North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg upon his arrival at the European Council
2015-11-17

Good morning,

It is important that we meet with European Defence Ministers today because the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris remind us of how important it is that the European Union and NATO increase and strengthen our cooperation.

And the terrorist attacks in Paris are not only attacks on innocent people in Paris but they are also attacks on the core values on which both NATO and the European Union are based: democracy, freedom, our open societies.

And it is also important to remember that this is not a fight between the West and the Muslim world. Muslims are on the frontline fighting terrorism, extremism and they are also the main victims. Terrorism doesn't distinguish between nationality and religion as we have seen in Beirut, in Ankara and also when it comes to the downing of the Russian airplane.

To fight terrorism, extremism, is a complex challenge and therefore we need a comprehensive approach. We need military means, we need political means, we need diplomatic efforts. And that's also the reason why it's important that NATO and the European Union cooperate closely.

All NATO Allies participate in the coalition fighting ISIL and we are intensifying our work when it comes to exchanging analysis, information, intelligence, so we can be even more focused on the fight against ISIL.

NATO is also very focused on how we can help our neighbours, partners in the region to increase their ability to enable them to better defend themselves, by doing defence capacity building, train, assist and advice as we do in Afghanistan, as we do with the government of Iraq, as we do in Jordan, in Tunisia and many other countries. Because in the long run, prevention of conflicts is better than intervention. And if our neighbours are more stable, we are more secure.

NATO is also strongly supporting all political efforts and the renewed initiative to find a politically negotiated solution to the crisis in Syria. In the long run there is no military solution, we need a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Let me also just mention that we are now focused on the fight against terror and NATO is playing its part. At the same time we are also concerned about other challenges like for instance the situation in Eastern Ukraine. We have seen over some time some positive developments, implementation of the Minsk agreements, withdrawal of heavy weapons and also respect for the ceasefire but recently we have seen more violations of the ceasefire, increased number of casualties and this of course causes great concern and there is a real danger of resumption of violence and therefore I urge all parties to respect the Minsk agreements, to respect the ceasefire and to withdraw heavy weapons from the contactline.

Q (WSJ): Can Allies work together with Russia in Syria, given your concerns about Ukraine, given the very different tactics Russia has used in Syria so far, than the French or the US or other Allies?

Secretary General: NATO strongly supports the initiative and the renewed efforts to find political solution to the crisis in Syria. And I welcome that Russia is a part of that. And I welcome that Russia is sitting down with many other nations to try to find a political solution. Russia can play a constructive role in Syria.

But what we have seen so far is that most of their military actions have been targeted at targets not in ISIL-controlled areas. So I very much underline the importance of the renewed efforts to find a political solution. And I think the efforts should be on how to fight ISIL, not how to support the Assad regime, which is what Russia has done so far.

Q (Afghan media): France is under attack now, and Mr Hollande said that we are in a war. Does it mean anything for activating Article 5? Taking in consider that the French asked to activate another article within the European Union?

Secretary General: The important thing is that all NATO Allies, as all EU members, stand in full solidarity with France. We have already heard that several NATO Allies and EU members have offered assistance, help to France.

And NATO and NATO Allies are playing a key role in the coalition fighting ISIL. It’s a US-led coalition. The US is NATO's biggest Ally, and Turkey, which is on the border of Syria and Iraq, is the NATO Ally most affected by the violence, the turmoil we see in Syria and Iraq and also the terrorist acts of ISIL.

So NATO, NATO Allies support France. We are playing a key role in the fight against ISIL and we will continue to do that. And I welcome also, of course, that both NATO Allies and EU members support France.

Q (NTB): Has France asked NATO for military support after the attacks?

Secretary General: There has been no request for invoking Article 5. But many NATO Allies have offered France support and help. And we are doing so in many different ways, not least by sharing intelligence, working more closely with France in their efforts to fight ISIL.

And US, our biggest NATO Ally, is leading the coalition fighting ISIL. And Turkey, another NATO Ally, is on the borders of Syria and Iraq and very much affected, a key Ally in the fight against ISIL. So NATO countries contribute in many ways, both in their support for France and in the fight against ISIL.

And I’m looking forward now to meet with European Defence Ministers now and discuss how we can further develop our close cooperation between NATO and the European Union.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2015/11/17/doorstep-statement