



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN

Address by the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Gerald. E. Conolly (United States)

At the Plenary Sitting of the NATO PA

68th Annual Session, Madrid 2022

Dear friends,

- It has been an honor to serve as your president for these two, consequential years.
- We have faced our share of challenges together.
- A global pandemic, a violent insurrection in the United States Congress, the fall of Kabul in Afghanistan, and Russia's brutal, depraved, criminal invasion of Ukraine which has helped precipitate energy, inflation, food, and refugee crises over the world.
- Through these trials we have forged a stronger Alliance and a stronger Assembly.
- The bravery demonstrated by the Ukrainian people and their leadership, most notably President Zelensky, whom we'll hear from later, has stiffened our spine and that of friends around the world and provided absolute clarity about the threat posed by Putin's Russia.
- We stand ready to welcome, with open arms, two new Members of the Alliance, Sweden and Finland.
- And we helped rewrite the way NATO girds itself for a more hostile and challenging security environment, with the adoption of the new Strategic Concept here in Madrid in June.
- A Strategic Concept that further enshrines the founding of democratic principles of the Washington Treaty founding NATO in how we define and organize ourselves as a political-military alliance.
- Let me quote some of the ways in which NATO has committed itself to operationalizing that commitment to democratic values in the new Strategic Concept:
 - For the first time ever, we resolve that NATO will "safeguard our freedom and democracy" as a purpose
 - For the first time ever, we resolve that NATO will "reinforce our shared democratic values"
 - And for the first time ever, the Strategic Concept identifies authoritarianism as a challenge to our "interest, values, and democratic way of life."
- Not just Russian or Chinese authoritarianism, but authoritarianism in general – both within and without.
- On the fundamental issue of democracy, our Assembly moved that needle.



- You should be proud of that. I know I am.
- On January 6, I was starting the first year of my two years as President of this organization and I was huddled on the floor of House of Representatives when a violent mob attacked the United States Capitol to stop the democratic process in America.
- I spoke a few weeks later to Secretary Stoltenberg who came to visit Washington and I told him that we were going to insist that NATO live up to its founding commitments to democracy. And that this would be a defining issue for our time and a matter for our collective legacy.
- The Secretary General is delivering on that commitment.
- We now have 29 of 30 Allies supporting our proposal to create architecture for democracy within NATO - the Center for Democratic Resilience.
- We need that 30th vote! And you know who you are.
- Remember the skepticism we faced when we started this journey!
- After 73 years of existence, we believe that it is time that NATO establish the architecture – concrete architecture – dedicated to the advancement and propoundment and defense of democracy.
- You walk in the NATO headquarters in Brussels and it looks like a scene from Star Wars – it's contemporary and beautiful. There are offices dedicated to a myriad of activities for NATO – mobility, interoperability, strategic planning. But there's not even a broom closet dedicated to democracy.
- That has to change.
- If we want to continue NATO's success;
- That has to change.
- If we want to be something more than just a military bloc that opposes Russia;
- That has to change.
- If we want to gird ourselves against the march of authoritarianism which has in recent years quickened its step and violently;
- We must move beyond the rhetorical in our commitment to democratic institutions.
- With the new Strategic Concept, we have a solid basis finally to turn our proposal for a Democratic Resilience Center into a reality.
- Look no further than Ukraine to understand why that's so critical.
- People are dying in Ukraine as we speak here today. They're dying to embrace that democratic ideal.
- For daring to associate themselves with us - an Alliance that through solidarity, sense of purpose, and courage won the Cold War to be a free people.
- Through their brave and inspiring struggle, Ukrainians are demonstrating every day the power of right over might and freedom over fear.



- Yehor and Solomiia, and all of our Ukrainian friends who are here, on behalf of our Assembly, we pay tribute to you, and through you, to all Ukrainians for your extraordinary bravery, resolve and resilience.
- We are faced with a moment of truth, my friends, which this generation, our generation, cannot fail to meet. Because the stakes are truly about the future of liberal democratic values and individual freedoms, versus the alternative, the absolute suppression of those freedoms, and with it the suppression of the human spirit itself.
- This Alliance will not allow authoritarianism to extinguish the flames of democracy.
- This Alliance will not allow Vladimir Putin to stamp out the embers of democratic ambition, wherever they burn.
- Every day, Ukrainians fight for those democratic values and for their democratic future. We must stand by them. We must support them for however long it takes to prevail. And prevail we will!
- This session has sent a powerful message of that unwavering support.
- Our military assistance is making a real difference on the battlefield.
- Our Assembly has reaffirmed we will never recognize, never, any of Russia's illegal and illegitimate attempted annexations. Crimea is Ukraine. Donetsk is Ukraine. Luhansk is Ukraine. Zaporizhzhia is Ukraine. And as the Ukrainian flags flying again over the city make clear, Kherson is Ukraine!
- Over the last few weeks, Vladimir Putin has once again escalated the brutality of this senseless, criminal war with a terrorizing bombing campaign on urban centers and particularly civilian infrastructure. These are going to be cold months for Ukrainian people. And these despicable and depraved attacks are war crimes.
- So during this session, we recommit to holding Russia accountable for its crimes, including through the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression. All of Russia's actions must be investigated, including all war crimes, crimes against humanity and possible acts of genocide. Peace cannot be built on impunity.
- We must also begin to help Ukraine rebuild and achieve the goal it has set for itself and has included in its own Constitution: to become a full-fledged member of our Euro-Atlantic family of democracies.
- Because what are we fighting for?
- What will the legacy be of this fight in Ukraine?
- What better legacy than the firm establishment of liberal democracy having endured a Russian onslaught and the Ukrainian people living in freedom and peace, and sovereign independence.
- We have had to listen to endless talk about the retreat of democracy.
- Well, we are not retreating.
- In fact, we are doing something we have not done before. We are creating architecture to protect and advance democracy, organizing ourselves around the threat of authoritarianism, and operationalizing commitments that have been heretofore rhetorical.



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- Our collective response during this critical moment for the Alliance will hew a new path in our chapter of history.
- When we all face our grandchildren in the next generation and they ask “where were you when Russia decided on its cataclysmic and reckless and brutal campaign to suppress freedom in Europe and indeed around the world?”, let us make sure all of us can say to those grand children: “I stood with Ukraine.”
- Thank you, and thank you for letting me serve as your president during these momentous two years.
- Our collective accomplishments have met this moment, and it has been a great honor of my life to serve with you as we do the hard work of building democracy together.
- *Slava Ukraini*