the necessary importance to this threat coming from the south, to the Atlantic Alliance, from Africa? Thank you very much.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you so much. I can start with the last question. First of all, so NATO has a 360 degree approach, so of course everything that happens also to the south of NATO matters for the whole Alliance. Then of course, depending a bit on where in NATO you stand, the south may be a bit different places, but I think mostly

when we speak about the south, we think about North Africa and the Middle East. And NATO is, or is addressing those challenges in many different ways. We have to remember that our biggest military operation ever is in Afghanistan, which is about fighting terrorism. We have the training mission in Iraq, which is about fighting terrorism. And then we are working closely with partners in North Africa and the Middle East, as Tunisia and Jordan, to help them build their military capabilities, intelligence services, command and control, to help them stabilise their own countries. Then we also have the Sea Guardian presence in the Mediterranean. I think there is a potential for NATO to do more, but the precondition for NATO to do more is that Allies agree. So, actually one of the things, challenges I'm working on is to create the necessary political consensus within the Alliance to step up and do even more when it comes to addressing the challenges stemming from the south.

Then on the US, first of all it was a great honour to speak to the US Congress, that was really an honour and a recognition to NATO and it provided also an excellent platform for me to highlight that NATO's strong transatlantic bond is of course good for Europe, but it's also good for United States. It is good to have friends. And no other country, no other power, great power, has more friends and Allies than the United States. This has proven extremely important after 9/11, but it is also important if we for instance address the challenges related to the rise of China. If anyone, United States are concerned about the rise of China, then of course it is even more important to keep friends and Allies as NATO close. You asked in particular about values. Well, NATO is based on core values; individual liberty, rule of law, democracy. And I highlight and I underscore and I stress the importance of these values in my meetings, in my speeches, because these values are actually what we are based on. Then I know that there are concerns and I think that the… one important role that NATO plays is that we are bringing Allies together, we provide a platform for Allies in an open way to discuss those concerns and raise those concerns. So, for instance, it's the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, that’s an idea platform to have a democratic open debate on concerns which I know exist. NATO cannot enforce any decisions on national parliaments, but what we can is to provide a platform for open democratic discussions where also Allies are free, and actually welcome, to raise concerns about to what extent we are all able to live up to those standards. The last thing I would say about this is that, even if there are concerns, and I accept that and I raise this issue in different capitals when I travel around, we have to remember that NATO has really contributed to the spread of democracy and rule of law, especially throughout Europe after the end of the Cold War. The enlargement of NATO, together with the enlargement of the European Union, has by far been one of the biggest gains for those values for decades. So yes, there are problems, but in the bigger picture NATO has really made a difference, strengthening rule of law, democracy, throughout the former members of the Warsaw Pact, Central Eastern European countries, that were not democratic countries at all until the end of the Cold War.

Then the UK, well to be honest the last part of your question I didn’t really get, but if it's about human rights, it's partly the same, that these are core values for NATO. Peace and stability is

absolutely essential for human rights. The fight against terrorism is essential for human rights. So, this is partly about protection our own countries, but it is also working with partners beyond NATO territory, to help to stabilise them, to help them to promote our values. And if they are more stable, we are more secure, and that's one of the main tasks of NATO, to work with partners also outside the NATO territory.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you. We now have the following Heads of Delegation, Mr Christian Cambon from the French Delegation, Mr Sven Koopmans, Head of the Netherlands Delegation and Mr Luca Frusone from the Italian Delegation. So, Christian first.

Question [interpreted]: Thank you Madam President. Mr Secretary General, we are of course very worried by the situation in Turkey. We know, as you do, the challenges that Turkey has to face up to, you've mentioned them. However, nothing authorises an Ally to carry out, to help Daesh maybe reconstitute its presence in a territory in which we have fought very hardly for. This situation is unacceptable and France firmly condemns this situation and has suspended its arms sales and it calls on Turkey to cease its offensive. We have been surprised, Mr Secretary General, by the tone of your statements in Istanbul. Were this the consequence of consultation with our major Ally, the US? Don't you think it is now up to the NAC to mention these issues and to defend the values of democracy and pay that characterise NATO's work? Thank you very much.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Sven? Sven Koopmans?

