



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

POLITICAL COMMITTEE (PC)

Friday 14 May 2021

By videoconference

095 PC 21 E | Original: English | May 2021

ATTENDANCE LIST

Committee Chairperson	Lord CAMPBELL OF PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom)
General Rapporteur	Brendan Francis BOYLE (United States)
Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships	Sonia KRIMI (France)
Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations	Ahmet YILDIZ (Turkey)
President of the NATO PA	Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States)
Secretary General of the NATO PA	Ruxandra POPA
Member delegations	
Albania	Mimi KODHELI Xhemal QEFALIA
Belgium	Wouter DE VRIENDT Theo FRANCKEN Annick PONTHER
Bulgaria	Hristo Georgiev GADZHEV
Canada	Leona ALLESLEV Pierre-Hugues BOISVENU Michel BOUDRIAS Cheryl GALLANT John Norman MCKAY Marilou MCPHEDRAN
Croatia	Ante BACIC
Czech Republic	Jan FARSKY Josef HAJEK
Denmark	Mads FUGLEDE
Estonia	Kerstin-Oudekki LOONE
France	Jean-Jacques BRIDEY Marianne DUBOIS Françoise DUMAS Gilbert ROGER
Germany	Dagmar FREITAG Wolfgang HELLMICH Karl A. LAMERS Alexander S. NEU Ulla SCHMIDT
Greece	Marietta GIANNAKOU Theodora TZAKRI
Hungary	Mihaly BALLA Zsolt NEMETH
Iceland	Njall Trausti FRIDBERTSSON
Italy	Paolo FORMENTINI Luca FRUSONE Guglielmo PICCHI

Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Netherlands

North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal

Romania

Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Turkey

United Kingdom

United States

Ojars Eriks KALNINS
Audronius AZUBALIS
Lydia MUTSCH
Bastiaan van APELDOORN
Alfred ARBOUW
Ruben BREKELMANS
Rudolf KOOLE
Arber ADEMI
Liv Signe NAVARSETE
Przemyslaw CZARNECKI
Marcos PERESTRELLO DE
VASCONCELLOS
Adao SILVA
Sorin Mihai GRINDEANU
Silviu Nicu MACOVEI
Nicoleta PAULIUC
Juraj KRUPA
Branko GRIMS
Luis RODRIGUEZ-COMENDADOR
Osman Askin BAK
Utku CAKIROZER
Ahmet Berat CONKAR
Ilhan KESICI
Faik OZTRAK
Lord ANDERSON
Alec SHEL BROOKE
John SPELLAR
Bob STEWART
Brett GUTHRIE
Rick LARSEN
Filemon VELA
Dina TITUS

Associate delegations

Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan

Georgia

Serbia

Sweden

Switzerland

Ukraine

European Parliament

Viktor YENGIBARYAN
Reinhold LOPATKA
Ziyafat ASGAROV
Siyavush NOVRUZOV
Irakli BERAIA
George KHELASHVILI
Andrijana AVRAMOV
Dragan SORMAZ
Annicka ENGBLOM
Karin ENSTRÖM
Kenneth G. FORSLUND
Pal JONSON
Laila NARAGHI
Kalle OLSSON
Hans WALLMARK
Josef DITTLI
Ida GLANZMANN-HUNKELER
Solomiia BOBROVSKA
Yehor CHERNIEV
Juozas OLEKAS

Tom VANDENKENDELAERE

**Regional Partner and Mediterranean
Associate Member Delegations**

Algeria
Morocco

Abdelhak BENBOULAD
Slimane EL OMRANI

Parliamentary Observers

Assembly of Kosovo
Kazakhstan

Driton HYSENI
Erlik TAIZHANOV

Speakers

Gudrun PERSSON,

Associate Professor and Deputy
Research Director of the Russia and
Eurasia Studies Programme at the
Swedish Defence Research Agency
(FOI)

International Secretariat

Andrius AVIZIUS
Clara DE LATAILLADE
Jailee RYCHEN

Director, Political Committee
Research Assistant
Coordinator, Defence and Security Committee

Friday 14 May 2021

I. Opening remarks by Lord CAMPBELL of PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom), Chairperson of the Political Committee

1. In his opening remarks, Chairperson **Lord Campbell of Pittenweem** (UK) thanked the Swedish delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) for hosting the online Spring Session. He provided practical information on the conduct of the meeting.

