



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE (DSC)

Wednesday 2 September 2020

By video conference

ATTENDANCE LIST

OFFICERS OF THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Chairperson Michael R. TURNER (United States)
(Vice-President of the NATO PA)

General Rapporteur Cédric PERRIN (France)

NATO PA BUREAU MEMBERS

Secretary General Ruxandra POPA

MEMBER DELEGATIONS

Canada Pierre-Hugues BOISVENU
 Cheryl GALLANT
 Pierre PAUL-HUS

Czech Republic Jan FARSKY
 Jan LIPAVSKY

Estonia Leo KUNNAS
 Ants LAANEOTS

France Jean-Jacques BRIDEY
 Jean-Charles LARSONNEUR
(Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation)
 Jean-Marc TODESCHINI

Italy Luigi IOVINO

Latvia Raimonds BERGMANIS
 Gatis EGLITIS
(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation)

Norway Erlend WIBORG

Poland Rafal SLUSARZ

Portugal Lara Fernandes MARTINHO
(Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities)

Romania Nicu FALCOI
(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation)

Spain Ana María BOTELLA
 Zaida CANTERA
 Fernando GUTIERREZ
 Manuel MESTRE

Turkey Kamil AYDIN
 Utku CAKIROZER
(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities)
 Ahmet Berat CONKAR
 Ahmet YILDIZ

United Kingdom	Abena OPPONG-ASARE Alec SHEL BROOKE <i>(Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities)</i>
United States	Neal Patrick DUNN Rick LARSEN <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation)</i> Gregory Weldon MEEKS John SHIMKUS Filemon VELA

ASSOCIATE DELEGATIONS

Armenia	Gevorg GORGISYAN Viktor YENGIBARYAN
Azerbaijan	Ziyafat ASGAROV
Ukraine	Mariana BEZUH LA

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

European Parliament	Rasa JUKNEVICIENE Juozas OLEKAS Kris PEETERS
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INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Ethan CORBIN	Director, Defence and Security Committee
Steffen SACHS	Director, Science and Technology Committee
Sarah FILION	Coordinator, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and Science and Technology Committee
Jailee RYCHEN	Coordinator, Defence and Security Committee
Serafine DINKEL	Research Assistant

I. Opening remarks by Michael R. TURNER (United States), Chairperson

1. The Chairperson of the Defence and Security Committee (DSC) **Michael R. Turner** (US) welcomed DSC members to the Committee's second online meeting.

II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [130 DSC 20 E]

2. **The draft Agenda [130 DSC 20 E] was adopted.**

III. Consideration of the draft General Report on *Russian Military Modernisation: Challenges Ahead for NATO Allies* [030 DSC 20 E] by Cédric PERRIN (France), General Rapporteur

3. **Cédric Perrin** (FR) took the floor to present his draft General Report on *Russian Military Modernisation: Challenges Ahead for NATO Allies* [030 DSC 20 E]. Senator Perrin said he appreciated the opportunity to discuss the topic, even if the meeting had to take place online. He noted his interest in working on the report, as it is a topic at the core of the Committee's work, which focuses on the principal challenges to Allied defence and deterrence.

4. Mr Perrin began by noting that Russia had recently tested anti-satellite weaponry. Such new weapon systems, he noted, threaten Allied security and economic interests. He argued that Russia's claim that these systems constitute legitimate defensive measures is typical for Moscow's propensity to twist international law and norms to its advantage and challenge the existing international order. He said the tests are part of a long list of instances of political and military brinkmanship and hostile rhetoric by Russia that has been escalating in recent years.

5. Mr Perrin explained that Russia had demonstrated its disregard for international law and treaty obligations when it developed dual-capable intermediate-range missiles, which prompted the United States to suspend its participation in the INF Treaty and, ultimately, led to its demise. Russia's selective application of the Open Skies Treaty over the years has led to a similar step by the United States in recent months, he said.

6. Russia is pursuing comprehensive efforts to modernise its defence sector, often to the detriment of public sector spending, he continued. Modernisation efforts, he argued, aim to achieve parity with NATO across all services in terms of firepower and mobility. As such, Russian military modernisation should be viewed as a direct challenge to NATO Allies. Recent efforts even signal the intention to restart an arms race: President Putin's unveiling of new "invincible weapons" designed to circumvent NATO's ballistic missile defence system being a concrete example. These weapons include new hypersonic missiles, as well as a range of new, powerful dual-capable cruise and ballistic missiles.