Question: Thank you Madam President and thank you Mr Secretary General. The Turkish invasion in Syria is causing a lot of suffering and creating insecurity, and we see now a resurgence and emergence of terrorists. What are you proposing to do to counter this action and what can NATO itself do in terms of denying support and means that may be used by the forces of President Erdoğan? Thank you.

Question [interpreted]: Italy has long had a NATO mission in Turkey to protect Turkish airspace and the local population from missile strikes. The mission has run its course, but some time ago we decided to stay in place because we believe in NATO's values, because we believe that all Allies should do their share, because we believe that multilateralism is the way to go. But some Allies, like Turkey, decided to take action unilaterally against people who helped us defeat Daesh, bringing chaos to the region again and endangering Allies on Turkish soil, as the Italians. This action will strengthen Russia's position in this area and will further destabilise other important countries for Allies like Italy, Libya being one of these. A mention must be made of the newly displaced persons and civilian victims. It is NATO's duty to protect all of its Allies or we will be witnessing a unilateralist drift that will undermine the Alliance and values it represents. So, if you were in Italy's position, would you withdraw your troops from the mission

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: All the questions were about Turkey and the situation in northern Syria, so I will answer them together. I expressed my deep concern, and

I did that in Istanbul, because I am deeply concerned. And I think what has happened since Friday has just underpinned and underscored those concerns. Because we see a very unstable situation, we see human suffering, and that's exactly why I expressed not only my concern for the ongoing military operation, but my serious concern for the ongoing military operation and for the risk of increasing tensions, further destabilising the situation, and more human suffering. I also highlighted exactly what some of your alluded to, that we must not put in jeopardy the gains we have made against our common enemy. There are many challenges and many problems, and there's still violence and instability in Iraq and Syria, but at least we have made enormous progress by liberating the territory that was controlled by Daesh not so long ago. And that progress, the liberation of these territories held by Daesh, was something we all did together in the Global… the US-led Coalition to defeat Daesh. All NATO Allies are a part of that coalition. NATO as an Alliance is part of the Coalition and it was a great achievement to liberate the territory they controlled. And that's also the reason why I, in Istanbul on Friday, expressed my concerns that we may see that these gains are now put in jeopardy. So, I conveyed exactly the same message as I did from the lectern here today, in Istanbul on Friday. Then I also say that we have to… the only way you can understand what is going on there is also to understand the important role Turkey has played. Turkey is important for NATO. It has proven important in many ways, not least in the fight against Daesh. We have used… so, NATO Allies, the Global Coalition, all of us have used infrastructure in Turkey, bases in Turkey, in our operations to defeat Daesh. And that's exactly one of the reasons I am concerned about what is going on now, because we risk undermining the unity we need in the fight against Daesh. And Daesh has… they don't control any territory any longer, but I visited Baghdad and the NATO training mission in Iraq not so many weeks ago, and it was clearly conveyed to me, a message, that Daesh still exists. Daesh is still there, underground, operating sleeping cells. So, Daesh has not disappeared, Daesh may come back, and that makes it even more important that we do whatever we can to maintain the unity in the fight against Daesh, because that's our common enemy. And then I expressed, and I repeated that today, that the most immediate concern is the concern about those terrorists, Daesh fighters, who have been captured which we now risk that can be set free. So, I think we share those concerns. And then the challenge is that we need a more coordinated approach from the international community in general and from NATO Allies in particular, to deal with the issue of foreign fighters. We have not been that successful so far and I think we should see more commitment and stronger efforts to try to find a coordinated, international solution to how to deal with the foreign fighters.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you, Secretary General. We now have the next set of three from the heads of the… Karl Lamers from the German Delegation, Mariori Giannakou from Greece, Theo Francken from Belgium. Karl first.

Question: Excellency. Dear Secretary General, first of all thank you very much for your efforts to keep the Alliance together. I turn to Afghanistan; Resolute Support is successful in training, advising and assisting the Afghan national defence and security forces. The progress made is

visible. Germany and many other countries supported, in close coordination with the United States, to achieve political progress for the future of Afghanistan. My question is, how do you see the possibility for NATO to stay included in the political and diplomatic process and can you assure us that we will be able to decide, condition-based, in time and together, on the way forward? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Mariori?

