

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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**President, NATO Parliamentary Assembly**  
**Spring Session**  
**Monday 28 May 2018**  
**Warsaw, Poland**

**Part 1 – Opening**

Order, order.

I now declare open the plenary sitting of the 2018 Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

I would like to welcome you all to the Spring Session of our Assembly, here in Warsaw. I would like to thank the Marshals of the Sejm and of the Senate for hosting this Session in the houses of parliament.

I would also like to thank the Head of the Polish Delegation, Marek Opiola, for his delegation's welcome. Marek, you and your team have done an excellent job in organizing this very successful Session, and we are grateful to you for all the work you have done.

This year, Poland celebrates two significant historical milestones: the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its regained independence, and the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Polish parliamentarism. On behalf of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I would like to congratulate Poland and the Polish people on these anniversaries and say how delighted we are to take part in their celebration.

This year also marks centenary celebrations for a number of Alliance member states: Estonia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. In addition, several of our associate members, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia celebrate 100th anniversaries this year. I offer my congratulations to all of your countries.

This is the third session Poland has hosted since becoming a member of the Alliance in 1999. Poland was in the first wave of NATO enlargement after the end of the Cold War, and it stands as a vivid demonstration of the wisdom of NATO's Open Door Policy.

Since its accession, Poland has consistently been a major contributor to NATO-led operations. It still has substantial contingents in both Afghanistan and Kosovo, and it is a part of the international coalition against Daesh.

Poland provides a key site for NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence, it has led NATO's Baltic air Policing mission, and it plays a leading role in land, air and sea exercises in the Baltic region.

Last but not least, Poland is one of the NATO members which is already fulfilling the Wales defence spending pledge to dedicate 2% of GDP to defence.

Our discussions this weekend have given us an opportunity to learn more about Poland's contribution to the Alliance, as well understand its perspective on the challenges facing our countries.

Understandably, one of Poland's key concerns relates to its eastern neighbour's aggressive and revisionist policies.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Russian leadership has decided that NATO is a competitor, and even a threat. It has also decided that its interests are better served by ignoring international laws, norms and institutions. Russia's considerable talents are therefore turned to efforts to undermine stability using methods ranging from disinformation and deceit to propaganda

and media manipulation. It has abandoned the languages of reason and cooperation and replaced them with force and intimidation.

I believe that the firm and rapid response to such actions has surprised Russia. And we should not forget that it is not only NATO which responded, but also the European Union and many nations around the world who reacted to Russia's flagrant disregard for international law and norms.

I am convinced that our responses prevented a further deterioration in the international situation.

Our Assembly has a good story to tell in all this.

We took a firm line when Russia occupied the Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008. And we acted decisively in sanctioning Russia when it occupied Crimea.

The lesson for us, I believe, is to remain united and strong – and also to remain open to the prospect of genuine dialogue. Not propaganda, distortion of facts, and self-serving monologues, but genuine dialogue.

Since 2014, NATO has significantly strengthened its collective defence and deterrence posture in the East to deter further aggressive action by Russia. This has translated into the deployment of four battlegroups in the Baltic States and in Poland.

The presence of the US-led contingent and of NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Poland is a clear demonstration of Allies' solidarity with Poland. It shows that all NATO countries recognise that Poland's borders are the Eastern borders of NATO, and it is therefore up to all of us to protect them

This is a point that I make regularly in my country: if we, in Italy, want others to see Italy's borders as the southern borders of Europe, we should also accept that Poland's borders are the eastern borders of Europe.

So through the NATO presence here, Poland benefits from Allied solidarity, but it also contributes actively to our common security. This is the essence of our NATO Alliance and what makes it strong.

The Summit of Allied Heads of State and Government in Brussels in July will provide an important opportunity to further adapt NATO to the complex and multifaceted challenges our countries face today. I will be honoured to represent you at this important event, and when we welcome the NATO Secretary General later this morning, I will say a few more words about what our Assembly's priorities are for the Summit.

Thank you.

**Part 2 –**

Colleagues, I am now delighted to welcome to our meeting the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Mr Secretary General, dear Jens, less than two months from now, NATO's Heads of State and Government will meet in Brussels to take stock of progress in NATO's adaptation to today's particularly challenging security environment.

The pace of change we have witnessed in the past four years, and the breadth of change are unprecedented. The result is a unique combination of volatility and unpredictability, the implications of which we are still struggling to assess.

I spoke earlier this morning about Russia's challenge to Euro-Atlantic and global security, and the need to maintain NATO's dual-track policy of strong deterrence and defence on the one hand, and dialogue on the other.

But we face challenges from many other directions as well.

In the South, Daesh's defeat in Syria and Iraq, unfortunately, will not mean the end of terrorism, and has generated humanitarian crises that have strained our resources and even our societies.

NATO has stepped up its contribution to stability in the region, and contributes actively to the fight against terrorism.

I hope that we can turn NATO's Strategic Direction South and the Hub for the South into genuine instruments for projecting stability and that we can enhance our efforts to engage and assist in North Africa and the Middle East. We should also maintain our commitment to Afghanistan.

I have sought to support this effort by reaching out to our southern partners, particularly the Arab League, the African Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council. And I want to welcome here the delegation of the Arab Parliament, which is attending an Assembly Session for the first time.

Closer to home, we must redouble our efforts to promote long-term stability in the Western Balkans. If we are not careful, external forces will succeed in deepening internal divisions and preventing the people there from deriving all the benefits of Euro-Atlantic integration which should be their right.

In the past two years, I have visited Belgrade three times and Sarajevo twice, and I will travel to Skopje next month to promote the cause of reconciliation and progress. The Western Balkans must remain one of our key priorities. We must keep our door open to aspirants from the region, as well as to Georgia and Ukraine.

Technological change will also have unforeseen and often dangerous consequences: artificial intelligence, "big data", surveillance, social media and its manipulation, cyber warfare and activism, the proliferation of missile and nuclear technology, and drones. Add all this to regional, religious, and ethnic tensions and resource shortages, globalization and growing social disparity.

We must modernize the Alliance's response to these new threats and challenges. And work closely with others, first and foremost the EU.

Most importantly, burden sharing and the fulfilment of the defence spending pledge must be key priorities, not only to ensure that we can afford the necessary defence and deterrence capabilities, but also to preserve the vital transatlantic relationship which is at the heart of the Alliance and our Assembly. This relationship is more than valuable: it is indispensable. We are all each other's best Allies.

That means that strains among us are only ever temporary, because what unites us far outweighs the differences which sometimes emerge between us.

Our Assembly provides an essential forum for discussing frankly and openly any issues which might arise between us, and helping forge and maintain consensus. It is my deep conviction that this role will become increasingly important in coming years.

Nationalism and populism are rising, while multilateralism seems to be in decline. The world is becoming multipolar as we can see with China's growing influence and assertiveness.

In this environment, it is all the more urgent and important to improve understanding about NATO among both the traditional and new political forces in our parliaments and among our public, especially the younger generation. Our Working Group on Education and Communication about NATO is contributing actively to this effort, in cooperation with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division and the Atlantic Treaty Association.

Such initiatives are essential to ensure that we pass on, from one generation to the next, the memory of our common history and a shared commitment to our common security and our common values.

Lord Campbell's excellent text – which we will discuss later this morning - addresses all these issues as our considered advice for the Alliance's leaders.

Secretary General, dear Jens, we look forward to hearing from you what you expect of the Brussels Summit, and how our Assembly can help ensure that our Alliance and our transatlantic relationship will emerge from the Summit stronger and better prepared to address today's threats.