

HR/VP meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

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Thank you very much!

This is actually, I am just realising, my first conference in this capacity, and I am very happy that it is with Jens, with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg. This is my second working day in office, even if Sunday was already a working day as you can imagine. We discussed before he became Secretary General and before I became High Representative that we would work together closely and that we would coordinate as much as we can, and also that we would meet very soon at the beginning of our respective mandates. He had to wait some weeks for me to join. But here we are and I am happy that this is not only the first conference that I do here but also my first bilateral meeting that I have in my capacity.

It is therefore a great pleasure also personally since we know each for a long time, and I think that also personally we can go very well together which is going to be very important for our respective constituencies. We have obviously different mandates and different memberships, even if 22 of our Member States are the same, but we have a common challenge in front of us: a security environment that is all the more worrying every day. Furthermore, the intention stated both by the European Union (EU) at the Council in June and by NATO at the last summit in Wales, is that cooperation among us should improve. This is the only way of having effective capabilities on the military ground. We all know how much it is important that we manage to have an effective work on the defence and security landscape.

We decided that we would meet regularly, hoping to be in Brussels quite often. We decided also that we would participate respectively in meetings taking place in our organisations. I had the pleasure of inviting Secretary General Stoltenberg to the next Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting in the format of Defence taking place on 18 November. We also discussed my presence at the next NATO Ministerial at the beginning of December. We would thus be happy to work together on defining further the cooperation between NATO and the EU in the coming months. Our mandates start together, and we have some years in the course of which we can develop this cooperation in an effective way.

We covered also in our meeting all the hot topics that we have on our agenda, starting with Ukraine and Russia. We shared the need for a firm and strong reaction, together with an open channel of dialogue. This mix could maybe give us some hope for a political solution of the crisis in the East of Ukraine, for the sake of us all and also, and first of all, for the Ukrainian interest.

We also discussed issues related to the Middle East and the Mediterranean, in particular Syria, Iraq and Libya. We also discussed the situation in the Western Balkans where both NATO and the EU have an engagement and a presence.

Even if it is not related strictly related to EU-NATO cooperation, let me say a few words on EULEX Kosovo. I know that it is high on your agenda and it is also high on my agenda. I started dealing with the case yesterday that was my first day in office. As you know, yesterday, there was a discussion on the matter in the AFET Committee of the European Parliament. I intend to appoint, as a matter of urgency, an independent and experienced legal expert to review the mission's mandate and implementation with a particular focus on the handling of the allegations of corruption. The name will be communicated as soon as it is agreed on.