Question: Mr Secretary General, as you know, the EU, according to the treaty of the Union, prepares a common security and defence policy, including military capacities. What do you think about a formal cooperation between NATO and the security and defence system of the EU? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: And finally, Theo?

Question: Yeah, thank you, dear Secretary General. Yesterday, Hervin Khalaf was murdered. She was a famous Kurdish human rights activist. She was the Secretary General of the Future Syria Party. She was murdered by Turkey-backed jihadists, following multiple independent sources. Hervin wasn't a terrorist. Hervin wasn't a YPG, she wasn't PKK. She was a young woman engaging for her people, for human rights, just like all of us I think. I hope. The Kurds aren't our enemies, they are our allies. They were and are our allies in the fight against ISIS. We cannot let ISIS regain power or strength. The Kurdish people aren't a threat. Daesh is a threat to us all; they attacked our people in London, Madrid, also in Brussels, Belgium, Paris, Stockholm, Nice, and other places. The real terrorists are now escaping from prison. NATO must act. The Belgium Delegation wants an urgent gathering of NATO Council. Turkey has to cease fire. Mr Stoltenberg, will you support the demand for immediate ceasefire, not only expressing your concern? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you so much. First Afghanistan, well we are there to create conditions for a political solution, but for us there is no contradiction between our military presence and the work for a political solution. On the contrary, I strongly believe that the best way we can create the conditions for a political solution in Afghanistan is to send a clear message to Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield; they have to sit down and negotiate at the negotiating table. Therefore we welcome the resumption of peace talks, but today, for them to be successful, Taliban has to show more real willingness to make compromises and to create credible instruments for enforcing a peace deal. And therefore we will stay committed and we will also stay very coordinated. It has been the US that has negotiated with Taliban, but the US has briefed, consulted with NATO Allies, again and again, to make sure that all Allies are on board, because our presence in Afghanistan is not only US, but many NATO Allies and partners are also there with forces. We will stay committed and then, by our military presence, create the conditions for something, for what I hope can be renewed peace talks and a political settlement.

Then on NATO-EU cooperation, yes, NATO supports of course cooperation with the EU also on defence and security matters. I have stated again and again that I strongly welcome the EU efforts on defence. I think that can help to improve burden-sharing between North America and Europe. What I've also stated again and again is that the EU efforts on defence cannot replace NATO. It has to complement, not compete with NATO. We must avoid duplication and EU cannot replace NATO as the guarantor for the security of European NATO Allies. Especially after Brexit, we have to remember that 80% of NATO's defence expenditure will come from non-EU Allies, three of the four battlegroups we have in the eastern part of the Alliance, or in the Baltic countries and Poland, will be led by non-EU Allies. So, we have just to make sure that, yes we welcome EU efforts on defence, but they should not replace NATO, they should complement the efforts of NATO.

Then also we have seen many reports about civilians killed, actually on both sides, and that's one of the reasons why I think it was right to express, from the outset of this conflict, what happened last week, serious concerns about increased human suffering. I cannot confirm every report, but there is no doubt that there are civilians that have been killed in this conflict and there are civilian casualties, and we see human suffering, people also being forced to flee. So, that's exactly why what we need in Northern Syria and in Syria in general, is a political solution. And we call on all those parties involved to support the UN led efforts to find a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you. We now have the heads of… Matej Tonin, Head of the Slovenian Delegation. Njall Fridbertsson, Head of the Icelandic Delegation. And Osman Askin Bak, the Head of the Turkish Delegation. Matej first.

Question: Dear Secretary General, you said in March 2019, in United States Congress, that NATO Alliance is not only the longest lasting Alliance in history, it is the most successful Alliance in history. And Slovenian Delegation totally agree with you. We are satisfied that Montenegro is in; that North Macedonia is almost in the Alliance. Slovenian Delegation, we support enlargement of NATO. We would like to see Georgia as a part of NATO. They are great NATO partner and contributor to our missions. So, Secretary General, when we will see Georgia as a full member of NATO?

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Njall?

