North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement

by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the start of the Defence Ministers Meetings in Brussels
2012-10-09

Good morning.

We will be meeting today and tomorrow to discuss progress of our missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and how we can maintain our security in a time of economic austerity, including through cooperation on key defence capabilities.

Afghanistan will top the agenda. This is a challenging mission – and we have faced some challenging months. The enemies of Afghanistan are trying to undermine the progress we have made in building security, and building the Afghan forces. But we will not let them succeed.

We remain committed to our goal, our strategy, and to Afghanistan. We remain committed to completing our ISAF mission at the end of 2014, as planned. And we remain committed to launching a new mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces after 2014.

In other words, the goal, the strategy and the timeline remain unchanged.

Tomorrow, I will look to Ministers to endorse the broad framework for the new training mission in Afhanistan and that will guide our military planners as they draw up the detailed outline in the coming months.

We will also take stock of the progress we've made on capabilities. We are maintaining the momentum on defence projects and building on what we agreed at our Chicago summit. Allies are already working on 24 multinational programmes. And more will come soon.

But at a time when defence budgets are under pressure, we also need to cooperate more on defence planning, training and exercises.

This period of economic austerity poses a challenge to defence budgets but it also opens an opportunity for strengthened cooperation and new ways to provide security.

And we need to be clear: once our economies recover, we must increase our investment in defence once again. Because security is the basis of prosperity. Some argue that we cannot afford it. But I say that we cannot afford to be without it.

With that, I am ready to take your questions.

OANA LUNGESCU (NATO Spokesperson): Reuters.

Q: Adrian Croft from Reuters. Secretary General, you say that the Ministers will be discussing today making a better use of defence capabilities. Would a merger of BAE and EADS in your view contribute to a better use of scarce defence resources?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN (NATO Secretary General): First of all, let me stress that I consider such a merger a commercial decision and it's for shareholders and involved governments to figure that out. It's their decision. NATO does not interfere with such decisions. But let me stress that in general I'm in favour of restructuring European defence industries with a view to making them more competitive and more effective.

OANA LUNGESCU: Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

Q: Yes, Dieter Eberling, Deutsche Press-Agentur. Mr. Secretary General, for years now the governments have been at loggerheads about common funding, about whether costs should lie where they fall or whether there should be common funding. There will be another stock-taking exercise today. Does stock-taking mean that there is no progress at all? That there is no real decision on better common funding foreseeable in the [sic] next future?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: First of all, I would like to stress that we're not going to make concrete decisions at this meeting as regards the use of common funding. But you're right, we will discuss it. We will take stock of the situation and also discuss whether we can use common funding in more efficient ways, use common funding to promote some of the multilateral projects, use common funding to promote our smart defence and connected forces initiatives. So we will discuss a broad range of issues connected with common funding.

This is very much in the spirit of what we decided in Chicago; namely, to promote more multinational cooperation. And common funding, of course, is part of that.

OANA LUNGESCU: IHA, Turkish media.

Q: Sertaç Aktan, IHA Turkish News Agency. On Syria, the shellings are continuing every day in the border of Turkey and Syria. This raises questions. Wasn't NATO's message clear enough to the Syrian regime? What do you think? And how do you evaluate the mandate that was given right after the extraordinary session in NATO by the Parliament to the Turkish military to be able to make operations to Syria in any other foreign country?

ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: First of all, I would like to commend the Turkish Government for the restraint it has shown in its response to the completely unacceptable Syrian attacks on Turkey.

Obviously, Turkey has a right to defend herself within international law. I would add to that that obviously Turkey can rely on NATO solidarity. We have all necessary plans in place to protect and defend Turkey if necessary. We hope it won't be necessary. We hope that all

parties involved will show restraint and avoid an escalation of the crisis. I do believe that the right way forward in Syria is a political solution. And to facilitate such a political solution we need a strong and unified message to the Syrian regime from the international community, a clear message, that the Syrian regime should accommodate the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

OANA LUNGESCU: Thank you very much. That's all we have time for now. Thank you.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2012/10/09/doorstep-statement