II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [075 PC 21 E]

2. The draft Agenda [075 PC 21 E] was adopted.

III. Adoption of summary of meeting of the Political Committee on 19 and 20 November 2020 [212 PC 20 E]

3. The summary [212 PC 20 E] was adopted.

IV. Roundtable discussion on Security and Political Challenges Emanating from Russia

- **Consideration of the preliminary draft General Report *Confronting Russia's Continuing Geopolitical and Ideological Challenge* [020 PC 21 E] presented by Brendan BOYLE (United States), General Rapporteur**

4. The General Rapporteur began by noting that the draft report will need to be updated to reflect recent developments, including the military build-up on the Ukrainian border. He stressed that relations between Russia and West are at a new post-Soviet low; and the transatlantic community must be extremely vigilant. **Brendan Boyle** (US) argued that the Putin regime has become increasingly ideological, limiting the possibility for rapprochement. The General Rapporteur stressed that while Russia is declining economically, its military challenge remains robust. In addition, Russia has developed a formidable arsenal of 'hybrid' techniques, used extensively on neighbouring countries, but also increasingly on NATO members as well.

5. Mr Boyle noted that Russia has few allies but holds significant influence in Belarus. He also reminded his audience of the growing strategic alignment between Russia and China, who work in tandem to spread anti-Western narratives. Due to China's assertiveness, some have urged for re-engagement with Russia to avoid a unified bloc. Mr Boyle suggested instead demonstrating consistency, predictability, and commitment to the rules-based order. He expressed concern about Russia's growing activism and influence in the Middle East and North Africa.

6. Mr Boyle also stressed the increasingly authoritarian, repressive, and violent nature of the regime. However, cracks have emerged, he argued, as shown by the outcry following the attempted assassination of opposition leader Alexei Navalny in August 2020. Coupled with the mishandling of the pandemic, the situation in Belarus and political unrest in some Russian regions, the regime faces a challenging internal situation as it prepares for the Duma elections in September 2021.

7. Mr Boyle recommended that the NATO Strategic Concept be revised to reflect the current state of relations with Russia. NATO's dual-track approach of defence and dialogue

remains valid, but the General Rapporteur cautioned that prospects for genuine dialogue remain bleak and the focus should be on further investments in credible defence and deterrence on the northern, eastern, and south-eastern flanks of the Alliance as well as prioritising resilience to counter Russian hybrid threats. Dependency on Russian energy sources should be reduced, Mr Boyle said and stressed that making the transition to a green economy is also a matter of national security. Sanctions should continue to be applied and the Alliance should explore ways to support Russian civil society to reject accusations of Russophobia. Mr Boyle concluded that Ukraine and Georgia should continue to be supported – helping these countries become success stories would send a powerful signal to the Russian people, the General Rapporteur said.

- **Presentation by Gudrun PERSSON, Associate Professor and Deputy Research Director of the Russia and Eurasia Studies Programme at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) on *Russian Security Policy Priorities: A View from Sweden***

8. **Kenneth Forslund** (SE) introduced **Dr Gudrun Persson**, a leading Swedish expert on Russia. Dr Persson began by stressing the importance of analysing Russia in a time where its behaviour is seen as unpredictable and ad hoc, as sound analysis helps develop more nuanced policies vis-à-vis Russia. She stressed that from the Russian perspective, it is the West that attacked Russia, which allegedly gives Moscow the right to strike back. Dr Persson added that Russia's objectives are clear: it wants a Russian sphere of influence to be acknowledged, to re-write the Euro-Atlantic security order and to secure its own authoritarian political system. Accordingly, she argued that the Kremlin wants to resurrect Russia as a great power through military and non-military means, using the Gerasimov doctrine. Dr Persson noted that Russia has learned from its past with regards to bridging the technological gap with Europe, as shown by its major armament programs. She characterised Russia as repressive at home and aggressive abroad, stressing the ideological and territorial aspects of Russia's demands for a new world order, which it frames as rectification of historical injustices.

9. Dr Persson argued that while currently there are no signs of potential changes in Russia's foreign policy, shifts can occur rapidly as they did with the invasion in Ukraine's Crimea. She warned that misunderstanding and distrust between Russia and the West can spiral. She also stressed that, to revert this trend, the change must primarily come from within Russia. She warned that the current Russian view is that the West is a threat due to its sheer existence, which means the West should not be naïve in dialogue with Russia. Dr Persson emphasised the need for firm and consequent policies as Russia creates uncertainty to sow division within the EU and NATO. She also called for a rebuilding expertise on Russia, much of which was dismantled in the 90s and 2000s.

10. In the discussions, **Audronius Azubalis** (LT) expressed his doubts about the efficacy of the dual track approach and suggested instead freezing the bank accounts and other assets of Russian oligarchs as well as other sanctions if Russia does not change its policies. He also suggested that Georgia and Ukraine be given a roadmap to membership at the NATO summit as Russia should not affect NATO's decisions in the matter. **Sonia Krimi** (FR), on the other hand, expressed support for the dual-track approach and inquired about ways to influence Russia. Dr Persson stressed the value of dialogue, as it was present even during the Cold War, but added that naivety should be avoided.

