North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Press conference

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Heads of State and Government on Projecting Stability
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Good afternoon.

We have just finished a very productive meeting and yesterday we took decisions to strengthen our defence and deterrence. Today, we have taken decisions to strengthen our partners. And to project stability beyond our borders.

To the south we see failed and failing states. And millions left homeless and hopeless by terrorist groups like ISIL. This instability has a direct impact on our societies. It has caused the worst refugee and migrant crisis in Europe since World War Two. And terrorist groups have organised attacks on our streets.

The scale of the challenge demands that we take action. NATO is a military alliance for collective defence. And an expeditionary alliance for crisis management. Now we need to become even more of a training alliance, to build local capacity.

NATO has unique capabilities to make a difference: tried and tested command structures; the ability to generate forces; and a network of regional partnerships. In the long run, training local forces is more effective than deploying large numbers of our own forces in combat operations. It is one of the best tools we have in the fight against terrorism. Prevention is better than intervention.

So first, we will provide greater support to our partners. So they can secure their countries and push back against violent extremism. Today, we decided to start training and capacity building in Iraq, which is key to the fight against ISIL.

We will also continue training hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan. We will soon deploy a team to Baghdad to start planning, provide strategic advice, and support security sector reform.

NATO can provide the framework for smaller and medium sized nations to contribute to our training in Iraq. Let me just give you one example. Albania offered in the meeting to contribute a significant number of trainers. We are now working with them to use NATO’s legal framework to allow them to make the contribution to our training programme. Because it is easier for NATO to negotiate a legal framework covering all Allies and partners than for each of us to do that separately.

In Tunisia, we are working to establish a new intelligence ‘Fusion Centre’. We will shortly begin providing support for Tunisian Special Operational Forces.

We will continue enhancing our cooperation with Jordan.

And we continue preparations to assist Libya design security policies and structures which will help them unify and better defend their country against groups like ISIL.

Second, we have decided to provide direct support to the fight against ISIL. All Allies are already part of the Global Coalition against ISIL. We have now agreed in principle that NATO’s AWACS surveillance aircraft will provide direct support to the Coalition forces. A clear signal of our resolve to help tackle terrorism.

And third, we will launch a new maritime security operation in the Mediterranean Sea, Operation Sea Guardian. It will have a broad scope, including the situational awareness, counter terrorism and capacity building.

We intend to work closely with the European Union’s Operation Sophia in the Central Mediterranean. Building on our swift and effective cooperation with the EU to cut the lines of international human smuggling in the Aegean.

We are also stepping up our support for partners in the east. This afternoon, we will meet President Poroshenko in the NATO-Ukraine Commission to decide what more we can do together.

And yesterday, Foreign Ministers met in the NATO-Georgia Commission to reiterate our strong political and practical support. Our efforts aim to strengthen Georgia’s defence capabilities, and help the country progress in the preparations towards membership.

Over the last two days, we have taken decisions to respond to crises beyond our borders by working with our partners around the world. And we have taken decisions to renew our deterrence and defence at home. We have just adopted the Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security. This is a strong signal of our unity.

In an unpredictable world, with challenges from the south and the east, NATO remains an essential source of stability. Our mission is enduring: to ensure that our Alliance remains an unparalleled community of freedom, peace, security and shared values. Europe and North America standing together, and acting together.

And we look forward to meet again in 2017 at our new headquarters in Brussels for our next Summit.

And now I’m happy to take your questions.

OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]: We’ll start with Iraqi TV over there.

Q: Thank you. My name is Sarhang Hars for NRT. I was wondering would there be any equipment provided to the Iraqi Army, also the Peshmerger Forces? And also, with this support on training would be enough for the Iraqi Army, especially before retaking Mosul? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: We have already started to train Iraqi officers in Jordan. But after requests from Prime Minister Abadi, we are also now decided to increase our training and to move training into Iraq itself.

I met with Prime Minister Abadi and he was very focused on the need for enhanced support from NATO, and now we have decided to deliver that, and we will send a team to Baghdad very soon to start the preparations; to start to provide strategic advice and to prepare for organizing the increased training. And in the meeting we also had nations that already offered trainers to start training in Iraq.

So the focus is training, capacity building, development and strengthening of security institutions. That's the main focus of our activity. Equipment is not on the agenda for now. It may be that might be an issue later on. It's training and a request or a positive answer on the request from Prime Minister Abadi.

OANA LUNGESCU: Georgia National Broadcasting here.

Q: Secretary General, Georgia Public Broadcaster, Keteran Kardava. Can you tell us more about the main issues and points which are in the statement issued at Georgia – NATO Georgia Commission? And how close now after the Warsaw Summit is Georgia to future membership? For example, Polish Foreign Affairs Minister just said that Georgia is a candidate country. And also we want to know more about your future visits in Georgia, as we know your visit will be in autumn. In autumn we have also parliamentary elections, and it's why it's very important to host you in Tbilisi. Thank you very much.