7. Mr Perrin explained that the modernisation projects are the result of Russia's evolving national security strategies and military doctrines, which identify NATO as a threat encroaching upon Russian interests at all levels – military, economic, political, and societal. Russia has responded by adopting a whole-of-nation approach to military modernisation to counter this perceived threat, said Senator Perrin. He also noted that Russia's military modernisation underwrites Russia's increasingly aggressive revisionist foreign policy, challenging the international order NATO Allies have invested in since the end of WWII. Russia views the ability to back up its increasingly aggressive foreign policy with the threat of a stronger military force as lending credibility to its revisionist agenda, Perrin noted. He continued by stating that the effects of these efforts are already visible in places like the conflict theatres of Ukraine and Syria, which serve as laboratories for this new equipment.

8. Mr Perrin reminded his colleagues that NATO's defence and deterrence posture is based on its nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities – Allied strength has come from putting a premium on maintaining capable and credible modern forces. He pointed out that in light of the growing challenge Russia poses, NATO Allies needed to overcome any current differences of

threat perception and present a united, strong front, which depends, he stressed, on maintaining a lead in defence innovation. To maintain NATO's technological advantage, he argued, it is crucial Allies remain committed to spending 2% of their GDP on defence as well as investing 20% of their defence spending into research and development (R&D). Commitment to the defence spending pledge, he stressed, should not waiver due to the economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

9. Concluding his remarks, he recalled the spirit of Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, which calls upon Allies to act individually and together to maintain and develop the means to defend against potential adversaries. He said that in the face of Russia's goal to break consensus amongst Allies, they should "work even harder to cooperate to keep intact the strongest and most effective political-military alliance in history."

10. **Kris Peeters** (European Parliament) congratulated Mr Perrin on his report. He suggested that the challenge of Russia's use of hybrid threats could be elaborated upon in an updated draft. **Alec Shelbrooke** (UK) asked about Russia's ongoing targeting of Allied military assets. He asked what might be NATO's response, for example, if transport infrastructure were to be targeted in the event of an armed conflict. Mr Shelbrooke also asked what further steps NATO could consider to counteract the growing Russian missile threat. He also noted his appreciation of Mr Perrin's message for Allies to adhere to the 2% GDP defence spending commitment, but asked how this may relate to new EU defence initiatives including the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF).

11. **Ahmet Yildiz** (TR) thanked the Rapporteur for highlighting the issue of Russia's military modernisation efforts to the Committee. He expressed an interest in having the report develop a more concrete description of lessons learned from the Russian interventions in Syria and Ukraine. He also noted that strengthening NATO's technological capabilities alone would not suffice, and stressed that strong cohesion between Allies is crucial. He concluded by saying that the Turkish delegation will send along more specific suggested edits to the report to the Committee Director. **Lara Fernandes Martinho** (PT) congratulated Mr Perrin on an excellent report and asked how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected Russian military spending. She also pointed out that she found it interesting to learn from the report that Russia is concerned with so-called hybrid threats coming from the West, when the West itself is faced with the very real concern of the threat of Russian disinformation to interfere with Allies' domestic affairs.

12. Mr Perrin replied to the first group of questions by noting that some additions could be made to the report's existing discussion of hybrid threats. Regarding the question about hypothetical response to Russian targeting, he said that this issue had not been central to his report on arms modernisation but could be reflected within the DSC's programme of study more broadly. Regarding the question about European-specific defence programmes, he noted that the EDF budget was regrettably halved as a result of the latest EU budget discussions. He also noted that the report acknowledged that Russia used Syria and Ukraine as 'laboratories' for new capabilities and invited the delegations to forward contributions about any additional evidence they may be able to bring to bear on the subject. He concluded by noting that most countries' budgets would be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. He also said that Russia's commitment to military spending comes at a cost to other state sectors, such as health and education. He suggested he would look into adding a section in the report specifying the degree to which Russia 'sacrifices' other domains to continue to fund its vast military modernisation programmes.