11. **Luca Frusone** (IT) asked about the possibility of a closer relationship between Russia and China as a result of Western sanctions on Russia. NATO PA President, **Gerald E. Connolly** (US) noted that historical and cultural differences between Russia and China make their full-fledged alliance unlikely. Dr Persson added that the Russia-China relationship is based on pragmatic interests and, indeed, cannot be characterised as an alliance. **Ojars Eriks Kalnins** (LV) noted that Russia may be testing the new US

administration and the EU-US relationship, which was weakened and proposed that the informal NATO PA support group for Crimea be mentioned in the report. **Mimi Kodheli** (AL) asked about the role that emancipation and integration of Serbia could play in addressing the Russian influence in the Western Balkans. **Marilou McPhedran** (CA) enquired about recommendations on engaging with civil society leaders, and particularly women's groups. Mr Boyle agreed that the contributions of female leaders should be highlighted and recognised the importance of the Western Balkans for NATO. Dr Persson added that civil society leaders and opposition members are seen as a major threat by Russia. She also noted that Russian promises to Serbia rarely materialise. **Siyavush Novruzov** (AZ) commented on Russia's influence in the South Caucasus. **George Khelashvili** (GE) spoke of Georgia's commitment to reforms and NATO membership despite Russian aggression and noted that the Georgian delegation submitted amendments to the report. He asked about ways to improve security in the Black Sea region. **Yegor Cherniev** (UA) also asked about next steps in the Black Sea region and expressed support for Mr Boyle's recommendation to become independent from Russian energy sources. Mr Boyle highlighted the importance of Georgia's continued commitment to reforms and the Euro-Atlantic integration. He recognised that enlargement is one of the main questions facing NATO today.

V. Consideration of the preliminary draft Report of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships NATO and the Mediterranean Security Agenda [\[021 PCNP 21 E\]](#) presented by Sonia KRIMI (France), Rapporteur

12. Ms Krimi began by describing the report's focus on geopolitical and security aspects in the Mediterranean region. She reminded the audience of the strategic importance of the Mediterranean given its position at the intersection of major global political, economic and energy poles. As a result of political upheavals in the region since 2010, which reached their climax in Syria, Iraq and Libya, the Alliance intensified its involvement, but divergences arose between Allies regarding specific security challenges. Ms Krimi noted encouraging examples of diplomacy and dialogue which have mitigated these divergences and opened the way to conflict resolution. However, she stressed that the Alliance needs to elaborate a constant, clear and coherent strategy to better define its role in fighting the threats in the Southern neighbourhood. Ms Krimi stressed that external actors – including Russia, China and the Gulf monarchies – are increasingly active in the Mediterranean.

13. Ms Krimi welcomed the recent step taken in Libya with the formation of a united provisional government but urged the international community to be vigilant as the situation in Libya remains challenging. She also discussed tensions in the eastern Mediterranean, noting that NATO played a key role as intermediary. She welcomed the resumption of talks between Turkey and Greece in January, as well as the informal talks on Cyprus. Ms Krimi said that the next version of the report will include an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She stressed that recent events highlight the need for a political solution, and she called for an immediate end to all violations of international law.

14. Ms Krimi then discussed the Alliance's involvement in the region and stressed that the Alliance's ambition in the Mediterranean pales in comparison to actions on the eastern flank. She called for more political consultation between Allies regarding their role, as well as better understanding of the region by leveraging the Southern Hub's expertise and developing the political dimension of the Mediterranean Dialogue. Additionally, Ms Krimi said that collective defence and crisis management capabilities in the region need to become more robust and encouraged more Allies to participate in regional exercises.

15. In the ensuing discussions, **Marietta Giannakou** (GR) remarked the role of parliamentarians in promoting security and stability in the region through the respect of international treaties and norms. **Ahmed Yildiz** (TR) mentioned the amendments submitted by Turkey, including on the language regarding Cyprus and the Turkish-Greek dispute. He

expressed his regret for the earlier collapse of talks with Greece on Cyprus after the latter's EU accession and voiced his disagreement on the language regarding Libya, noting Turkey's support for the UN-recognised government. He added that while Turkey is not a member of UNCLOS, it observes principles of proportionality and superiority of geography. Ms Krimi responded to these comments by again calling for dialogue between the parties, including in the Israel-Palestine conflict. She also thanked the Turkish delegation for its proposed amendments to the report and said that a number of them would undoubtedly be integrated, while others would require a closer look. Ms Giannakou added that Greece would also be submitting amendments and expressed disagreement with the Turkish interpretation of UNCLOS.

