



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE CIVIL DIMENSION OF SECURITY (CDS)

Wednesday 9 September 2020

By videoconference

ATTENDANCE LIST

OFFICERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE CIVIL DIMENSION OF SECURITY

Chairperson	Joëlle GARRIAUD-MAYLAM (France)
General Rapporteur	Ulla SCHMIDT (Germany)
Special Rapporteur	Lord JOPLING (United Kingdom)

NATO PA BUREAU MEMBERS

Secretary General	Ruxandra POPA
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MEMBER DELEGATIONS

Bulgaria	Milen Vasilev MIHOV
Canada	Jane CORDY <i>(Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance)</i> Vernon WHITE
Estonia	Leo KUNNAS
France	Anissa KHEDHER <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance)</i> Jérôme LAMBERT
Italy	Emanuele PELLEGRINI
Latvia	Aleksandrs KIRSTEINS
Luxembourg	Lydia MUTSCH
Norway	Tellef Inge MORLAND
Romania	Angel TILVAR <i>(Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance)</i>
Turkey	Muhammet Naci CINISLI <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance)</i> Ahmet Berat CONKAR Ahmet YILDIZ
United Kingdom	Baroness Denise KINGSMILL Heather WHEELER
United States	Brett GUTHRIE <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance)</i> John SHIMKUS

ASSOCIATE DELEGATIONS

Armenia	Viktor YENGIBARYAN
Azerbaijan	Kamran BAYRAMOV

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

European Parliament	Anna BONFRISCO Juozas OLEKAS Kris PEETERS
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INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Nathan Robinson GRISON	Director, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security
Paul COOK	Assistant Secretary General and Director Economics and Security Committee
Sarah-Claude FILION-PROVENCHER	Coordinator, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and Science and Technology Committee
Anne-Laure BLEUSE	Officer, Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group - Coordinator, Economics and Security Committee
Sofiia SHEVCHUK	Research Assistant

I. Opening remarks by [Joëlle GARRIAUD-MAYLAM](#) (France), Chairperson

1. Chairperson **Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam** (FR) thanked members for joining the second online meeting of the Committee.

II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [133 CDS 20 E]

2. **The draft agenda [133 CDS 20 E] was adopted.**

III. Consideration of the draft Special Report [China and the Global Liberal Order](#) [029 CDS 20 E] presented by [Lord JOPLING](#) (United Kingdom), Special Rapporteur

3. **Lord Jopling** (UK) noted that NATO was founded more than seventy years ago on the shared values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. These values form the foundations of the global liberal order. By standing together for these liberal values, the Alliance secured peace in Europe and contained the Soviet Union during the Cold War. However, the global liberal order continues to face challenges and threats, many of which are posed by China. The Special Rapporteur stressed that his draft report focuses on Beijing's efforts to disrupt the existing order and reshape global norms and institutions. In doing so, China aims to export its authoritarian governance model and advance its national interests in its neighbourhood and beyond.

4. Lord Jopling emphasised that China has adopted a dual-track approach towards multilateral institutions. On the one hand, Beijing has gradually inserted itself into the post-WWII multilateral institutions and acquired growing influence within them. On the other hand, China has established and promoted alternative multilateral structures. They are designed to reflect its vision of the world and support its objective of expanding its sphere of influence in Asia and beyond. The Special Rapporteur therefore argued that China is a revisionist power attempting to undermine the liberal foundations of the institutions underpinning the global order.

5. Lord Jopling pointed out that China's political structures, in their current form, are incompatible with liberal principles. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is one of the longest running one-party regimes in modern history. Moreover, since he rose to power in 2012, President Xi Jinping has rapidly consolidated his power, built a cult of personality, and asserted the CCP's control over all political institutions, the military, and Chinese society more broadly. This lack of respect for democratic and liberal norms goes hand in hand with the Chinese authorities' lack of respect for human rights. Despite significant progress in advancing the economic rights of its population, China remains one of the least free countries in the world. Restrictions on freedom of expression, religion and belief, assembly and association are severe in the country. The Chinese authorities' repression of religious and ethnic minorities has worsened over the past decade, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang.

6. The Special Rapporteur expressed his concern about Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong's democratic aspirations and imposition of its authoritarian governance model on the territory. In 2014 and in 2019, the Hong Kong authorities repressed pro-democracy protests. More recently, the situation has deteriorated further. In June 2020, the Chinese authorities imposed a national security law on Hong Kong. The law criminalises ill-defined notions such as 'subversion' or 'collusion with foreign forces', undermines the right to free speech and reinforces the grip of the mainland authorities on Hong Kong. It also gives sweeping powers to the authorities to crack down on the opposition and quash future protests. In July, they barred opposition candidates from running in the upcoming Legislative Council elections, before postponing the vote for a year.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the risks associated with China's partial rejection of the global liberal order. The Chinese authorities' efforts to silence whistle-blowers gave the coronavirus a critical month-long head start after it emerged. Subsequently, their lack of transparency worsened the crisis. In addition, the pandemic strengthened the resolve of the authorities to reinforce their control over the population. There is a significant risk that they will use public health protection as a pretext to expand their censorship and repression. Moreover, Lord Jopling warned that Beijing is increasingly using disinformation and propaganda in the context of the pandemic to shift the blame away, undermine democratic regimes, as well as promote and export its authoritarian governance model. Finally, Beijing has exploited the global uncertainty created by the pandemic while the world's attention is focused on responding to the crisis, to opportunistically advance its interests in its neighbourhood.

