



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE (DSC)

Thursday 16 July 2020

By video conference

ATTENDANCE LIST

Chairperson Michael R. TURNER

DSCFC Rapporteur Lara MARTINHO

NATO PA President Attila MESTERHAZY

Secretary General Ruxandra POPA

Member Delegations

Germany Jurgen HARDT
Greece Andreas LOVERDOS
Hungary Attila MESTERHAZY
Latvia Gatis EGLITIS
Portugal Lara MARTINHO
Romania Nicu FALCOI
Spain Zaida CANTERA
Turkey Kamil AYDIN
Utku CAKIROZER
Fikri ISIK
United Kingdom Feryal CLARK
Abena OPPONG-ASARE
Alec SHEL BROOKE
Bob STEWART
United States Brendan BOYLE
Neal DUNN
Michael R. TURNER

Associate Delegations

Armenia Andranik KOCHARYAN
Viktor YENGIBARYAN

International Secretariat Ethan CORBIN, Director, Defence and Security Committee
Steffen SACHS, Director, Science and Technology Committee
Jailee RYCHEN, Coordinator, Defence and Security Committee
Karen WALKER-LOVE, Coordinator, Political Committee

I. Opening remarks by Andreas LOVERDOS (Greece), Vice-Chairperson

1. In his opening remarks, the Vice-Chairperson of the Defence and Security Committee (DSC), **Andreas Loverdos** (GR) welcomed DSC members to the Committee's first online meeting. Mr Loverdos started with some practical information regarding the conduct of the Committee meeting and expressed his gratitude to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's International Secretariat for making the meeting possible.

2. Due to technical difficulties DSCFC Rapporteur **Lara Martinho** (PT) experienced during the meeting's soundcheck, Mr Loverdos proposed to change the presentation order of the Committee's reports as indicated on the agenda. He noted this would mean the Committee would first hear Attila Mesterhazy's presentation of the DSC Special Report.

II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [103 DSC 20 E]

3. **The draft Agenda [103 DSC 20 E] was adopted as amended orally by the Vice-Chairperson during his introductory remarks.**

III. Consideration of the draft Special Report *The Role of NATO's Armed Forces In The COVID-19 Pandemic* [091 DSC 20 E] presented by Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary), NATO PA President and Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation (DSCTC)

4. **Attila Mesterhazy** (HU) took the floor to present his draft Special Report on *The Role of NATO's Armed Forces in the COVID-19 Pandemic* [091 DSC 20 E]. Mr Mesterhazy began his remarks by underscoring the extraordinary measures taken by Allied armed forces during the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that national armed forces continue to play a major role assisting health institutions reduce the spread and impact of the virus, which ultimately, he said, has resulted in many lives being saved.

5. Mr Mesterhazy noted that, to date, NATO has facilitated hundreds of missions to transport medical personnel and supplies, set up field hospitals, and help develop innovative responses to challenges directly related to the COVID-19 crisis. Though the broader response was organised by NATO SACEUR, General Tod Wolters, out of SHAPE, the stocks of equipment and medical professionals came from all Allies who were able to donate to one another in their times of greatest need – clearly demonstrating excellent levels of inter-Allied solidarity, Mesterhazy told the Committee.

6. Mr Mesterhazy said it was not surprising that nations turned to their armed forces from the outset of the COVID-19 crisis as militaries have an instinct for executing large-scale logistical operations on command. He also emphasised that Allied armed forces have been engaged around the clock since the beginning of the crisis, from the emergency transportation of supplies and personnel, to civilian repatriation efforts, public space disinfection, lockdown enforcement, border control, and, even in some cases, ensuring food and water distribution.

7. Moreover, the Rapporteur underscored the pivotal role played by the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency during the pandemic. The Alliance's strategic airlift programmes allowed for effective sharing of heavy lift cargo transportation aircraft. One of these programmes, the Strategic Airlift Capability programme allows 10 NATO Allies and two partner nations to jointly own and operate three C-17 Globemasters, which are operated out of Pápa Air Base in Hungary.