JENS STOLTENBERG: So we have recognized the progress Georgia is making towards membership, and we also clearly state in our statement that we reaffirm the Bucharest decisions, and we also strongly convey the message of support for Georgia when it comes to territorial integrity and its sovereignty. And that's also the reason why we have implemented the different elements in the substantial package, and we will continue to provide strong political support and strong practical support for Georgia.

And we will also continue to encourage NATO allies to provide bilateral support. And several allies have stepped up their bilateral support for Georgia.

I'm going to visit Georgia this autumn, together with the North Atlantic Council. And that's yet another example of the strong NATO support for Georgia, its territorial integrity, and our support for Georgia implementing reforms on its way towards membership.

OANA LUNGESCU: RT in the first row.

Q: The cooperation between NATO and the EU on the southern flank is obviously very, very crucial. Can you please elaborate a little bit further on the Sea Guardian, the new cooperation project?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Yesterday, President Jean-Claude Juncker and President Donald Tusk and I signed a declaration, a joint declaration. And that declaration reflects that we are now really taking the NATO EU cooperation to a new level. We have already done a lot and actually more over the previous months than in the previous 13 years. Both – when it comes to our operation in the Aegean Sea, we agreed on operational cooperation with the European Union Frontex, but also on cyber where we had an agreement recently on how to expand our cooperation and work together in the cyber domain.

And then we had a declaration yesterday, outlining how we can do more in many different areas, including hybrid capacity building, but also in the Mediterrean and maritime domain. And we have decided at this meeting to transform our existing operation in the Mediterrean, Active Endeavour, into a broader security mission called Sea Guardian. The scope will be wide. Then we will define concrete tasks depending on the concrete needs, and we will now sit down with the European Union and look into how we can complement their efforts in the central Mediterrean, also building on the lessons learned from the Aegean where NATO presence has helped cut the lines of illegal trafficking, and then we will, based on that, also look into what more we can do in other parts of the Aegean, and that's exactly what we decided to do today.

OANA LUNGESCU: NTV Turkey, second row.

Q: There are still some concerns, at least in Turkey, from threats coming from the southern flank. And to that end – and some measures has already been taken, but I was wondering whether more is to come or not, and how we can reassure Turkey on the one hand and countries in the region on the other hand? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: So NATO has already implemented assurance message for Turkey. Turkey, the NATO ally most affected by the turmoil, the violence to the south. We have AWACS planes flying over Turkey. We have Patriot batteries and SAMP/T batteries provided by Italy and Spain. We have increased port visits to Turkey, and we are working closely with Turkey how to expand our assurance measures in Turkey.

Let me also add that when NATO now is stepping up our efforts, both to cooperate with Jordan, an island of stability in the region, but also to step up training of Iraqi officers and build capacity in Iraq, enabling them to fight ISIL; that is also important for Turkey because Turkey's bordering both Syria and Iraq, and everything we do to fight ISIL will also be of great benefit for Turkey.

OANA LUNGESCU: Okay. Antenna 3. First row here.

Q: Secretary General, we all saw that in the last year the military turmoil that took place in and around the Black Sea. Romania has proposed to Turkey and Bulgaria a defence initiative maritime in the Black Sea. First of all what is your opinion about this initiative of Romania, and if you consider that a naval group, a NATO naval group in the Black Sea will be necessary? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: We have increased our presence in the Black Sea region. We have more air policing. We have more naval presence. And we agreed a tailored enhanced forward presence at our meeting yesterday, meaning that we will increase NATO presence built around the Romanian brigade in the south-eastern part of our alliance, and that will be a multi-national presence on land, which then different NATO allies will contribute to.

Moreover, we also decided yesterday that we will ask our military planners to provide advice on enhanced naval presence and also enhanced presence in the air over the Black Sea. And the plan is to then – based on those advices, to make decisions during the fall. So we will now ask the planners to provide advice and then make decisions depending on that.

OANA LUNGESCU: POLSAT. Second row there. Second row. Thank you.

Q: Secretary General, I would like to ask you if you could at this point sum up the summit and say if, in your opinion, the summit is historic one? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: It is a very successful summit because it is a summit with a lot of substance. And it is historic because it is a summit that takes place at a decisive time for our security. Because we see so many challenges, so many threats, and so many reasons for NATO to adapt because the world is changing. And we have been able to make those decisions, and now we will start the implementation of the decisions, both related to how we can enhance and strengthen our collective defence, but also how we can do more projecting stability to our neighbourhood.