VI. Consideration of the preliminary draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations *The Transatlantic Link and Burden Sharing in the Changing Strategic Environment* [022 PCTR 21 E] presented by Ahmet YILDIZ (Turkey), Rapporteur

16. **Ahmet Yildiz** (TR) presented his preliminary draft report, which discusses ways to rejuvenate the transatlantic bond and seek fairer burden sharing between Allies in the context of the NATO 2030 debate. He listed several developments which have shaped the political context in which the Alliance currently operates. Mr Yildiz reminded the audience that the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed NATO countries to demonstrate their ability to cooperate effectively in reaction to a crisis. He stressed that in a post-COVID strategic environment, Allies will need to further embrace multilateralism and do more with scarce resources to address both traditional security challenges and rising geopolitical competitions, coming from Russia and China. The current political context also presents new opportunities to reinvigorate transatlantic relations, particularly with regards to declarations of commitment to multilateralism by the new US administration, the Rapporteur said.

17. Mr Yildiz then presented the preliminary draft report's recommendations, starting with the need to reinforce commitment to transatlantic solidarity based on shared democratic values and the three core tasks of the Alliance in the updating of the NATO Strategic Concept. The scope of political consultation can be enhanced with the aim of increasing dialogue, minimising internal tensions, and achieving a more cohesive Alliance. Secondly, ensuring adequate levels of defence funding will be essential in navigating the complex challenges faced by the Alliance in the post-COVID world. Mr Yildiz called on all Allies to use the upcoming NATO summit to recommit to the 2% and 20% targets agreed upon at the Wales Summit. He also stressed the need to consider potential new ways to ensure fairer burden sharing, in particular with recognition of the key role played by flank countries, who deserve more substantial assistance. Thirdly, China's growing influence and actions in the context of the pandemic and oppression of the Uyghurs have created favourable conditions for the development of a joint, more coherent transatlantic strategy on China, which should focus on competition rather than confrontation to protect Allies' interests while avoiding a new 'Cold War'. Fourthly, NATO should continue to develop a meaningful partnership with the European Union and welcome efforts by the European Union to build a stronger and more capable European defence capacity, as long as these contribute to a fair transatlantic burden sharing and fully involve non-European Allies. Finally, the principle of joint engagement of transatlantic partners should be applied across all NATO missions and operations, as excessive focus on division of labour could lead to the fragmentation of the Alliance. In Afghanistan in particular, Allies need to coordinate their approaches in view of the planned withdrawal.

18. Mr Yildiz concluded by welcoming NATO's ability to find consensus despite diverging interests and priorities and stressed the importance of adapting and reinventing the Alliance to better respond to new Challenges.

19. Discussions focussed on the NATO-EU partnership. Ms Giannakou highlighted that the participation of non-EU Allies should be in line with the NATO-EU cooperation framework. **Juozas Olekas** (EP) inquired about ways to strengthen the NATO-EU relationship. Mr Yildiz expressed doubt about EU defence initiatives that are not inclusive of other NATO Allies. He mentioned Operation Irini as an example where the view of some Allies has been overlooked and this led to friction. He also stressed that a more cohesive Alliance should be achieved by discussing issues among Allies and that inclusiveness is key for defence initiatives.

VII. Future activities of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships and the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations

20. The Chairperson introduced **Dr Karl A. Lamers** (DE) to speak about the activities of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships.

21. Dr Lamers began by mentioning the Sub-Committee's invitation to the meeting of the UNIC on 8 February, where Ukraine's extensive partnership with NATO and the country's active contribution to Euro-Atlantic security were reviewed. On 18 March, together with the CDS Committee and the GSM group, a webinar was conducted on the ramifications of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. On 12-13 April, Dr Lamers co-chaired an online PCNP – together with the Sub-Committee on Transition and Development – visit to Poland. He thanked the Polish delegation and highlighted the important session on Belarus. The Sub-Committee plans to visit Spain in November together with the GSM group, to discuss challenges on the Southern flank.

22. The Chairperson noted that the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic relations is in contact with the Dutch and Canadian delegations regarding visits in the second part of the year. Mr Yildiz suggested that the visit to Canada includes meetings in Vancouver focusing on Asia-Pacific issues and relations with China.

VIII. Date and place of the next meeting

23. The Chairperson announced that the next meeting of the Committee will take place in Lisbon for the Annual Session, scheduled from 8-11 October 2021.

IX. Closing remarks

24. The Chairperson thanked all members for their constructive and thoughtful participation, and the Swedish delegation for hosting the virtual event. He noted the high attendance for the meeting, and thanked interpreters and the NATO PA staff for facilitating the meeting.

25. **The Chairperson adjourned the meeting of the Political Committee.**

26. A recording of the meeting is available on the NATO PA YouTube Channel [here](#).