Question: Thank you, Madam President. Secretary General, I share the view and concerns my fellow parliamentarians have expressed regarding the serious situation in Syria. The Foreign Minister of EU are now meeting in Luxembourg, inter alia discussing reactions to the invasion. Are any formal discussions or actions intended on a NATO level? I also want to address climate change, which is our greatest national security threat. This is especially relevant to the Arctic as the Arctic region is rapidly warming due to global climate change. It is time for both our governments and NATO to adapt to a new reality. Does NATO intend to

become a leading force in battling climate change and thereby taking a prominent seat in safeguarding our future?

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Osman?

Question: Thank you very much, Secretary General. Turkey will eliminate the terror threat across our borders that are also NATO's south eastern borders. This fight is also for Europe and the Alliance. Your Excellency was received by President Erdoğan and met with our ministers, I was there too. All of these meetings were excellent examples of comprehensive dialogue between Turkey and NATO. We have been also discussing Operation Peace Spring for two days. Turkey is always ready to listen to views of our Allies and to explain its legitimate securities. You stress on many occasions that you recognise our legitimate security concerns, this is extremely important. Turkey is focused and determined to continue to fight against Daesh and is also a country that is fully dedicated to fighting these cowardly terrorists and killed, chest to chest, 4,000 Daesh militants. Daesh is an enemy of Turkey. Daesh has attacked many times.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Sorry Osman, I have to stop you. We've gone past the minute. My apologies to everyone that I have to do this to, but we have so many questions to get through.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: OK, thank you so much. First, Slovenia: First of all, NATO's door remains open. We have proven that by allowing Montenegro to join, so Montenegro became the 29th member of our Alliance two years ago, and soon North Macedonia will become the 30th member of the Alliance. So, we have proven over the last few years that NATO's door remains open. We have also clearly stated, and restated again and again at different NATO Summits, that Georgia will become a member of NATO, but we have not put a timeline to that process. We support the efforts of Georgia to modernise, to strengthen its defence and security institutions to meet the NATO standards. So, that is something which we are working on, together with Georgia. And I think it's also important to remember that, even without membership, we have seen more NATO in Georgia. We have a joint training centre there now, we have exercises, we have more NATO presence in Georgia than ever before. And this is good for Georgia and it's good for NATO. So, even without full membership, we have a very strong partnership with Georgia.

Then Iceland asked me whether we will discuss the situation in Syria. Well yes, absolutely. That’s a discussion which has been going on in NATO, between NATO Allies, for a long time. And we have also of course discussed the recent developments. We did that last week and I know that NATO Allies discuss this as we speak and also an issue which has been addressed and will be addressed at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. I think we also have to admit that when we see the public debate also between NATO Allies there are different views and NATO is not present on the ground in northern Syria. Some NATO Allies are, but NATO as an Alliance is not present on the ground in northern Syria. We are part of the Global Coalition

and I have expressed my serious concerns about the risk of jeopardising the progress we have made in that Coalition.

On climate change: well, before I became Secretary General of NATO, I was UN Special Envoy on Climate Change and my views and my concerns about climate change have not changed. And climate change… and NATO has recognised that in our Strategic Concept back in 2010, that climate change may have security consequences. It may lead to conflicts about resources of water, it may force people to move, so of course there are security consequences of climate change. It will also affect our military infrastructure and the way we have to plan and conduct military operations. And we have also highlighted in some of our work that, if we are able to make our operations more energy efficient, that will be good for climate, but also good for the resilience of our military operations. So, through some of our projects, some of our research projects and so on, we are addressing how can we reduce energy use in military operations because that's a huge effort to provide all the energy, and it'll also address some climate concerns. Having said that of course, NATO is not the main tool to address the reasons for climate change. We have other international bodies dealing with that. I focus on what is NATO's core task, security and collective defence, and then I think it's important that those tools, especially the UN and the UN Climate Change Convention, are the platforms where the international community addresses climate change more broadly.

