



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN

Address by the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Gerald. E. Conolly (United States)

At the Plenary Sitting of the NATO PA

Spring Session, Vilnius 2021

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Dear friends,

- It is a pleasure to be here at the spring sitting of the 2022 Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, although I cannot imagine a graver moment for such a meeting in the history of our Assembly.
- This is **a critical moment for the Euro-Atlantic and global security Alliance. Next month, NATO Heads of State and Government will meet in Madrid to adopt NATO's next Strategic Concept as well as adapt the Alliance to the new strategic reality created by Russia's brutal and vile invasion of friend Ukraine.**
- **We in fact were due to gather today in Kyiv.** But, on the 24th of February, Vladimir Putin began his ruthless, brutal and utterly **unjustified an unprovoked attack** against the Ukrainian people, shattering the peace in Europe and shaking the very foundations of international security.
- **The Lithuanian parliament stepped up as did the Lithuanian government and volunteered to host this meeting at the last minute because of the events in Ukraine.** And I want to express the **gratitude to the Speaker of the Seimas and Audronius Azubalis, our colleague who is the head of delegation to this body, in particular.** Thank you for being a wonderful host. And for Lithuania being at the forefront of Allied solidarity with Ukraine who knows the tender-loving mercy of its Russian neighbor.
- **I am delighted that members of the Ukrainian delegation and parliament are here with us today** On your behalf, I want to convey **our profound admiration and respect** for their outstanding courage and leadership in mobilizing the Ukrainian people's remarkable unity, resilience and bravery in the face of brutal Russian aggression. **Your fight for freedom and democracy has inspired the whole world.**



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- This session has sent a **powerful message of unwavering support** for Ukraine, its democracy, its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- **Our Ukrainian friends and partners have been clear: they will not bend. And neither will we.**
- All of us in NATO must search our souls and explore **what more we can do to assist Ukraine in its valiant fight.**
- We should go as far as possible in **accommodating Ukraine's requests for military equipment and intelligence sharing and humanitarian assistance.** Ukraine must be able, effectively, to defend itself. And **Russia cannot be successful.**
- We have to maintain and increase the **massive, crippling and sustained economic sanctions** that we put in place – for however long it takes. Putin and his enablers must know that the price they pay for their reckless and maniacal war of choice will only continue to increase in cost.
- We must also **denounce and prosecute Russia's gruesome and horrific crimes,** providing **further emergency humanitarian assistance** and step up **support for refugees and displaced people.**
- And we also of course will need, when this conflict ends, a **Marshall-like Plan to help rebuild Ukraine.**
- **The NATO PA lives up to its role.**
- Since the start of the war, we have been **in constant contact with our Ukrainian colleagues and friends** and played our part in **mobilizing support in our respective parliaments.** As you know, in my parliament, the United States Congress, on a bipartisan basis, we adopted a **\$40bn aid package for Ukraine – the largest single bilateral aid program in the world.**
- Later today, I hope we will adopt the **declaration by this body *Standing with Ukraine,*** which sets out clear and strong recommendations to our respective parliaments and governments.
- We will also vote to create a **special fund to assist the Verkhovna Rada and support Ukraine's democracy as it rebuilds and reconstructs.**
- We will continue to **stand firmly by Ukraine, its people and its democratically elected parliament and government.**
- Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is an act of aggression on a scale not seen since World War II. Its **ultimate goal is to undermine democracy, to upend [the] European security order and to destroy the internationally based rules order.** The war has created



a new strategic reality for all of us and we need to contend with it in the long term as well as the immediate term.

