SACT's REMARKS to

Baltic Defence College

Tartu, 26th May

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER

Welcome:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much, Vitalijus, for your kind introduction. It is genuinely an honour to be here at the Baltic Defence College and I am delighted to address such a distinguished audience.

The Baltic Defence College was built on the inspired vision that three nations that just had regained their independence and were struggling to build modern armed forces could cooperate and together build an advanced military college to educate their officers.

The Baltic States armed forces and the Baltic Defence College grew and matured together. In a very short period of time, the College transitioned from being a tactical-level school to being an advanced higher-level staff college where senior officers and civilians could participate in a Master programme and cooperative advanced research projects with other colleges and with NATO institutions.

Military institutions like yours can also exchange ideas and views with national military authorities in order to better prepare future leaders and staff members for the challenges lying ahead of us.

The story of the Baltic Defence College is thus one of constant and positive evolution. It provides a great example of the huge potential offered by mutual cooperation, resolve, and a unified effort.

I therefore deeply appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts with you concerning NATO's future and the challenges the Alliance faces today and will have to confront tomorrow.

Changing Security Environment – Changing NATO:

When we look into the future, like we do at Allied Command Transformation, it is imperative we understand the past.

NATO was officially born on the 4th of April 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, more commonly known as the Washington Treaty, after the city in which it was signed.

The Treaty committed each individual member to sharing the risks, responsibilities, and benefits of collective security.

It also committed them to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and stated that NATO members formed a unique community of values committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

NATO's essential and enduring purpose was, <u>and is</u>, to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. Collective defence remains at the heart of the Alliance, further enhancing the solidarity and cohesion of all its members.

In addition to collective defence and its shared values, the spirit of the Alliance is defined by the principle of consensus-based decision-making, the importance of consultation, <u>its defensive nature</u> and its flexibility.

This remains true for its twelve founding members, as it does for the sixteen additional nations who have joined the Alliance since its foundation.

I should pause to praise the skill of the Treaty's writers whose text has proved so flexible that <u>NATO has been able to adapt to a changing security environment without the original text being modified.</u>

Three Phases in NATO's Past:

Generally speaking, there have been three distinct periods during which the Alliance's strategic thinking had to evolve:

- the Cold War period;
- the immediate post-Cold War period; and
- the security environment since 9/11.

Cold War Period

During the Cold War period, from 1949 to 1991, international relations were dominated by a bipolar confrontation between East and West. <u>Collective Defence</u> was NATO's core task.

The emphasis was therefore initially more on tension and confrontation than it was on dialogue and cooperation.

This led to an often dangerous and expensive arms race.

NATO's first Strategic Concept, approved in January 1950, stated that its primary function was to deter aggression and that NATO forces would only be engaged if this primary function failed and an attack was launched against the Alliance.

Therefore, the Alliance should "insure the ability to carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception".

The fourth Strategic Concept, issued in January 1968, stated that the Alliance concept of deterrence was based on the flexibility required to prevent the potential aggressor from predicting, with any degree of confidence, what NATO's specific response might be to an aggression.

This would lead an aggressor to conclude that an unacceptable degree of risk would be involved regardless of the nature of his attack.

By the mid- to late 1980s, the two blocs of the Cold War had moved towards confidence-building.

Immediate post-Cold War period

1991 saw the beginning of a new era. The once formidable Soviet Empire dissolved and the members of the Warsaw Pact, including Russia, became NATO partners and happily in some cases, full members of the Alliance.

For the Alliance, this period was characterized by dialogue and cooperation, and a search for new ways of contributing to peace and stability such as multinational <u>Crisis Management and Cooperative Security</u>.

The 1991 Strategic Concept therefore differed dramatically from previous strategic documents.

- Firstly, it was a non-confrontational document that was released to the public; and
- Secondly, while its fundamental purpose remained the security of its members (i.e. collective defence), it sought to improve and expand security for Europe as a whole through partnership and cooperation with former adversaries.

It also reduced the use of nuclear forces to a minimum, one sufficient to preserve peace and stability.

In 1999, as the Allies celebrated NATO's 50th anniversary, a new Strategic Concept was agreed that committed members to

common defence and to peace and stability in the wider Euro-Atlantic area.

It was based on a broad definition of security which recognized the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the defence dimension.

Informed by events in the Balkans, it identified the new risks that had emerged since the end of the Cold War, which included terrorism, ethnic conflict, human rights abuses, political instability, economic fragility, and the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their means of delivery.

It noted that NATO had managed to adapt and play an important role in the post-Cold War environment, and established guidelines for the Alliance's forces and operational planners.

The strategy called for the continued development of the military capabilities needed for the full range of the Alliance's missions, from collective defence to peace support and other crisis response operations.