I would also like to add that this summit is important because I think also the summit reflects not only what we do on collective defence and projecting stability, but it also reflects that we are bringing the NATO EU cooperation to a new level. And that is important for NATO, it’s important for the European Union, and it’s important for all the people living in Europe and North America.

So this is important. Let me – the last thing I’ll add is that the summit is also a success because we have actually been able to review what we have done since the last summit. And the conclusion is that we laid out very ambitious plans at our summit two years ago, and we were able to report at this summit that we have delivered on the promises, and now we have outlined new plans and we will continue to deliver.

OANA LUNGESCU: Pobjeda, Montenegro, second row. Lady in the middle.

Q: ... [inaudible] ... Montenegro's membership. Should Montenegro expect this process to be completed earlier than it was expected, maybe by the end of this year?

JENS STOLTENBERG: First of all, I welcome that more and more countries ratify the Accession Protocol, and that reflects that there is a strong support for - in the parliaments of the different NATO allies - for the enlargement of NATO with Montenegro. And it has also been a great pleasure to have Prime Minister Milo Dukanovic attending our meeting, all our meetings, and it's great to have him sit at the table.

I said when we started the process that last time it took around one year to ratify, and I will not speculate whether we can make it faster this time. I think it's important to show respect for different parliaments, their different routines and different procedures. So they need the time to make their formal decisions in the different parliaments.

OANA LUNGESCU: Kuwaiti News Agency, second row.

Q: Kuwait News Agency KUNA. Sir, the decision to provide AWACS aircraft in the fight against ISL, will they be flying over Syria and Iraq or outside? And my second question is was the situation in Syria discussed at the summit? Thank you, sir.

JENS STOLTENBERG: We discussed the turmoil to the south of the Alliance, including the situation in Syria, and of course it is of great concern, the turmoil, the violence, the fighting, and we support – we expressed strong support to all the efforts to try to find a peaceful negotiated solution. And several NATO allies are key and instrumental in those efforts, including the United States and others.

We will provide AWACS support. The plan is to have the planes flying over international airspace and over Turkey, and that will enable them to look into the airspace over both Iraq and Syria.

OANA LUNGESCU: ADEVARUL, front row.

Q: Secretary General, the main idea of those debates regarding the eastern frontier, the eastern border of the Alliance, was we must strengthen this part of the Alliance with new capabilities for deterrence and defence against whom? What's the threat, possible threat, what's the possible security challenges facing this part of our countries, of our Alliance? And the second question, which is a follow-up, if (inaudible) now an unbalance existing between what's going on now in the north-east is power, is capabilities, and what is in terms of capabilities in the south-east? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: We don't see any imminent military threat against any NATO ally. And I think it is important to underline that because it's important not to exaggerate the dangers and the threats we are faced with. Because this is serious business, and I think it's important to use precise language. But what we see is more unpredictability, more uncertainties, and we also see a more assertive Russia, which has substantially built up its

military capabilities, modernized its armed forces, trained its forces, and tripled defence spending over – or since 2000, over the last years. And we've also seen a Russia which has been willing to use military force against neighbours, against Ukraine, illegally annexing Crimea and destablizing eastern Ukraine.

Add to that also the turmoil, the violence we see to the south, and all of this is together the reason why we have decided to increase the readiness and the responsiveness of our forces. And I think it's extremely important to remember that when we have tripled the size of the NATO response force or established a new Spearhead Force, that is not only a force which can be used in the east. It is also a force which has relevance for the south or actually for the whole Alliance. So that is the response to a more uncertain, more unpredictable security environment requiring that NATO has to be more agile, more prepared, more ready. And we have increased in readiness of our forces to be prepared for the unforeseen. It's extremely difficult to predict the future, but it's not that difficult to be prepared for surprises, for unforeseen events, and that's exactly what NATO has done by increasing the readiness of our forces. So that's the answer.

OANA LUNGESCU: Gentleman in the first row.

Q: Polish International Service. Recently after the Brexit and the six countries of European Union led by German and France initiative, there was also a proposal to extend VISEGARD Group with the Romania and Ukraine. Are you perceive this regional groups as a problem or enrichment and a strength for NATO and security?

JENS STOLTENBERG: I welcome that different NATO allies cooperate in different frameworks, and actually NATO has encouraged that the allies go together and work together, increase the interoperatibility and also establish the concept of framework nations. So that will increase the efficiency and that will reduce costs. That will increase the readiness of our forces. So there are many different kinds of cooperation between different kinds of NATO allies, and that's just part of the strength of the Alliance that we see that kind of cooperation.

OANA LUNGESCU: This concludes this press point. I know there are many questions. The Secretary General will be back in just under two hours for the last press point, which will be joint with President Poroshenko of Ukraine. Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you.

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