8. Lord Jopling concluded by stating that over the past decades China's growing military capabilities, economic growth, and political clout have changed the international balance of power. China is using this newly acquired influence to present its authoritarian governance model as an alternative to the liberal model and export it beyond its borders. In doing so, it challenges the liberal foundations of the current global order and thus poses a threat to the values that define democracies and underpin the Alliance. This challenge requires that, despite their occasional differences, NATO nations speak as one to draw attention to Beijing's unacceptable actions. However, at the same time, NATO and the Allies should not treat China as a pariah state. Instead, they should engage constructively with Beijing and encourage common understanding and tolerance where possible. Lord Jopling pointed out that tackling transnational issues such as international terrorism, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates international cooperation and shows the need for a frank but open dialogue between the Alliance and China.

9. **Kris Peeters** (European Parliament) stated that NATO Allies and European Union (EU) member states should develop their own initiatives, similar to China's Belt and Road initiative, particularly in the areas of digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

10. **Ulla Schmidt** (DE) insisted that, in order to speak with one voice in their relations with China, NATO nations must be united. She, however, expressed her concern about the growing political and societal differences amongst NATO member states. She asked how the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) could help strengthen the unity and common values-based identity of the Alliance. She added that such a reaffirmation by the Allies of their commitment to liberal values is crucial in ensuring economic resilience and preventing structural dependence on China, particularly in the area of new technologies such as 5G networks.

11. **Anissa Khedher** (FR) stressed that the relationship with China presents both challenges and opportunities. Cooperation with Beijing is necessary to fight climate change, protect biodiversity, and alleviate the debt burden borne by developing countries. On the other hand, Allies should denounce attempts by Beijing to undermine the global liberal order. She expressed her concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and suggested that an investigation be carried out in the region by international observers.

12. **Jane Cordy** (CA) pointed out that China engages in coercive diplomacy, thus challenging the principles of human rights and the rule of law. She mentioned that the Chinese authorities are detaining two Canadian citizens without any valid reasons, as retaliation for the detention in Canada and extradition to the United States of a Huawei executive.

13. **Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam** (FR) regretted that China refuses to let Taiwan become a member of the World Health Organization and pointed out that this position has had a negative impact on international cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, she pointed out that the Chinese authorities heavily subsidise their national companies, which makes it difficult for companies from Allied countries to compete freely. Finally, she called on NATO to reinforce its

already existing partnerships with countries such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea, and create new ones with countries that share our values in the Asia-Pacific region.

14. **Anna Bonfrisco** (European Parliament) said that the Chinese communist party restricts free speech amongst its own population, tries to extend its reach beyond China's borders, attempts to weaken United Nations commitments on human rights, and engages heavily in the surveillance of its own population's data.

15. Lord Jopling reiterated that the Allies must speak as one to denounce unacceptable actions undertaken by Beijing, but also engage in a frank but constructive dialogue with Beijing. Cooperation between NATO and the EU is essential in ensuring that both organisations' members take a common approach to their relationship with China. The NATO PA and its members will also have to play a role in maintaining a unified position amongst Allies. The Special Rapporteur insisted that NATO Allies should not treat China as a pariah state but should at the same time be firm in standing for the principles of democracy and human rights. Regarding the situation in Xinjiang, he added that an independent tribunal was being set up to investigate whether the authorities' human rights abuses against the Uyghurs in the region constitute a genocide or crimes against humanity. Finally, he said that NATO should further develop its partnerships, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

IV. Consideration of the draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance [Enhancing Information and Education about NATO](#) [028 CDS DG 20 E] presented by [Angel TILVAR](#) (Romania), Rapporteur

16. **Angel Tilvar** (RO) stressed that, unfortunately, the public in NATO countries remains generally poorly informed about the Alliance and its role. This, in turn, directly affects citizens' support for NATO. He emphasised that to reverse this trend of declining confidence, the Alliance needs to better inform and educate the public about its crucial role in ensuring the security of the Euro-Atlantic area.

17. Mr Tilvar pointed out that NATO, the NATO PA, as well as Allied countries have all taken important steps in recent years to better engage with citizens and raise awareness about the Alliance. NATO has launched several successful initiatives, including the #WeAreNATO campaign to promote the Alliance's mission and values. As for the NATO PA, communicating and educating about NATO is one of its core missions. It raises awareness about the security of the transatlantic area amongst parliamentarians and reaches out to citizens within and beyond NATO's borders. Lastly, member states play a crucial role in efforts to better inform and educate the public about the Alliance and its benefits. They greatly contribute through the development of school curriculums, and the creation of study programmes, essay competitions, youth forums, or social media campaigns about NATO.