- Later in this plenary, we will consider a **declaration on *Confronting Russia's Threat***, which offers clear recommendations to how NATO must adapt when leaders meet at the Madrid Summit.
- **NATO Allies' commitment to Article 5 and collective defence is ironclad.** In Madrid, we must reaffirm that commitment and make clear that Allies will take all necessary measures to deter and defend every inch of NATO territory.
- That means **resetting our deterrence and defense posture**, including through a **significant strengthening of NATO's military presence on the Eastern flank and moving swiftly to "forward defence" postures.** And this means our countries must continue to increase defense spending accordingly, to meet the 2014 Wales Defence Investment Pledge and to enshrine the 2%/20% guidelines as a minimum commitment to the long term. And already, after the invasion of Ukraine, many of our members have in fact stepped up to do just that.
- We also need to become more effective in **detering and defending below the Article 5 threshold** – in the grey areas of hybrid and cyber operations, disinformation and propaganda campaigns, of political and economic coercion, of energy blackmail and dependence.
- **Other NATO aspirants and partners are subject to Russian pressure and attempted intimidation**, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. We must step up political and practical, including military, support for those friends. We must denounce Russia's ongoing illegal and forcible occupation of parts of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.
- While Russia's threat looms large, **we cannot afford to let it totally consume our attention with the other threats and challenges** we also will face.
- **China for example. China's stated ambitions and actions pose a challenge - systemic challenge - to the rules-based international order** and challenge Allied security and interests in myriad areas of strategic importance to us.
- Like Moscow, Beijing seeks to **export its authoritarian model, undermine and divide democracies and weaken our citizens' faith in their democracies.** China is expanding its influence in key regions and investing massively in new, destabilizing advanced technologies. China is also stepping up their military and political co-operation with Russia. The recent Joint Statement has China, for the first time, echoing Russia's opposition to the right of all nations to choose their own path.
- As our Assembly has recommended, **NATO must therefore agree to a transatlantic China policy based on engagement, competition, and the defence of Allies' security interests.**



- Other complex threats and challenges cannot be ignored. **Terrorism remains a persistent, direct threat** to Allied security, as does the proliferation of **weapons of mass destruction**. Ongoing **instability, conflict, and poor governance** in the South and other neighbouring regions risk spilling over. And of course **climate change** increasingly acts as a threat multiplier everywhere.
- All of these challenges vindicate our Assembly's firm conviction that **the new Strategic Concept must be rooted in the enduring commitment of its foundational, immutable shared democratic values**. And they must be front and center in any new Strategic Concept.
- **The NATO Treaty is clear: NATO is an alliance of democracies**. The commitment to shared democratic values enshrined in the Preamble and Article 2 of that Charter cannot remain purely aspirational or rhetorical. Nor can they be outsourced or delegated to other institutions or bodies.
- After 73 years, we believe it is time that **NATO establish architecture – concrete architecture – dedicated to the advancement of democracy**. Today, there is **not even a broom closet** at NATO Headquarters dedicated to this subject and to the advancement of democracy. 73 years. You walk in that headquarters and it's like you expect Star Wars figures to come out – so advanced and contemporary and beautiful. There are offices dedicated to all kinds of things in NATO. But not to democracy. That must change. And if we needed a reminder – a dramatic and tragic reminder – Ukraine is it.
- **So we propose a Democratic Resilience Center within NATO** for the advancement and propounding of democratic values, as a resource, as a benchmarking place, as a place where people can go to see how others do it in terms of setting up democratic institutions.
- Our proposal I'm pleased to tell you – which started out in some people's minds as a quixotic venture – now has 19 of 30 NATO Ambassadors explicit endorsement with their signatures on a whitepaper saying "Yes, we need to do that." Give yourselves a hand because that comes from us.
- **Finland and Sweden share those democratic values, too. In fact, they enshrine them. Their membership would make NATO stronger**. I certainly hope and I think most of us as well, if not all of us, we welcome Finland and Sweden as the 31st and the 32nd members of NATO. And in my own Congress and on a bipartisan basis, our former President, my Republican colleague and good friend, Mike Turner and I led a bipartisan letter expressing our support for it in the US Congress. **And we were pleased, within just a few days, to get 190 signatures**, which is, believe me, hard to do but it wasn't hard in this case. So, thank you, Mike.
- **Their NATO bids demonstrate we gotta keep NATO's doors open**. Enshrined in the Washington Treaty, this policy is a clear expression of the Allies' commitment to shared democratic values and the rule-based international order. That policy must also **translate into genuine prospects for aspirants** who are committed to those standards.



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- In closing, let me just say that **the Assembly's voice has never been more vital at this important moment for NATO and for global security.** In a month's time, **I will present the Allied leaders with our contribution to the Strategic Concept as well as the two declarations we, I hope, adopt today on Russia and Ukraine.**
- Thank you to all of you for your steadfast commitment, for the solidarity it's showing and for the support you are giving to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. We will ultimately prevail in this struggle. Thank you.