North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the start of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Antalya, Turkey
2015-05-13

Good morning.

Over the next two days, foreign ministers of NATO will address the main challenges that NATO is facing, both to the East and to the South. To the East, we face a more assertive Russia, responsible for aggressive actions in Ukraine.

And to the South, we see turmoil, violence spreading across the Middle East and North Africa. And we are going to discuss how NATO is addressing these challenges and the changing security environment.

It is about keeping NATO strong, investing in our collective defence, increasing the readiness and preparedness of our forces. And also doing more to be ready to counter hybrid warfare and cyber defence.

It's also about help keeping our neighbourhood more stable, because if our neighbourhood is more stable we are more secure. So we would work with neighbours, with partners both in the East and to the South to help them reform and modernise their defences and to be able to take more responsibility for their security.

We also have the privilege of being briefed by Secretary Kerry on his talks with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov yesterday. We went through many different issues. He briefed also on both Ukraine, the Iran nuclear talks, the situation in Libya, Syria.

And on Ukraine, the main message is that the Minsk agreements has to be implemented in full, the cease-fire has to be respected, heavy weapons have to be withdrawn and we call on Russia to stop supporting the separatists and to withdraw all its forces from Eastern Ukraine. Actions speak louder than words, so now is the time to act and there is urgency when it comes to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

We are also going to address the partnership and cooperation with Afghanistan. We are going to discuss and address the long term partnership we foresee with Afghanistan after the end of the present mission, Resolute Support. And we have already decided that we will have a long term partnership. What we are going to do here is to move forward on the guidelines and the principles for the long term partnership with Afghanistan. So this is going to be an important meeting and I think it's fitting that we meet in Turkey.

Turkey is close to both the challenges we see to the South of the Alliance, bordering Syria and Iraq, but Turkey is also close to the challenges we see to the East of the Alliance, close to the Black Sea and Ukraine.
So I am very grateful that Turkey hosts this foreign ministerial meeting and Turkey is a cornerstone in our Alliance, situated as it is close to both the South and East, close to the challenges we face both to the East and the South, so thank you.
Question : ICTV (question inaudible)

Secretary General: I expect the foreign ministers to have a very clear message on the importance of full implementation of the Minsk agreements, meaning full implementation of the ceasefire, withdrawal of all heavy weapons, and of course also that the inspectors from the OSCE are allowed full access to the area and the security guarantees they need to inspect and monitor the implementation of the Minsk agreements, so there will be a statement from the NATO-Ukraine Commission and I expect also the foreign ministers to have a very clear message to Russia, that Russia has to stop supporting the separatists and that Russia has to use all its influence on the separatists to make sure they are implementing the Minsk agreements in full.

Question : Novaya Gazetta Moscow

… Mr. Stoltenberg, yesterday's meeting of Mr. Kerry with Putin and Lavrov, could change the agenda of today's meeting in Antalya?

Secretary General: The agenda has not been changed, we have the same agenda for the meeting, but we added an extra meeting in a way that we invited Secretary Kerry to brief us on the talks he had with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov and I think that was a very useful exchange and a very useful brief, that we got from Secretary Kerry because it is useful for the foreign ministers to get an update directly from Secretary Kerry just a few hours after the talks in Sochi ended and as I said it's also very much about Ukraine, the importance of full implementation of the Minsk agreements, but also other issues like for instance the Iran nuclear deal and the situation in North Africa. So we haven't changed the agenda, but we added one more event, a breakfast with Secretary Kerry and I think that was a very good event. Let me also add that NATO's position is unchanged. We have suspended all practical cooperation with Russia. We support the economic sanctions but at the same time we keep channels for political dialogue open and I think that the talks that Secretary Kerry had with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov is very much in line with this approach of suspending practical cooperation, imposing economic sanctions and at the same time keeping channels for political dialogue open.

Question : (media unknown) - What do you expect from your partners in the Arab world when you meet them? Is there any concrete idea what it is that they can do to fight against the IS?

Secretary General: One of the important issues at this meeting in different formats will be how NATO can do even more in fighting terrorism and fighting ISIL.

As you know, all NATO Allies participate in the coalition against ISIL and I think one reason why the coalition is so effective is that NATO Allies over many years have developed interoperability, meaning ability to work together in military operations like the coalition against ISIL because we worked together in Afghanistan and in other places, then of course NATO's main responsibility is to protect and defend all Allies, and therefore we have deployed patriot batteries in Turkey to augment the air defences of Turkey. We are increasing the readiness and preparedness of our forces, we are establishing a new spearhead force and the main purpose of this force is that we shall be able to deploy it where needed, on time, to have the right forces, in the right place and the right time, and that is also of course a response to the threats we see in the South.

Then we are also increasing our cooperation with neighbours, partners in the Middle East, North Africa and we do that because we very much believe that we can project stability without always deploying large numbers of forces, meaning that if we can enable the countries in the region to take more responsibility for their own security, nd to contribute to security in the region, that is the best long term solution. So that's the reason why we have for instance have established what we call defence capacity building with Jordan, to help assist Jordan in increasing their defence. Jordan is important not only for Jordan itself but also for the whole region. That's actually what we do in Afghanistan, where we train, assist and advise the Afghan national forces and we are also are now assessing a request from the government of Iraq to start defence capacity building also in Iraq, helping them increasing their capability to fight ISIL and to stabilise their own country and we are standing ready to do the same in Libya, when the security situation allows us to do defence capacity building in Libya.

Question : Afghan Media- what will you exactly discuss about Afghanistan in today's meeting. And will NATO support long term Afghan national forces?

Secretary General: So we will discuss different issues related to Afghanistan. We will meet with the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Minister Rabbani. And he will update us together with the NATO commander in Afghanistan, on the security situation in Afghanistan. Then we will discuss the way we now are conducting the Resolute Support mission, which is our present mission in Afghanistan, and that is about train, assist and advise, the Afghan national security forces. But then we will also discuss and also make some decisions related to the guidelines, the principles for our long term partnership with Afghanistan, also after the end of the current Resolute Support mission. So we have decided that when we end our Resolute Support mission, our current mission, we will move into a more long term partnership which will then continue to support Afghans, to help them make sure that Afghanistan can be a stable, united country moving forward. So we will continue to support and we will discuss the guidelines for the long term support partnership at our meeting today.

Question : (media unknown) – We know that Turkey buffer zone or a no fly zone in Northern Syria. Will these two issues be on the table in this two day meting and what is your current

position about these topics?

Secretary General: The question of a buffer zone is not a question which is up to NATo to decide. That has been a question which has been raised in different meetings over some time. But it’s not for NATO to decide whether there is going to be a buffer zone or not in Syria. All NATO Allies are part of the coalition against ISIL. Some are also taking part in the airstrikes against ISIL in Syria but the coalition as such is not a NATO-led coalition so this is nothing that NATO is going to decide.

Thank you.

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