Then Turkey, well I was in Istanbul on Friday, as I've already stated. I said exactly the same there as I said here now, but one part of that message is that we have to recognise that no NATO Ally is more exposed to the turmoil to the south than Turkey, bordering Iraq and Syria, and that they're hosting more than almost four million refugees. And of course, for NATO Allies to deal with the refugees and migrant crisis, it is critical to work with the European… no, to work with Turkey. And for instance, NATO plays a key role in helping to implement agreement between Turkey and the European Union on the migrant and refugee crisis. We have our own military presence, the naval presence in the Aegean Sea to help to implement that deal. And I think it highlights that close to four million refugees in Turkey is a challenge not only to Turkey, but to all other NATO Allies, and therefore we need to also address that together.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: We now go to Deputy Heads of Delegation, Julio Miranda Calha from Portugal, Ants Laaneots from Estonia, and we have Ausrine Armonaite from Lithuania. Julio, over to you.

Question: Thank you, President. Dear President and dear Secretary General, the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships recently visited Addis Ababa, where the Headquarters of the African Union is located. From our visit, we learned that security developments in Sub-Saharan Africa are closely intertwined with the stability of the Middle East and North Africa region. My conclusion from the briefings that we received there was that the challenges on NATO's southern flank should not be considered in isolation or as a local problem. Security

issues facing [inaudible] and some parts in Africa [inaudible] potential which can ultimately threaten the safety of NATO's southern European Allies. Are African security issues on NATO's radar screen? If not, do you think that NATO should do more to increase awareness about these subjects? That's that question, thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Ants please, from Estonia.

Question: Thank you, Madam President. Mr Secretary General, Russia has deployed intermediate-range nuclear missiles Iskander in all its 12 armies. It means one missile brigade in each, with 12 launchers. Understanding Russia has two navy missile brigades with the same missile system. One is in Kaliningrad area and second in Crimea peninsular. A few weeks ago NATO announced, and you, Mr Secretary, repeated it now again, that Alliance doesn't know, not foresee deployment of the NATO intermediate-range missiles in West Europe. From our point of view, it means a serious threat in balance of nuclear power in Europe, between NATO and Russia. Would you like to explain a little bit more [inaudible] what is the reason of such NATO decision? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Ausrine?

Question: Thank you, Madam President. Dear Secretary General, I'm right here. Right here. Last week, the New York Times has published an article about the existence of top secret Russian unit that seeks to destabilise Europe and their sources claim that an attempt, well poisoning of Sergei Skripal in Salisbury and also an attempt to poison the arms dealer in Bulgaria, and the recent murder of a former Chechen insurgent in Berlin, are related and that Russian State is behind these cases. It's getting more and more obvious that NATO can't ignore that kind of modus operandi by Russian State and we have to combat it. Could you please elaborate more about this? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Secretary General?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you. First, on Africa: so yes, I think that NATO can do more when it comes to the south in general and Africa in particular. We have partners there, we work with them. We have fruitful cooperation with also the African Union and partners in Africa, but I think the potential for doing more is absolutely there. I think one of the main challenges we face as an alliance is to have agreement within the Alliance, what more we should do, because when I travel I meet leaders from the south, from Africa, they actually want more NATO and more cooperation with Allies. And I think Portugal plays a key role in promoting that agenda.

Then Estonia: well, we have stated that we don't have any intention of deploying new nuclear-capable land-based missiles in Europe for several reasons. Partly because we think it is important to find a balance between responding in a way that makes sure that we have efficient and credible deterrence and defence also in a world without the INF Treaty and with more Russian missiles in Europe, but without triggering a full new arms race. Second, we

know that we have alternatives. We are now working on other ways to respond and that includes conventional options, air and missile defence, readiness of our forces, better intelligence, and other ways to make sure that we are able to respond. Then I think we have to understand that the violation of the INF Treaty and the deployment of the SSC-8 and also the Iskander, which is not… also are short-range missiles, they are part of a pattern and NATO has already responded to that pattern, meaning that the increased investments of Russia in modern military capabilities we have seen over several years is one of the reasons why we now, for the first time in our history, have combat-ready troops in the eastern part of the Alliance, why we have tripled the size of the NATO response force, why NATO Allies are investing more in defence, and why we are in general modernising our Alliance and have implemented the biggest reinforcement to our collective defence since the end of the Cold War. So, it's not that this is only SSC-8, this is SSC-8 as part of a broader pattern. NATO has already responded to that and we will continue to take the necessary decisions and measures to make sure that we have credible deterrence and defence also with a more assertive Russia.