It also stipulated that the Alliance would, for the foreseeable future, maintain an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces.

Security environment since 9/11

The 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States brought the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to the fore.

NATO needed to protect its populations both at home and abroad.

It therefore underwent major internal reforms to adapt military structures and capabilities to equip members for new tasks, such

as leading the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

This led to a thorough debate and analysis of NATO issues. These discussions and the economic context presented an opportunity for a profound rethink, reprioritization and reform of NATO which eventually led to the current Strategic Concept, which was agreed at the Lisbon Summit in 2010.

After reiterating NATO's enduring purpose as well as its key values and principles, the 2010 Strategic Concept defines the Organization's three core tasks thus:

"The modern security environment contains a broad and evolving set of challenges to the security of NATO's territory and populations.

In order to assure their security, the Alliance must and will continue fulfilling effectively three essential core tasks, all of which contribute to safeguarding Alliance members, and always in accordance with international law":

- Collective defence
- Crisis management
- Cooperative security

A new 4th Phase?

Even though most of our security challenges were anticipated in NATO's current Strategic Concept, today's security context is more uncertain, more volatile, and more complex than we had ever imagined possible.

While the core tasks and principles of the concept remain valid, the security environment has evolved.

Looking at today's challenges and threats, one could see the beginning of a new phase – the fourth phase in NATO's evolution.

Threats have grown in number and size. They range from possible confrontation with state or non-state actors, hybrid scenarios, cyber and terrorist attacks, all of which affect our Alliance as a whole.

- The crisis in Ukraine has shown the heightened risks associated with conflicts between states. In Crimea, we saw a state challenge the international principles established in Helsinki, principles that guarantee the sanctity of borders and the territorial integrity of Nations. We saw how state actors can coordinate all instruments of power, including those associated with non-state actors. This has led NATO to refocus on the core task of collective defence.
- To the South, we are witnessing the destabilisation of entire regions. The lawless zones emerging on Europe's periphery, especially in Syria and Libya, provide support bases and safe havens for terrorist and extremist groups.
- To the North we have seen an increase of military activities in the Arctic region with major exercises and the establishment of military footprints.

In the current security environment, the distinction between state and non-state actors has become very fluid. We have seen non-state actors trying to establish state-like structures, while elsewhere state actors are using non-state actor tactics in hybrid scenarios.

All these threats are a source of long-term instability which is likely to keep us engaged for many years to come.

Having to deal with instability situations in the strategic environment is not new. What is new is the simultaneity of the

threats, their lack of geographical limits and the interrelated nature of these crises.

New Challenges – New Answers:

Seeing these current and potential future challenges for our security, one might wonder what the Alliance does to react to the continuously increasing speed of change.

This is a fair question, especially since many Allies chose to make the most of their peace dividends following the end of the Cold War and cut their defence budgets excessively during the decades that followed.

In light of this changed and continuously evolving security environment, the Alliance must continue to fulfil its three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, all of which remain fully relevant, are complementary and contribute to safeguarding the freedom and security of the Allies.

As crises become more interrelated, our answers to them must evolve in turn. They need to be responsive, flexible, sustainable, and interconnected. We need to look in all directions rather than restrict ourselves to a purely regional focus, using a "360-degree" approach to answer threats that can occur anywhere and at any time.

Building a Modern Deterrence Posture

To do this, our Alliance needs to permanently adapt its deterrence and defence posture, a posture that must be credible at the political and military level, today and tomorrow.

During the last couple of decades, when the Alliance focused more on expeditionary crisis management operations, we probably failed to pay enough attention to defining the appropriate level of responsiveness for any possible threat.

In this respect, finding the right balance between a permanent forward presence and the flexible reinforcement of forces is at the heart of our work on the way to the Warsaw Summit.

How can we build the right posture for the 21st century and make it credible now and in the future?

Credibility

A posture is a mix of conventional, nuclear, and missile defence forces with the appropriate level of readiness and responsiveness. This last point is essential as the credibility of our posture is driven by the readiness and responsiveness of our forces. In ACT, to drive our work on regaining the right level of responsiveness, we concentrate our efforts on the military capacity of the Alliance, focusing on six areas:

- Command and Control,
- Collective Training and Exercises,
- Partnerships,
- Logistics and Sustainability,
- Human Capital, and
- Capabilities.

Let me expand briefly on these six areas.

We need a new approach for Command and Control, which has always been NATO's main strength. At the heart of this new Command and Control will be new architectures that allow us to act faster, with a higher level of force integration, and more efficiently than our opponents.

Although we develop crisis response mechanisms at 28, we need to be aware that when we are facing a new crisis, we may find a single Ally or a "coalition of the willing" acting as the "first responder" before NATO is engaged as a whole.

