North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the European Council on Security and Defence
2016-12-15

(As delivered)

Good afternoon,

It’s a pleasure to be back and to meet with the European Council and to address the importance of cooperation between the European Union and NATO. And closer cooperation between the European Union and NATO has always been important, but it is even more important now for several reasons.

First, because we face new security threats. We see terrorism, hybrid threats, cyber-attacks. And a combination of military and non-military means of aggressions creates new challenges both for the European Union and for NATO. And neither the European Union nor NATO has all the tools to address these threats. But together, we can be a formidable force.

And therefore I welcome very much that together with High Representative Federica Mogherini , we were able to agree last week on more than 40 concrete measures on how to strengthen the cooperation between the European Union and NATO. On cyber, on maritime, on hybrid, on exercises, and in many other areas. This is a concrete follow-up of the declaration I signed with Presidents Juncker and Tusk this summer in July.

The second reason why stronger NATO-EU cooperation is so important is the fact that the European Union is now stepping up its efforts to strengthen the European defence. And I welcome that. More European defence capabilities, more defence spending in Europe, stronger European industrial base for the defence industry, will strengthen the European Union. It will strengthen Europe and it will strengthen NATO.

But we have to make sure that we avoid duplication. We must complement each other, not compete with each other. That would be like competing with ourselves, if the European Union and NATO start to compete. And that makes no sense.

And the third reason why NATO-EU cooperation is so important is the importance of the transatlantic bond. In times of uncertainty like we see now, we need strong institutions. We need institutions that build the partnership between Europe and North America. And NATO is there and we need fairer burden sharing and we need increased defence spending among European Allies and we see that that is now taking place.

So I look forward to meet the European Council and European leaders and to address these issues together with them, because stronger NATO-EU cooperation is as important as ever.

QUESTION ZDF: NATO – Russia Council?

SECRETARY GENERAL: The NATO-Russia Council is an important platform for dialogue and I have invited the members of the NATO-Russia Council for a meeting on Monday. We will meet at ambassadorial level and we will meet at NATO headquarters. We will discuss topics of relevance for European security, importantly Ukraine, and the NATO-Russia Council is a platform for dialogue. We have suspended practical cooperation with Russia after the annexation of Crimea but we have maintained open channels for political dialogue, because when tensions run high as today it is even more important to have a direct dialogue with Russia.

QUESTION NOS: Secretary General, our Prime Minister Mark Rutte, he holds a very important piece of the geopolitical puzzle in his hands, don't you think?

SECRETARY GENERAL: Well, if you refer to the discussion about the relationship between Ukraine und the European Union, that's for the European Union to decide, but what I can say is that NATO cooperates very closely with Ukraine. Ukraine is an important partner for NATO, and for NATO it is an absolute fundamental principal that every nation has the right to decide its own path including what security arrangements or alliances it wants to be part of. So, whether Ukraine is going to become a member of NATO or not is up to Ukraine and the members of NATO to decide. No one has the right to veto such a process. No one has the right to intervene in such a process. The focus of Ukraine now is reform, is to modernize its defence and security institutions and NATO is supporting those efforts with practical and political support and we will continue to do so.

QUESTION KUNA: What's happening in Aleppo?

SECRETARY GENERAL: The situation in Aleppo and Syria is very fluid, and what we see now is a horrendous humanitarian catastrophe. We see the killing of civilians, we see suffering and we see that innocent people are trapped in parts of Aleppo. So, the focus of the whole international community has to be on how can we ensure full respect for a ceasefire, a sustainable ceasefire. How can we ensure safe evacuation of civilians and how can we ensure to the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people in Aleppo. This is the focus of all NATO Allies today. NATO and NATO Allies strongly support all the efforts of the UN to make this happen, both the ceasefire, the delivery of humanitarian aid and of course the evacuation of civilians. And this will be the first step to a more lasting sustainable political solution to the conflict in Syria.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2016/12/15/doorstep-statement