Part of this is also to continue to work for arms control. Arms control is our interest and therefore the whole idea of deterrence, defence and dialogue, when it comes to Russia, is just highlighted by the violation of the INF Treaty, because if Russia wants to confront us then well we are ready to respond. If they want to work with us, to cooperate with us, then we are ready to sit down and work with them. Arms control should be part of that.

Then, Lithuania: so, I cannot confirm each and every report and comment on our intelligence, but what I can say is that of course Russia is using what we call hybrid tools, trying to meddle in our democratic elections, using cyber, disinformation, they were behind the use of a chemical agent in Salisbury, as you mentioned. So, we see a pattern of Russian behaviour which is of course of great concern. That’s the reason again why we are responding and adapting NATO also to address and to respond to these hybrid threats. Meaning, for instance, significantly increasing our intelligence to better understand, to see what is going on; significantly strengthening our cyber defences, which we have done and we are in the process of further strengthening; increasing the readiness of our forces, because if we saw… you saw what happened in Crimea, readiness of forces, so not a NATO Ally, but readiness of forces is perhaps the most important tool we have to respond if we suddenly see some little green men somewhere in NATO territory. And also then a presence of forces in the eastern part of the Alliance is partly also to respond to potential hybrid threats. Last thing I will mention there is resilience of our infrastructure; making sure that we have telecommunications, energy infrastructure, which is resilient, that is also part of the way NATO is addressing these hybrid threats. So yes, we are also addressing that.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you. We move on to Sverre Myrli from Norway, Ojars Kalnins from Latvia, and Chris Peters from the European Union.

Question: Thank you, Mr Secretary General. First we can inform you, it's functioning quite well in your home country, even without you as our Prime Minister. Believe it or not. And we are happy to see that NATO is functioning very well with you as the Secretary General. You mentioned China and the growth of the Chinese economy in your speech. I have a question to you about the development in China and China's role in the future. In this Assembly, we have several times discussed the links between the transatlantic area and Asia, and in particular China. So, could you, Mr Secretary General, from your point of view, comment on the development in China and the future role of China, from a NATO perspective, from a security perspective? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Ojars?

Question: Yes, thank you, Madam President. Mr Secretary General, the NATO Leaders' meeting will take place in London this year, in what could be a post-Brexit period, and if there's a no-deal Brexit it could impact civilian mobility between the European continent and the United Kingdom, but this could also impact military mobility and, as you've pointed out, EU-NATO cooperation is essential to deal with the regulatory and infrastructure issues that are necessary. Do you have any concerns at all about the UK's departure from the EU affecting this NATO-EU cooperation, especially on mobility issues?

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Chris?

Question: Thank you, Madam President. Dear Secretary General, the best achievements do not guarantee future success multilateralism. Is that a core of the European Union and of the NATO [inaudible] Alliance is a very… that is the very reason we have spent time and energy to build our organisations and engage our soldiers in many operations on a daily basis, because dear colleagues, we are convinced that this is the only way we can achieve peace, security and prosperity. Today we witness a search of unilateralism. This lack of consultation not only undermined the stability of entire regions, but put a threat to security, our security, and I would also like to make clear that this endangers our organisations. Dear colleagues, the crucial part of an alliance is the trust we put in your Alliance and in the upholding of our values. As a result, dear Secretary General, I would like to ask whether the current situation is discussed or will be discussed in the Council? Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Sorry Chris, you went over the minute. Sorry. I've got to be the same strictness for everybody. Sorry.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you. First, to Sverre Myrli from Norway, it's very hard to imagine that you manage without me, but… I see it works. Then, China: I think we have to understand that, for historical reasons, NATO has been focussed on the Soviet Union and Russia. But I think that, at the same time, that more and more NATO Allies realise that the rise of China has security implications. We have seen what they have done in the South China Sea. We see how they use modern technology also to control their own people. And of course many Allies are also concerned about what they see in Hong Kong.