Therefore, our Command and Control architectures need to be flexible by design and enable seamless transitions between different scenarios, which are likely to include NATO Nations, Partners, and different international organizations.

These architectures should integrate a permanent, robust, and comprehensive strategic awareness process that would enhance how we collect and disseminate huge amounts of data together with a wide range of actors. At the higher level, it would enable decision makers to connect seemingly unrelated events and react in sufficient time when necessary.

In order to make our posture as credible as possible, it is also important to demonstrate our capabilities. Our exercises, which obviously are vital to the training and interoperability of NATO and Partner Forces, also serve as a vehicle to demonstrate the credibility of our posture by displaying the full scope of our abilities.

They also confirm and improve our forces' readiness and responsiveness and serve as a platform for trials and the experimentation of new technologies and concepts.

We will also need to think about new and innovative approaches to logistics and sustainability. We must imagine new ways to improve

how we deploy our forces. This will include greater cooperation and mutual support within the civil and military logistics and sustainment environment.

In terms of Human Capital, we must consider the human factor in future capabilities that will integrate more autonomous systems and artificial intelligence. Leaders need to be educated to look at the future challenges with a new mindset. The cooperation with academia, including with the Baltic Defence College of course, is vital in this regard.

And last, but not least, we will need to incorporate more flexibility in our capability development process to deal with urgent requirements as well as with a long-term vision to ensure we take the right decisions for the future.

The implementation of the Readiness Action Plan, agreed at the last NATO Summit in Wales, is addressing issues in all the six areas, but this is only a first step. We need to continue building on these areas, as they will enable us to deliver the posture that we need today and in the future.

However, credibility must extend beyond purely military aspects and needs. Political resolve, capabilities and communication constitute the basic elements of effective deterrence against any aggression.

The Alliance needs to demonstrate the necessary political will and effectively communicate NATO's unity and resolve to any adversaries as well as its own public.

And allies must demonstrate that they are prepared to share the risk, responsibilities and burdens associated with deterring and defending against potential adversaries.

Innovation

As I just have mentioned, our posture needs to be credible, not only today but also in the <u>future</u>. In order to keep the edge to offset all potential future adversaries, the Alliance needs to support and implement creative and innovative ideas.

We are working on the conditions to better integrate innovation in our work and to improve our ability to anticipate future technological breakthroughs which might change how we plan and conduct operations or even the very nature of warfare itself.

The Alliance needs to use innovation in order to develop new operational concepts and work closely with a strong and innovative defence industry on both sides of the Atlantic and capitalize on any technological breakthroughs.

It is vital that we maintain a strong connection between the Alliance's vision for the future, the "US Defense Innovation Initiative", and all the equivalent initiatives from other Nations, whether they are implemented nationally or within the framework of the European Union, in order to maintain and continuously improve interoperability.

Nowhere else in the world is there such a concentration and diversity of expertise that can be harnessed to generate innovation, as long as we can leverage it in the most efficient and timely way possible.

However, we should not limit ourselves to technology alone. Innovation also relies on new ways of thinking and new mindsets. In this regard, we need to increase our cooperation with think tanks and academia.

Looking not only at civilian universities and think tanks, but also at all <u>our</u> educational assets such as the NATO school, the NATO Defence College, and all the various staff colleges – like yours - we have a huge pool of expertise and a diversity of experience that will help us "think outside the box".

Strategic Awareness

Let me illustrate this with an example, crucial for our Alliance. While building a new credible posture as I just described, it is vital that we provide this posture and our forces with the right level of readiness and responsiveness to enable us to answer all the threats associated with our dynamic security environment.

This is what our work is focussed on. We have, for instance, developed new processes within the Readiness Action Plan which is being implemented and developed even further.

Our forces must be able to respond in the time required when directed.

However, we have to understand that quick responses rely on two key factors:

- SACEUR's permanent authority to direct preliminary actions; and
- Decisions by the NAC to allow the conduct of the first phases of an operation.

Therefore, our ability to detect and identify the signs of an emerging crises at the earliest stage possible and our ability to attribute responsibilities are essential conditions for quick responsiveness.

An adapted quick reaction may deter a potential aggressor, prevent the emergence of a crisis or it extension to larger geographical areas or even worldwide.

But, the main factor for immediate reaction lies in the decision-making process within NATO and the understanding of the strategic environment through a comprehensive strategic awareness.

There are many different ongoing initiatives for the development of a better intelligence fusion, but in order to build this strategic awareness, the Alliance needs to look past traditional military intelligence.

Especially in hybrid scenarios, there is a need to detect changes in the strategic environment across the full Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Legal spectrum.

We need to look at building strategic awareness in innovative ways.

This includes open sources, social media, cyber awareness, knowledge of own forces capacity/capabilities and limitations, our societies resilience, the advice of an experienced POLAD, Medical Advisor, and the many other perspectives that would be required to create continuous comprehensive awareness.

