

## Speech by the NATO PA President

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Order, order. I declare open the Annual Session of the 2020 the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Welcome to all of you and a special word of welcome to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg who will join me on screen in a moment.

A key theme for our sitting today will be how NATO adapts to remain a political-military transatlantic alliance unsurpassed today and in the future.

One year ago, at their December meeting in London, Allied leaders decided to launch a reflection process on ways to strengthen NATO further.

Of course, they did not know then that this process would coincide with the most serious, profound, and wide-ranging crisis which our societies and economies have known in decades. COVID-19 has taught us important lessons about our ability to sustain major global shocks – as societies and as an international community. This pandemic has also confirmed that our nations must learn to better confront a number of new dynamics and new challenges. Among these are the rise of China and our dependence on Beijing in strategic sectors and the need to better counter disinformation and propaganda.

For all these reasons, COVID-19 is a security issue.

But of course, the security challenges which predated the pandemic have not disappeared. To the contrary. First among these are Russia's aggressive actions; terrorism; instability in our neighbourhood; hybrid and cyber threats; and emerging and disruptive technologies.

NATO 2030 offers a timely and important opportunity – to ensure NATO is prepared to deal with these challenges and any future ones and to learn the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key pillar of this Alliance is the remarkable commitment to collective defence – NATO's defining principle enshrined in Article 5. Allies must continue to demonstrate this commitment in words and in deeds. In this, the Alliance should not overreach, but it must address the entire range of complex and diverse threats at 360 degrees.

To back up this commitment, we must continue to maintain defence spending and investment in innovation and technology, despite the increased pressure on public budgets in the wake of the pandemic. But we must also work harder to achieve a fair sharing of the burdens and responsibilities for defence. This is essential for NATO's ability to address today's complex threat environment. But it is also essential for transatlantic unity and solidarity.

The bond uniting Europe and North America is unique. It is the wellspring of NATO's unmatched political and military strength. We cannot let it weaken.



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Similarly, our values must remain our compass. We must protect them and resolutely counter those who seek to undermine the democratic foundations of our societies and institutions.

We must also do more to protect the rules-based international order, working with like-minded partners, from Europe to Asia. This order is threatened by many factors. Russia of course, and its many ongoing violations of international law. But also China and its attempt to impose its own vision and values. Let me be clear: China must act as a responsible global player. We can no longer afford to be naïve about its ambitions and role.

Recommitting NATO to shared values is also a prerequisite for strengthening the political dimension within NATO. Allies must consult more and better. This will increase predictability among Allies, foster a better understanding of Allies' national interests and policies, and promote a greater convergence of interests and strategic priorities.

Allies must also make decisions faster and streamline their decision-making processes, while preserving the fundamental principle of consensus.

The diversity of today's threats and a multipolar world make it more difficult for many citizens to understand NATO's mission and contribution to security. Yet public support is an indispensable element of NATO's strength and credibility. We must strengthen communication and public diplomacy to explain how NATO delivers security for citizens. And we must back it up with the necessary resources.

Our Assembly is particularly well placed to support key elements of this vision: whether it is about enhanced political consultation; rededicating ourselves to our shared values; maintaining public support for NATO; keeping up efforts on defence spending and innovation; or broadening NATO's network of partners. We complement and amplify NATO's action in ways no other organisation can.

Therefore, I want to thank NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for recognizing our Assembly as a key stakeholder in NATO 2030 and reiterate our commitment to support this process as best we can.

Later this afternoon, I will present a draft declaration which includes a number of recommendations on NATO 2030. This text draws much of its inspiration from the contributions which Assembly delegations have submitted over the summer and early autumn. I therefore sincerely hope you will be able to support it.