The fact that China is also investing heavily in new military equipment is something that is gradually shifting the global balance of power. Then I think, no NATO Ally is arguing in favour of moving NATO into the South China Sea. But China is coming closer to us, partly because we see them in Africa; we see them in the Arctic; we see them actually investing in critical infrastructure in our own… in Europe; and we see them in cyberspace. And we also know that what happens in Asia also has implications for our own security. The debate about intermediate-range nuclear forces is one example of that. So, we need to address these challenges and I welcome the fact that NATO Allies are now assessing, discussing how we can both see the opportunities but also the challenges related to the rise of China.

Then Latvia: military mobility. Now, that's an excellent example of where there is a huge potential for cooperation between NATO and the European Union. We address those issues. I had a meeting recently with President Juncker and President Tusk, and one of the main issues we discussed during that meeting was exactly how we can speed up the cooperation when it comes military mobility, because our collective defence depends on our ability to move forces quickly throughout Europe.

And EU, well I think my main message is, in a more unpredictable world with more uncertainty, we need stronger multilateral institutions, and NATO is such an institution, EU is such an institution, because I think that's the best tools we have to deal with surprises and to deal with the uncertainty we all are faced with. And of course also an argument for two multilateral institutions, as NATO and EU, to work together.

I try to be short myself, but that's hard.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Right, we now move on to Afrim Gashi from Macedonia, Irakli [inaudible] from Georgia and [Yemov] Chernev from Ukraine. Afrim?

Question: Thank you, Miss Moon, President. Distinguished Mr Stoltenberg, as you mentioned earlier, my country, North Macedonia, very soon is going to be the 30th member of NATO. In accordance with that … thank you. You are taking my seconds. Even though I process of joining NATO is a long standing in time, even though 18 MAPS were delivered in past 18 years, even though our real military contribution to NATO peace missions in the world is evident and highly appreciated by NATO Allies, at the end of the day we can all openly say in knowledge that all these achievements, national and painful concessions are the result of the adherence and commitment of our governments so far, of all our parliamentarians so far, and of all the large majority of citizens who support Euro-Atlantic integration. We believe in the benefits of NATO membership, not only because we know that the states and armies of the 29 Allies will be beside us and with us, but also for the future of our children and future generation. Thank you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: So, I did give you a few extra seconds for the applause. Irakli?

Question: I would like to thank you very much, Secretary General, for your great address and for your continued support to Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and our membership aspirations. NATO membership is a value based choice of the citizens of Georgia and 2019 has been very special and very unique in terms of enhancing political and practical dimensions of our cooperation. We witness more NATO in Georgia and more Georgia in the NATO. We attach great importance to the recent visit of the North Atlantic Council to Batumi, which is a strong signal of political and practical support to our country, as well as an ample proof of Georgia's significance in the Black Sea security architecture, in land, air and maritime domains. My question is, to what extend does Georgia's engagement on the Black Sea contribute and approximate our country to its top foreign and security policy objection, which is NATO membership? Thank you very much.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Yemov from Ukraine?

Question: Dear Secretary General, dear Madam President, we have been fighting against Russia aggression for our sovereignty, for the European values, for Europe, since 2014. We have already paid high price for it, by losing more than 13,000 people. NATO has supported us, both politically and practically. We do appreciate this strong support. However, it is so important for Ukraine to see major signs that NATO's door is open for Ukraine, I'm talking in particular about the enhanced opportunity programme and growing cooperation together, in particular navy, as the steps to Membership Action Plan. I kindly ask you to bring Allies' attention to us as part of the modern security environment and consider various options to make Ukraine, and thus Europe, even stronger. Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: First, North Macedonia: it's a great achievement and I would like to commend North Macedonia for the enormous progress you have made and I really looking forward to welcome you as a full member. As you know, you're already participating as an invitee at all NATO meetings, you will also… at least most of the meetings, and you will also be present at the Summit in December. So, I look forward to having you as a full member.

Georgia, I have not so much to add, but just to say that you're… we are also working with you on the Black Sea and everything you do to modernise, to improve your defence and security institutions, including naval capabilities, is of course helping you to move towards NATO. We also work with your coastguard, so Black Sea is also part of the cooperation with Georgia.