We believe that instead of focusing on sharing of classified intelligence to get early warning and understanding of a situation, the core of a shared strategic awareness should be based on the collection and analysis of available non-classified information and open sources.

We are currently trying to develop the key principles of Continuous Comprehensive Strategic Awareness in a concept.

This concept should address how the collection of this data could be organized, exploited, and fused, while taking into account that the product of fused unclassified information could then be fed and augmented by classified intelligence.

The main challenge ahead of us will certainly be how we can handle the huge amounts of data that will be generated by such a workflow.

It will require new tools, based on new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Partnerships

Due to the interrelated nature of current and future crises, our deterrence and defence posture will also increasingly depend on our ability to act together with our Partners.

From an operational point of view, it is highly unlikely NATO will conduct any operation without the involvement of some of its 41 partner Nations.

But, today's interconnected world compels us to adopt a truly comprehensive approach to modern threats and challenges.

Tasks like crisis prevention, crisis management, or stabilization cannot be accomplished with military means alone.

Sustainable security in our modern world requires reconstruction, economic and social development, as well as transparency and good governance.

When we look at things from this angle, NATO clearly has the most robust and credible military capacity but, notwithstanding its civil

capabilities (in emergency planning for example), lacks tools and mandates to achieve all the objectives it shares with its partners.

While on the other hand, other international organizations or institutions have access to many useful assets:

- The United Nations has a unique role in providing a framework of legitimacy for the use of force, coordinating multilateral stabilization and reconstruction efforts, or attracting resources on a global basis.
- The European Union has many civilian assets that are essential to capacity building, such as police, justice and rule of law programmes, together with financial and development resources.
- The OSCE provides a framework for arms control, transparency and risk-reduction measures, or norm setting for post-conflict processes.

Closer cooperation between these international organizations, especially with the EU, would lead to great gains, especially with regards to hybrid threats and resilience.

I am convinced we have moved far beyond a situation where each international organization should stay within its own lane without coordinating its efforts with the others.

Constraints that prevent closer cooperation and hinder information exchange between NATO and its Partners must be lifted.

Regarding the instability in certain parts of North Africa and the Middle East, with fragile or failing States under growing pressure from terrorist groups, one of the main efforts for the international community will be to reinforce these States and help them improve, upon request, their defence and security capacities.

These efforts will require coordination with other international organizations to ensure Partner initiatives are complementary and support each other.

Acknowledging the wide variety of NATO's Partners – including Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, Jordan, or Sweden (to name just a few) – it is obvious we will need individual and specific plans for a mutually beneficial and fruitful partnership.

This is why NATO is developing individually tailored roadmaps with each Partner, to ensure both sides gain through a win-win approach.

Resilience

Despite our best efforts, we will not be able to entirely avoid being "surprised" in the future, nor will we always be able to foresee the magnitude or timing of these events.

In order to be able to deal with future "strategic surprise", resilience has become vital in our response to emerging security challenges.

Resilience, our ability to resist and recover, must be reinforced to fit the modern era. It requires a strong interconnection between the military, public, and private sectors.

The ways Nations and Partners integrate their own resilience efforts across society are of paramount importance to the Alliance.

Resilience will in fact be a major factor for the Alliance's ability to deter, since potential aggressors will see that they cannot succeed or achieve their objectives, because the Alliance is prepared and will recover from any blow, strike, or "strategic surprise".

Conclusion:

To conclude, it is clear that we will face changing and new instability situations in the future.

But in order to cope with these future challenges, NATO will remain a unique and united community of values, committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As stated in NATO's founding document, the Washington Treaty, the Alliance will remain "resolved to unite [its] efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security."

The Alliance has successfully dealt with the many challenges its members faced throughout its history by preserving peace and stability within the Allies' territories. NATO will succeed once more in the future.

I would like to stress that, whilst we work on many projects that enable our forces to be more reactive, the Alliance's entire strength is built on the combined forces of 28 Allies (soon 29) and 41 Partner nations which can operate in coordination with many other organizations, the European Union in particular.

The main message to come out of the Warsaw Summit will be that NATO is united and resolved to answer any future threat.

We will find the right balance between the needs of all Allies and find the right answers to all threats using a balanced approach between forward presence and flexible reinforcements.

Developing and using necessary innovative approaches will allow us to answer with a high level of responsiveness to any challenge, irrespective of its origin.

Let me encourage you to remain engaged and interested in the strategic environment and in security policy matters. Keep thinking about both current challenges and possible future threats.

Our future leaders will need new mindsets to deal with the increasingly complex and interrelated security environment.

Thank you for your attention and I am looking forward to your questions and a fruitful discussion.