

Speech at the third annual international conference on NATO and international security

Foreign Minister of Poland
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Mr Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman

Despite our hopes after the fall of the Iron Curtain, events have disproved the notion of the “End of History”. The world is not yet safe for democracy. NATO’s success will depend to a great extent on the recently-launched revision of its basic conceptual document: the Strategic Concept. I hope that it will be comparable to the *Harmel Report* in terms of its importance to the future of the Alliance. I also hope that as with the *Harmel Report*, the Strategic Concept will give momentum to NATO’s dual-track policy: combining credible deterrence and a strong defensive military posture with mutually beneficial partnerships.

During this process NATO has shown an unprecedented readiness to consult with partners, think-tanks, non-governmental organisations, scientists and the public at large. The “Group of Experts” is an example of an interdisciplinary exercise, which I hope will conclude its work with a report encompassing a wide range of recommendations. We expect you, Mr. Secretary-General, to continue with your leading role in the development of the Strategic Concept, using your characteristic determination and involving all of the Allies in a transparent and inclusive manner.

We are focusing today on the security interests of Central and Eastern Europe. They are not inconsistent with the security interests of our Western Allies or Eastern partners. In fact they should be seen as facilitating better communication and a building of trust over those disagreements that used to divide Europe. Let me be absolutely clear: we in this part of Europe do not expect any kind of preferential treatment. We just want to enjoy the solidarity and protection that will make us feel as safe and secure as all other Allies. Central and Eastern Europe needs strategic reassurance, and this we hope will be achieved through the application of the new Strategic Concept.

The principle of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is of course the cornerstone of transatlantic security. However, today's priority is to translate theory into practice. We need to make sure that we are capable of resisting any threat that might disturb the stability and prosperity that we have achieved. A fall in the number of "conventional" conflicts in recent times does not mean that this form of threat has disappeared. We should remain vigilant and prepare contingency plans – without pointing fingers at anyone. NATO should fulfill the promise made by President Obama in Prague last year, namely that every member would be provided with an up-to-date Contingency Plan, if it so wished.

Credible guarantees of security are especially important at NATO's periphery, giving inevitability and reliability to the Alliance's self-defence posture. Defensive capabilities should be maintained through, among other things, proper allied investments into infrastructure related to collective defence. We must also remember that a US political and military presence remains the key element of security in this part of Europe, and is a fundamental element of allied deterrence capabilities.

Allies should also take a closer look at the issue of nuclear weapons in an effort to combine the continued credibility of nuclear deterrence with a need to establish, step-by-step, an arms-control regime for tactical nuclear weapons in and possibly around Europe.

Central Europe favours extending the zone of stability and security, in line with NATO's Open Door Policy. I am confident that we will soon be welcoming the conclusion of the process of the Western Balkans' integration with the Alliance. But we also need to reassure Ukraine and Georgia that our commitments regarding their future membership remain valid.

Let me now elaborate on our regional expectations.

Polish citizens have died in terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and London. Poland and Central Europe understand the nature of the new threats, and we do not underestimate them. That is why we are in Afghanistan. Similarly, our concerns should be all of NATO's concerns. We have to stay united, in imagination and in action.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Wygłoszone przemówienie mogło odbiegać od tego tekstu

Our region may seem oversensitive about NATO-Russia relations, but this is a reflection of our desire to develop those relations in a realistic and mutually beneficial manner. Secretary-General Rasmussen's efforts to re-engage Russia are most welcome. Central Europe wants NATO to develop relations with its Russian partner pragmatically and with full respect to the legitimate security concerns of both sides. The precondition of this co-operation is primarily respect for common values uniting the Euro-Atlantic family, to which we hope Russia also subscribes. We have to rebuild mutual confidence and base our efforts on reciprocity. In order to avoid further misperceptions we should focus first of all on military predictability, which can be achieved through transparency in military affairs. Security today is not a zero-sum game, where one's loss is necessarily to another's benefit.

Since all Central European Allies are also EU members, we naturally place an emphasis on the proper handling of NATO-EU relations. It is unacceptable that NATO and the EU are not able to act together even when they are standing side by side in solving political and military crises. It is in that spirit that Poland has launched the initiative to develop the CSDP, and to make it a priority for Poland's EU Presidency next year. Our common interests and values should be reflected in new forms of political consultation and military co-ordination at the strategic (leadership), operational (in-theatre) and headquarters levels.

Ladies and gentleman,

We hope that the new Strategic Concept being elaborated by our distinguished guests will prove visionary. The Concept should offer strategic guidance, paving the way for the reforms necessary to maintain NATO's credibility and to increase its effectiveness.

The message from Warsaw for the future of the Alliance is twofold: re-engagement for Russia and reassurance for us.

Thank you for your attention