The last one was Ukraine. First of all, I think we have to understand that NATO stands in strong solidarity with Ukraine. We provide practical support, political support, and it's absolutely not acceptable what Russia has done, illegally annexing, taking a part of another country, illegally annexing Crimea and continuing to destabilising eastern Ukraine. And therefore we are stepping up our support, our cooperation with Georgia. After the incidents and the capture of the Ukrainian vessels in the Strait of Azov, we decide also to do more in the maritime domain, to work with the naval academy in Odessa. And in a few weeks, the

whole North Atlantic Council will go to Ukraine, visit Ukraine, and express our strong political support, and I urge also NATO Allies to provide even more practical support to Ukraine. They need our support. This is about supporting Ukraine, but it is also about upholding and supporting a rules-based order, which is of great importance for all of us. We are supporting Ukraine's ambitions for further Euro-Atlantic integration, including membership. We think that the focus should be on reforms, on how to modernise Ukraine. I see that President Poroshenko is back in the… in the crowd back there, and we have worked together on these issues for many, many years. And we of course also work with the new President on how we can further strengthen the partnership with Ukraine - that's good for NATO and it's good for Ukraine. And to modernise their defence and security institutions is the best ways also to move towards membership.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: We've got two final questions. Dragan Sormaz from Serbia and Andranik Kocharyan from the Head of the Armenian Delegation.

Question: Thank you, Madam Moon. Mr Secretary, short question. What is your assessment of NATO-Serbia cooperation, NATO-Serbia partnership today?

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Andranik?

Question [interpreted]: Thank you. Secretary General, Prime Minister of Armenia made a declaration that solution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be acceptable both for Armenian people, Nagorno-Karabakh people, and Azerbaijan. This signal from Armenia fully complies with the appeal of the Co-Chairs of Minsk Group on preparation [of people to peace]. Unfortunately, we haven't heard any similar declaration from another side, even more from there we hear militant rhetoric. My question is, how the North Atlantic Alliance can help to resolve Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on a fair and long-term basis? And how are you going to support the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk OSCE group?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: First, on Serbia: I strongly believe that we have a very good and strong partnership with Serbia and I welcome that, based on the fact that NATO fully supports the decision by Serbia to be a neutral country. NATO of course respects the decision of any country when it comes to what kind of security arrangements it wants to be part of, or don't want to be a part of. So, when North Macedonia or Montenegro want to the join NATO, we welcome them. But when Serbia decides that they don't want to be a member of NATO, we absolutely fully respect that. So, we respect the sovereignty and the sovereignty of Serbia to make its own decisions about its path and its role in the international community. Based on that, we have a good partnership with Serbia. I visited Serbia not so long ago and I saw how we actually had a big civil preparedness exercise together, NATO Allies and Serbia, and how we are working also in other areas together, strengthening both the practical cooperation and political cooperation. So, we welcome that partnership. We also hope that it is possible to make progress in the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue, to deal with the

challenges we have in Kosovo, and therefore we urge all parties to be constructive and find a political solution and to reactivate the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue.

Then on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh: first of all, I met the Armenian Prime Minister in the UN not so many weeks ago, that was a very good meeting; we addressed a wide range of issues. When it comes to Nagorno-Karabakh, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is an unresolved conflict and of course we are concerned about that we have not been able to find a political and a permanent solution to that conflict. It is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict. NATO has no direct role, but what we do is to support the work of the OSCE Minsk Group and the Co-Chairs, to try to find a political solution.

Then I would like to thank you all for all your questions, on a wide range of issues. I think it is extremely important that I, as Secretary General, meet the parliamentarians. This demonstrates that NATO is an alliance with 29 democracies, with many partners and many, many parliamentarians, and that is what makes NATO so strong, that we are an alliance of democratic nations with democratic institutions and parliaments. Thank you so much. It's great to see you.

Moderator [Madeleine Moon]: Thank you. Well colleagues, we managed to get through 24 questions and full answers in that hour, so that’s really well done. Thank you for being disciplined and I apologise for having to use the gavel, but really it was important that we got as many in as we possibly could. Now, we have a departing Secretary General and we say thank you for your time, thank you and good luck for the traffic in London.

Afghanistan,
arms control,
and disruptive new technologies.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2019/10/14/speech