13. In a second round of questions, **Ahmet Berat Conkar** (TR) took the floor to ask how Russia's involvement in the conflict in Libya should be evaluated from a NATO perspective and wondered how this could be highlighted more clearly in the report. **John Shimkus** (US), referring to paragraph 54 of the report, asked about NATO's stance toward Russia's recent deployment of anti-satellite technologies. In response to the militarisation of space by the Alliance's strategic competitors, the United States had set up the Space Force, he noted. **Utku Cakirozer** (TR) asked whether NATO's capabilities are ready to counter the threat of Russia's so-called invincible weapons and whether it needed to modernise its air and missile defence systems in response. He

also questioned if the current Western sanctions regime was sufficient to counter Russian threats, given Moscow's ability to continue funding its military modernisation programmes.

14. Mr Perrin thanked members for their questions. He responded that Allies agreed on the potential threat of Russia's recent space activities and that Russia's "invincible weapons" are only being presented as such by Russia, not by the Alliance. He deferred to DSC Chairperson, Michael Turner, to discuss NATO's position vis-à-vis space. Mr Turner explained recent US Space Force efforts to clarify the activities of adversaries in space in order to allow for Allies to understand more clearly the state of military efforts in the domain. He also stated that the United States is very concerned about Russia's efforts to build an arsenal of new dual-capable weapons systems. From a US perspective, he continued, these new programmes are an escalatory move by Russia, and may even indicate a dangerous shift in Russia's nuclear weapons policy. As a result, NATO's defence and deterrence posture will have to adapt. By way of example, he noted that while sensors and other assets may currently be able to detect such missiles, the ability to determine their flight path is more challenging. This is why, he concluded, the report highlights not only the need to invest in missile defence capabilities to counter these threats, but also a need to continue to invest in NATO's own nuclear capabilities to maintain credible and capable ability to deter Russia from any potential consideration of the use of nuclear weapons against the Alliance.

15. Mr Perrin concluded by noting he would highlight and expand some financial aspects in the report to help the reader better understand the size, scope, and durability of the Russian military modernisation programme. He thanked the members and the Chairperson for their attention and efforts to help shape the report, and the Committee Director for his assistance with the research and drafting of the report.

IV. Consideration of the draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation *Key Challenges to Maintaining Peace and Security In the Western Balkans* [032 DSCTC 20 E] by Jean-Charles LARSONNEUR (France), DSCTC ad interim Rapporteur

16. Michael Turner opened the Committee's discussion of the report by underlining his great interest in the report's subject. He told the Committee that he was joining the debate from Dayton, Ohio, where the Peace Agreement ending the Bosnian War in 1995 was signed, during his tenure as the city's mayor. He noted that the issue of security in the Western Balkans was not yet resolved and that it should remain a focus of the Alliance's efforts as a result.

17. **Jean-Charles Larsonneur** (FR) began by thanking the NATO PA Secretariat and the Committee Director for enabling the meeting to take place by videoconference. He explained that 2020 had seen important developments for peace and security in the Western Balkans and for their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Among the principal achievements, he said, was the accession of the Republic of North Macedonia as the Alliance's 30th member. The dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia had reopened after a year and a half suspension. He also noted, however, that 2020 also marked the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, the commemoration of which recalls the importance of Allied efforts to help achieve lasting peace and stability in the region.

18. Mr Larsonneur underlined that all countries of the region were by now seeking some degree of integration into the Euro-Atlantic community: All countries were either members of or pursuing membership in the European Union (EU); and, apart from Serbia, all were either members or aspiring members of the NATO Alliance. The role of the Euro-Atlantic community, he continued, has been pivotal to the region's successes since the wars that devastated the Former Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Since then, he continued, engagement by both NATO and the European Union continues to be essential to peace and security in the Western Balkans. He explained that NATO underwrote the full reconstruction of the security sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina, continues to be present in Kosovo, and has transformed security sectors across the region. NATO

has even built a solid partnership with Serbia. EU investments in parallel have helped transform virtually all sectors of the region's societies from political to economic to security and beyond.

