



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

# SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

## POLITICAL COMMITTEE (PC)

Monday 31 August 2020

*By Videoconference*

146 PC 20 E | Original: English | 31 August 2020

## ATTENDANCE LIST

### OFFICERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Chairperson	Lord CAMPBELL OF PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom) <i>(Former Vice-President of the NATO PA)</i>
Vice-Chairperson	Plamen MANUSHEV (Bulgaria)
General Rapporteur	Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States) <i>(Ex Officio Member of the NATO PA Bureau Members of the NATOPA)</i>

### NATO PA BUREAU MEMBERS

Vice-President	Philippe FOLLIOU (France)
Vice-President	Osman Askin BAK (Turkey)
Secretary General	Ruxandra POPA

### MEMBER DELEGATIONS

Albania	Mimi KODHELI
Canada	Cheryl GALLANT
France	Marianne DUBOIS Sonia KRIMI <i>(Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships)</i>
Greece	Mariori GIANNAKOU
Italy	Paolo FORMENTINI <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships)</i> Luca FRUSONE
Latvia	Ojars Eriks KALNINS <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations)</i>
Poland	Anna Maria SIARKOWSKA
Portugal	Marcos PERESTRELLO DE VASCONCELLOS
Turkey	Ahmet Berat CONKAR <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships)</i> Ilhan KESICI Ahmet YILDIZ <i>(Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations)</i>
United Kingdom	Lord ANDERSON Douglas CHAPMAN Heather WHEELER
United States	Gregory Weldon MEEKS John SHIMKUS Filemon VELA <i>(Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations)</i>

### ASSOCIATE DELEGATIONS

Armenia	Gevorg GORGISYAN Andranik KOCHARYAN Viktor YENGIBARYAN
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Austria Reinhold LOPATKA  
Ukraine Mariana BEZUHLA

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

European Parliament Kris PEETERS  
Sandor RONAI  
Mounir SATOURI

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT**

Andrius AVIZIUS Director, Political Committee  
Nathan Robinson GRISON Director, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security  
Karen WALKER-LOVE Coordinator, Political Committee; Coordinator, Document  
Service  
Sarah-Claude FILION- Coordinator, Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security  
PROVENCHER and Science and Technology Committee  
Serafine DINKEL Research Assistant

**I. Opening remarks by Lord CAMPBELL OF PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom), Chairperson**

1. **Lord Campbell of Pittenweem** (UK) welcomed participants to the second virtual meeting of the Political Committee (PC) and provided the attendees with information on the structure of the meeting.

**II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [128 PC 20 E]**

2. **The draft agenda [128 PC 20 E] was adopted.**

**III. Consideration of the Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on *NATO Partnerships The NATO-EU Partnership in a Changing Global Context* [037 PCNP 20 E] presented by Sonia KRIMI (France), Rapporteur**

3. Ms Krimi began her speech by underscoring that NATO and the EU, although unique in their respective structures, are natural partners in addressing complex and multifaceted global security challenges. Such challenges, including climate change, hybrid threats, artificial intelligence, competition between powers and renewed instability in the South, dictate the need for greater cooperation between these two organisations.

4. Ms Krimi stressed that, since the signing of the Joint Declaration in 2016, NATO and the EU have engaged in an unprecedented level of cooperation, focusing on counter-terrorism and hybrid threats as well as military mobility. Effective maritime cooperation between these two entities witnessed synergies between NATO's Operation Sea Guardian and the EU's Operation *Sophia*. Moreover, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic emphasised the benefits of this cooperation, whereby NATO and the EU were continuously working alongside one another in providing medical, health and logistical support to civilian structures and constantly engaged in fighting disinformation.

5. Ms Krimi argued that Europeans "are fully aware that they must do more for their own security and defence." She urged all Allies to respect the Defence Investment Pledge in its three dimensions: cash, capabilities, and commitments. She further argued that the more effective EU's Common Security and Defence Policy would contribute to a stronger NATO and that the Union's defence modernisation ambitions complement NATO's capacity development efforts.

6. In addition to developing further synergies between NATO and EU officials, Ms Krimi highlighted the need to nourish the sense of belonging to the same community through regular political dialogue at the highest level and joint statements, exercises, and projects. She suggested that the development of the strategic NATO-EU partnership should be a key theme of the "NATO 2030" reflection initiative.

7. During the ensuing discussion, **Ojars Eriks Kalnins** (LV) suggested rephrasing paragraph 36, so that it could not be interpreted as a justification for the reduction of US presence in Europe. He also suggested amending paragraph 44 to avoid the interpretation that some European countries prefer allocating greater investments in EU defence initiatives rather those of NATO.

8. **Ahmet Yildiz** (TR) considered the draft report to be overly EU centric and disagreed with the premise of the report that NATO-EU cooperation has significantly improved in recent years.

9. **Gerald E. Connolly** (US) echoed the concerns of Mr Kalnins over paragraph 36. He also added that, when referring to China's so-called 'generosity policy', the Rapporteur might want to consider adding a sentence describing China's lack of candour and early information sharing with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. **Kris Peeters** (MEP) expressed his hope that the EP and NATO PA can strengthen their relationship. He also added that the notion of Europe's strategic autonomy will continue to be high on the European Parliament's agenda, not least because the security situation around Europe remains challenging. Finally, he expressed hope of forging a better relationship between Turkey and the EU.

11. **Philippe Folliot** (FR) welcomed open discussions among parliamentarians of NATO PA on the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece. He also noted that the dispute between the two countries presents a challenge for the Alliance and the European Union.