8. Mr Mesterhazy also mentioned the activation of NATO's Rapid Air Mobility initiative, which allows SHAPE to use a special call sign to expedite flight planning and handling across the Alliance's airspace. In addition, the Rapporteur underlined Alliance efforts to plan for a potential second wave (as well as any future pandemic) via measures such as increased prepositioned

equipment stocks across the Alliance and the establishment of an emergency fund to help Allies with emergency supply purchases. Finally, he noted the Alliance has also activated its significant scientific network to help find innovative solutions to virus detection, improved situational awareness, decontamination and resilience.

9. Mr Mesterhazy then spoke about the high level of Alliance force readiness, despite the pressures ensuing from the pandemic. He explained that Allies took effective measures to ensure their forces are protected from the virus via such measures as increased testing to new protocols, as well as the modification of exercise planning to minimise the need for large-scale inter-force interactions. With these measures added to the steps taken since 2014 – including the *Readiness Initiative*, a significantly larger NATO Response Force, and increased presence in the Alliance's eastern territories from the Baltic down to the Black Sea and Mediterranean Seas – he argued that the Alliance stands more ready today to confront and prevail over the security challenges it faces.

10. The Rapporteur also noted how Russia and China have used the pandemic to expand their interests during a time of global crisis and exploited communication platforms to spread wilful disinformation about COVID-19. He argued that both NATO and the European Union are key targets of disinformation to strengthen Moscow's and Beijing's anti-Western agendas.

11. The Rapporteur concluded by asking Allied nations and, in particular, parliaments, to consider several key recommendations. First, to continue to work together to project the strength of democratic systems as the most effective means to meet populations' interests. Second, to focus on finding the ways and means to increase self-sufficiency, not just as individual Allies, but as an Alliance as a whole by protecting Allied critical infrastructure from predatory investment efforts by external actors. Third, to increase cooperation between NATO and the European Union, particularly to counter disinformation campaigns targeting NATO's shared values and to improve military mobility across Allied territory. Fourth, to remain focused on burden sharing and increased defence spending. Finally, the Rapporteur stressed the key role the NATO Parliamentary Assembly should have in the Secretary General's reflection group, which is seeking to find the ways and means to expand the Alliance's political role.

12. **Bob Stewart** (UK) asked whether there was a coordinated operation run by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) during the pandemic, and enquired whether some Allies went across national boundaries to help other Allies and partners?

13. **Alec Shelbrooke** (UK) suggested to make some adjustments in paragraph 59 in light of the recent decision taken in the United Kingdom regarding the Chinese telecommunications corporation Huawei. Furthermore, Mr Shelbrooke noted in paragraph 75, regarding the call for deeper NATO-EU cooperation, that it is not as straight forward as it used to be, and strongly recommended NATO and NATO PA to discuss specific details on NATO-EU cooperation, particularly in terms of procurement within PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation).

14. **Neal Dunn** (US) underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed some strategic weaknesses. He suggested that NATO consider greater focus on a comprehensive biodefence strategy to handle future challenges.

15. **Fikri Isik** (TR) thanked the Rapporteur for a well-balanced and prepared report. He recommended putting greater emphasis on the demonstration of solidarity and mutual support between NATO Allies during the pandemic. Mr Isik noted it is particularly important as some reports indicate a decline in public support for NATO among key Western nations.

16. Mr Mesterhazy first replied to Bob Stewart by underlining NATO's joint efforts coordinated by SACEUR during the pandemic. He also mentioned that many Allies have provided relief and support to other Allies and partners. Nevertheless, he noted that communication has perhaps not been as effective as it could be and the report could make an effort to show just how much is being done by Allies. Regarding Mr Shelbrooke's remarks, the Rapporteur agreed to incorporate his feedback into the report. The Rapporteur then replied to Neal Dunn by taking good note of his

remarks, noting the Committee would look into the issue for the updated draft. He also mentioned that the Science and Technology Committee (STC) had recently published a report on a similar issue. Finally, he turned to Mr Isik and agreed to put more emphasis on the solidarity displayed among Allies during the crisis.

IV. Consideration of the draft report of the Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities (DSCFC) NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative [031 DSCFC 20 E] presented by Lara Martinho (Portugal), DSCFC Rapporteur

17. Lara Martinho started by noting that the draft report on *NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative* [031 DSCFC 20 E] was supposed to have been accompanied by a fact-finding mission to Georgia. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, plans to visit Georgia were postponed. She noted her report is the product of research and interviews with NATO officials directly involved in NATO's DCB initiative.