19. Despite noting the region's important positive developments, the Rapporteur took stock of worrying signs of economic and political regression. State capture and corruption contribute to economic stagnation and the erosion of the rule of law and democracy, he warned his colleagues. Organised crime, coupled with the ongoing risk of violent extremism due to entrenched ethnic and religious divisions, could also easily exacerbate broader underlying tensions in the region. The combination of these factors, he lamented, has caused a significant portion of the population to emigrate from the region, particularly a large number of young and highly educated people.

20. Mr Larsonneur noted that, in light of these vulnerabilities, the region was a target for influence from external actors, notably China and Russia. Whilst Russia aims to undermine the integration of the region into the Euro-Atlantic sphere, China seeks to use it to expand opportunities for strategic investments for example with the Belt and Road Initiative. Mr Larsonneur noted that Chinese infrastructure investment was already relatively significant. Still, Larsonneur reminded Committee members that NATO and EU efforts in the region far surpass those of Russia and China at every level; something that he noted should not be overlooked.

21. The Rapporteur noted that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region was still difficult to determine, but that it had highlighted the vulnerabilities of some states' healthcare and public services. The pandemic has also had important political effects, he noted, leading to the eruption of protests in Serbia and the fall of the government in Kosovo. Moreover, externally sponsored disinformation had spread in parts of the region, confusing the population's understanding of the pandemic.

22. Concluding his remarks, Mr Larsonneur noted that whilst Kosovo-Serbia relations remained a key challenge, a recent easing of economic tensions and cross-border cooperation to tackle the pandemic was encouraging. He also said that Allies were increasing their investment at the political and economic levels, which was also a trend that Committee members should support and encourage. Finally, he recalled NATO's commitment to democratic values and encouraged Allies to adopt a common and coordinated approach to tackle the security and socioeconomic challenges in the region.

23. The Chairperson thanked Mr Larsonneur for the draft report, which he noted provides a good overview of the current situation. He agreed with the Rapporteur's assessment that the area still deserves international attention. **Ziyafat Asgarov** (AZ) took the floor to note Azerbaijan's initiative to hold a UN General Assembly meeting on cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and its financial support to the WHO and partner countries. **Kamil Ayin** (TR) noted that the report's focus on the concept of the "Western Balkans" could be extended to include other countries in the region, which he felt may highlight the region more accurately. Kris Peeters thanked the Rapporteur for a good report. He noted, however, that he regretted that it highlighted efforts of only a few Allies and EU Member States when there is a broader range of NATO and EU member states that have done a lot for the region. Ahmet Yildiz noted the importance of the Balkans, and also highlighted Turkey's instrumental role in stabilising the region. Mr Yildiz suggested the report should focus less on EU contributions and highlight the fact that Turkey and other Allies pursue the same objective of integrating the Western Balkans into the Euro-Atlantic security landscape. Utku Cakirozer agreed that the report should focus less on national strategies. He noted that Turkey had assisted ten Balkan countries in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and suggested the report could also reflect Turkey's historic and economic ties with the region.

24. Chairperson Turner pointed out that NATO as a whole had achieved a lot since the disintegration of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), as Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia had joined the Alliance, Bosnia and Herzegovina had received a Membership Action Plan and the Alliance maintains an essential presence in Kosovo. Whilst Serbia does not intend to join NATO, it does intend to join the European Union. He argued that it

was useful to focus on the FRY countries within the “Western Balkans” concept rather than focusing on the whole region.

25. The Rapporteur noted the Azeri initiative on COVID-19 relief cooperation, adding that he had witnessed the significant impact of COVID-19 during a recent visit to the region. He also stated that the concept of “Western Balkans” is the typical format in which the international community addresses FRY countries, which was the reason for the report’s relatively specific focus. He acknowledged that Allied efforts beyond those mentioned in the report should be recognised. Mr Larsonneur reminded members that reports were open for input and invited delegations to submit potential edits and additions to the report on this matter.

26. Mr Turner thanked the Rapporteur and invited members to send any additional points on the content to Ethan Corbin, the Committee Director.

V. Any other business

27. No other business was raised.

VI. Date and place of the next meeting

28. The Chairperson reminded members that the next Committee meeting is currently scheduled to take place on 21 and 22 November in Athens, Greece. He noted that the situation is being monitored closely by the International Secretariat and expressed his hope that the meeting can be maintained in person, but noted that, either by videoconference or in person, the Committee would reconvene in late November.

VII. Closing remarks

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