18. Mr Tilvar mentioned that the draft report examines innovative steps taken by four individual member states and partner countries to educate and inform the public about NATO. First, the example of Romania shows that it is essential for member states to take an active part in efforts to communicate about NATO, and to reach out to the youth, especially through social media. Second, discussing the example of Montenegro, he highlighted the efforts made by the authorities to reach out to the public about the benefits of NATO membership. However, because of historical grievances and widespread misinformation about the Alliance, some of which is being spread by Russia, public opinion remains divided. Third, in Serbia, public opinion about NATO has traditionally been negative. Ensuring that the public is accurately informed about the benefits of the Serbia-NATO partnership requires active cooperation between NATO, the Serbian authorities, and the media. Finally, the Rapporteur highlighted that Ukraine was an example to follow. Successful public diplomacy efforts have led to an increased awareness and understanding of NATO's role as well as increased support for membership among the population. The Rapporteur expressed his

belief that the lessons learned from these four case studies should be replicated, where and when possible, in other member states and partner countries.

19. Mr Tilvar pointed out that, in many Allied countries, low levels of understanding of the role and objectives of NATO among the population stem, in part, from the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda. These phenomena, primarily emerging from Russia and China, have drastically intensified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this respect, information and education efforts about the Alliance and the important role that it plays in responding to this crisis have become more necessary than ever.

20. Mr Tilvar concluded by pointing out some of the key strategic challenges that the Alliance needs to address in its efforts to better reach out to the public. Firstly, strategic communication ambitions and efforts must be backed with an adequate rise in funding and human resources. Secondly, at the national level, member countries need to encourage military and civilian structures to increase their participation in NATO's communication initiatives. At the NATO level, greater emphasis should be put on engagement with civil society organisations. Thirdly, the draft report highlights the importance of focusing NATO's communication on young generations and women's empowerment. Finally, NATO must continue and intensify its efforts to tackle disinformation and propaganda to ensure that factual and reliable information about the Alliance and its members reaches the public. The Rapporteur expressed his hope that his draft report and the recommendations it offers would contribute towards tackling these challenges.

21. **Kamran Bayramov** (AZ) suggested including a reference in the draft report to the importance of the exchange of best practices in the response to the pandemic between NATO Allies and associate members.

22. Kris Peeters (European Parliament) suggested adding more emphasis in the draft report on the need to enhance the relationship between NATO and the EU, and between the European Parliament and the NATO PA.

23. **John Shimkus** (US) emphasised the importance of education in reaching out to the youth and better communicating about NATO. He encouraged NATO PA members to visit schools, colleges and universities and talk about the benefits of NATO and the transatlantic relationship. He added that he would be leaving the NATO PA at the end of the year.

24. **Ruxandra Popa** (NATO PA) suggested further emphasizing in the draft report the crucial role of the NATO PA and parliamentarians in educating and informing citizens about NATO. Secondly, she stated that NATO needs to develop a new narrative as its missions are evolving. In particular, the Alliance must find ways of explaining to the public why it needs to pay increased attention to China and what its response should be to Beijing's actions. Finally, she paid tribute to John Shimkus (US) and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the NATO PA.

25. Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam (FR) suggested creating an official day dedicated to liberty, peace, and the end of the Cold War. She added that such a day would contribute to eliciting the curiosity of the younger generation which often takes peace for granted.

26. Angel Tilvar said that partner countries are important for NATO and pointed out that this was the reason why two of the four examples discussed in the draft report were partner countries. He added that education is the best way to ensure support for NATO and referred to initiatives implemented by the Romanian authorities in this area. He also agreed that parliamentarians should contribute to that effort by visiting educational institutions to discuss NATO and its role with youth. Mr Tilvar stated that increasing the cooperation between the European Parliament and the NATO PA, and the EU and NATO, was crucial and that this point would be reinforced in the revised version of the report. The Rapporteur then highlighted that NATO does not respond to propaganda with propaganda, or to disinformation with disinformation. Instead, it presents verified facts, as

doing otherwise would be contrary to the values of the Alliance. Finally, he referred to the existence in Romania of a two-week period during which schoolteachers can discuss topics of their choice with students, which many use to discuss the past and present importance of NATO for Romania. He welcomed the suggestion of creating an official day to pay tribute to heroes and those who fought for peace.

V. Any other business

27. No other business was raised.

VI. Date and place of the next meeting

28. The Chairperson announced that the next meeting will take place on 21-22 November 2020 at the Assembly's Annual Session in Athens, Greece.

VII. Closing remarks

29. The Chairperson thanked John Shimkus (US) and James Sensenbrenner (US) for their contribution to the NATO PA over the years. She then closed the meeting of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security.