18. The Rapporteur underlined NATO's long history of collaboration with partner nations on security sector reform. She mentioned the 1990 summit in London, when NATO Allies took a bold step away from their Cold War defensive postures to extend a hand of friendship to their former Warsaw Pact adversaries in Central and Eastern Europe. The underlying concept of NATO's cooperative security outreach programmes is simple, she said, "cooperation builds trust and expands the area of stability and prosperity for all involved."

19. Ms Martinho then underlined the dual security shocks in 2014 in NATO's near neighbourhoods in Ukraine and in Syria and Iraq which drove NATO Allies to return to collective defence as a priority. In parallel, she continued, 2014 was also an opportunity to review and adapt NATO's cooperative security programmes to make them a key element of NATO's efforts to guarantee 360-degree security and project stability going forward. An important expression of this effort, she said, was the announcement at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales of a new bilateral defence capacity building initiative – known as the DCB initiative. NATO's DCB initiative is an integral part of the Alliance's cooperative security outreach with partners and seeks to deliver tailor-made, effective defence and related security sector support, with the motto *one nation, one plan*.

20. The Rapporteur emphasised that NATO DCB partnerships focus on strategic-level advice on defence and related security reform and institution building, primarily via education and training programmes in the host country. She said that two initial DCB packages were granted to Georgia and Jordan at the 2014 Wales Summit. The Republic of Moldova and Iraq were agreed upon in 2015, and a package for Tunisia was added in 2018.

21. Ms Martinho concluded her intervention by mentioning several key recommendations. First, the imperative of demonstrating strong political support for NATO DCB packages by NATO parliamentarians. She argued that effective and strategic security assistance packages to partners in these regions will pay dividends to Allies' own national security. Second, she called upon Allies to increase transparency with NATO officials working on DCB packages about what they are already doing on a bilateral level with the host nation. Third, she argued that NATO DCB support should be seen as a strategic priority for Allies. She stressed that stronger partners in strategic regions surrounding the Alliance will help make NATO more secure. Fourth, Ms Martinho identified key support that must continue for the current five nations receiving NATO DCB packages, including Georgia, Jordan, Iraq, Tunisia and Moldova.

22. **Ruxandra Popa** (NATO PA) thanked Ms Martinho for her excellent report. Ms Popa also enquired how the NATO Parliamentary Assembly could support the DCB initiative with NATO headquarters, and highlighted the importance of having a structured conversation with NATO on this issue. She also took the opportunity to congratulate all the Chairpersons and Rapporteurs for their excellent work over the past several weeks of online Committee meetings.

23. Chairperson Andreas Loverdos took the floor to express the difficulties faced by Greece to overcome the economic consequences of the pandemic and stressed the challenges of thinking about balancing domestic needs with external cooperative security outreach.

24. Mr Shelbrooke commented on paragraph 79 regarding the broader inclusion of Jordan into NATO's exercises and education programmes. While recognising the importance of having a strong partnership with Jordan, Mr Shelbrooke recognised the pressures Jordan is facing, some of which have been directly caused by some of NATO's Allies.

25. Ms Martinho thanked everyone for their comments and started by mentioning that the DSCFC is working with the Operations Division at NATO HQ to help structure its relationship with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. She also noted that a lot more could be done at the NATO PA level regarding NATO DCB recipients. She then turned to Andreas Loverdos and pointed out that it has been also very hard economically for Portugal, but that Allies must maintain their focus on both domestic and external challenges. She also underlined the pivotal role played by the armed forces to fight the coronavirus pandemic and the recognition of such role among the population.

V. Any other business

26. Chairperson Andreas Loverdos mentioned that two members of the United States Delegation will retire at the end of the year, Representative Paul Cook and Representative John Shimkus, and recognised their excellent contributions to the Assembly over the years.

27. No other business was raised.

VI. Date and place of the next meeting

28. The Chairperson reminded the members that the Committee will meet again online in September to consider the remaining two draft reports of the DSC.

VII. Closing remarks

29. The Chairperson thanked all members for their constructive and thoughtful participation during the Committee meeting. He also thanked the interpreters, the Committee Director, Ethan Corbin, and the Committee Coordinator, Jailee Rychen, who have worked very hard to make this meeting possible. The meeting was adjourned.