12. **Mariori Giannakou** (GR) congratulated the Rapporteur for her clarity in outlining the problems set forth by the report and presented Greece's views on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

13. **Mounir Satouri** (European Parliament) reiterated the importance of reaching a nuclear-free world and called upon members of the Assembly that harbour nuclear capabilities to respect their disarmament commitments enshrined in Art. 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

14. **Ahmet Berat Conkar** (TR) called upon fellow NATO PA parliamentarians to be fair and balanced in their analysis of the recent developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and to be constructive in their positions.

15. Ahmet Yildiz stressed that creating subgroups within NATO will unavoidably harm the Alliance. He also reiterated Turkey's perspective regarding tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

16. Ms Krimi thanked her colleagues for the constructive feedback. She reiterated the importance of accounting for the security and defence policies of the 6 EU members that are not members of NATO as well as well as of the eight NATO member states that are not part of the EU. She expressed concern that the COVID-19 pandemic may impact national defence budgets. She also agreed to rephrase paragraphs 36, 44 and 51. Lastly, Ms Krimi addressed the concerns of Mr Yildiz by reiterating her commitment to provide a balanced report that accounts for all viewpoints.

#### **IV. Consideration of the Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations *Security and Political Dynamics in the Gulf* [038 PCTR 20 E] presented by Ahmet YILDIZ (Turkey), Rapporteur**

17. Mr Yildiz began his speech by stressing that security and stability in the Gulf and in the Middle East are of the utmost importance to Euro-Atlantic security. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the drop in oil prices have damaged many economies in the region and opened new opportunities for China to assert itself through increased soft power and economic influence.

18. The Rapporteur also noted that the emergence of these new challenges comes in addition to rather than replaces the old challenges, such as the rivalry between Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Iran continues to seek to alter the fragile regional balance of

power by supporting Shia militias in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia, supported by the UAE, continues to view Iran as a threat to the regional order and continues to counter Iran's influence from Yemen to Syria. Mr Yildiz also discussed the escalation of tensions between the US and Iran, starting from Iran's involvement in a series of attacks on oil facilities in the region. Qatar's blockade and renewed political instability in Iraq are also sources of particular concern, the Rapporteur said.

19. The Rapporteur warned of Russia's continued support for the Assad regime in Syria, where the war continues to divide the region. The war in Yemen is also proving detrimental for the stability of the region given the high number of deaths and displaced people and given the potential threat posed by terrorists finding safe haven in war-struck countries. Mr Yildiz also noted, however, that certain mediation efforts have also been made in recent months to solve the ongoing conflicts.

20. The Rapporteur concluded with a few general observations on how the Euro-Atlantic community could address these challenges. Among these, he stressed that NATO should continue its effort to secure peace and stability in the region through enhanced cooperation with Gulf countries. Moreover, because of NATO's involvement in defence capacity missions to help Iraqi forces counter Daesh, allied countries should also make a concerted effort to monitor the latest political developments unravelling in this country. Allied countries should be wary of China's 'mask diplomacy' and its intentions to exert influence in the region. Mr Yildiz also stressed that the Allies should voice stronger concerns over the situation of human rights in the Gulf.

21. **Lord Anderson** (UK) suggested adding a stronger focus on NATO's role in the region. He also mentioned that the recent UAE-Israel peace deal may have great potential for the region and is worth examining further. Lord Anderson also stressed the importance of looking into Iran's recent decision regarding inspections of its nuclear facilities and welcomed inserting an analysis of which countries are committing themselves to the reconstruction of war-torn Syria.

22. Mariori Giannakou asked whether Turkey, which currently has troops in Syria, is intending to cooperate with other Gulf countries towards conflict resolution.

23. **Osman Askin Bak** (TR) asked the Rapporteur why Yemen was witnessing such a devastating humanitarian catastrophe. He also urged for more investigations into the killing of Jamal Kashoggi. Mr Bak reminded the audience that Turkey is in need of assistance from both NATO and the EU to handle the over four million refugees it has welcomed since the onset of the Syrian civil war.

24. **Paolo Formentini** (IT) noted that the peace deal between the UAE and Israel is an historical deal and must be analysed objectively.

25. Mr Yildiz thanked his colleagues for the important suggestions. Regarding the UAE-Israel peace deal, Mr Yildiz reiterated Turkey's support to the Palestinians and confirmed that he will insert further considerations on the deal. Regarding Lord Anderson's comments on the reconstruction of Syria, Mr Yildiz admitted that for the time being other priorities have become of primary concern, such as finding a political solution to the war and drafting a constitution, while the reconstruction of Syria is only given a secondary priority for the time being. The Rapporteur responded to Ms Giannakou by noting that Turkey is hosting about 4 million refugees from Syria and that since the beginning of the war Turkey has made significant efforts to find a common political solution to the conflict. With regards to the question on the war in Yemen, Mr Yildiz explained that the excessive use of force by all countries involved is the prime cause for the ongoing humanitarian disaster. He also supported the call for further investigations into the killing of Jamal Kashoggi.

**V. Any other business**

26. Mariori Giannakou reminded delegates that they have until September 9 to let the Greek delegation know whether they will attend the Autumn Assembly Session in person or not.

**VI. Date and place of next meeting**

27. The Chairman informed participants that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on 21 and 22 November at the Annual Assembly Session.

**VII. Closing remarks**

28. The Chair thanked the interpreters, NATO PA staff, the Rapporteurs, support staff, and Committee members for their hard work and constructive participation in these difficult circumstances.