SACT's opening remarks to the MC Visit to ACT

Lisbon , 26 February 2018, 1300 - 1315

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER

Generals, Admirals,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you Petr (General Pavel) for your introduction.

I cannot underline more the importance of the discussions we are about to start, as your visit to ACT comes in the middle of ground breaking work for the Alliance's adaptation.

The last six months, we have been working on delivering the best military advice for the adaptation of the NATO Command Structure, and we did this "shoulder to shoulder" with ACO with an unprecedented level of direct coordination.

Two weeks ago, the Defence Ministers endorsed the political-military advice for the implementation planning. The NCS adaptation is part of a broader set of adaptation measures that were taken by our nations at the Warsaw summit. The NCS is however unique, NATO is the only organization of its kind that has a permanent Command and Control structure – so we need to keep it fit for purpose.

The complexity of our security environment is the main driver for the Alliance's adaptation. This complexity has dramatically changed the strategic assumptions laid out in the 2010 Strategic Concept.

NATO's core tasks remain valid, but they have become more and more interrelated.

As we know that the strategic assumptions will continue to be challenged, we need to be able to rely on Command and Control structures that are robust enough to operate and execute all the day to day functions of the core tasks, and at the same time flexible enough to adapt to the changing environment

The ability to project ourselves into the future is therefore indeed critical.

The structures we adapt today, must remain fit for purpose in the longer term.

This has been our primary concern in providing our recommendations for the adaptation of Allied Command Transformation.

Transformation is not an aim on itself, it is about the transformation of our military capacity. Consequently, warfare development is the actions we take to adapt our military capacity to the rapidly changing security environment.

In the discussions we will have, we aim to deepen your understanding and awareness on how a fully functioning Warfare Development Command will work, built on three main pillars: Strategic Plans and Policy, Capability Development and Joint Force Development.

This will be the topic of our first session this afternoon.

As we will go into a more detailed description of what the Strategic Plans and Policy pillar encompasses, it will highlight the importance of understanding the future strategic environment, the strategic concerns it raises and the necessity to develop the longer term strategic military considerations.

This brings me to today's second topic.

While we are finalizing the Future Framework for Alliance Operations 2018 publication, its military implications raises the need for a good understanding on the longer-term strategic military considerations.

Last month we concluded the first phase to define the military "ends": based on our nation's strategic views and in addressing their strategic concerns, define corresponding military objectives and priorities. Capturing these concerns is important, and they are not always related to operational scenarios and could even be different for certain nations related to their specific geographical situation, that makes them more vulnerable than others. We must remain open for these discussions, and not limit the subjects only to existing or identified future threats (e.g. Cyber, Migration, and Terrorism or Disruptive technologies).

The ongoing second phase will focus on the "means" and the "ways", as they apply to NATO's military instrument. The workshops and thematic discussions rely on continued support from our nations.

It could lead to the development of a "NATO Military Strategy". Today, we don't have it, but we have a "NATO Strategic Concept". Therefore, the Bi-SC Strategic Considerations will be the military advice to inform a military strategy that will in its turn informs the Political Guidance 2019.

As I mentioned earlier, disruptive technologies and their exponentially growing rate of impact on our future capabilities, are likely the most fertile ground to innovate. We will go deeper into this subject tomorrow morning, but I would like to mention a few things.

Disruptive technologies bring challenges, but also opportunities. The most important challenge is to set the conditions for the integration of these new technologies in our future capabilities while remaining interoperable. Focussing on what NATO owns and that are unique to the Alliance (Command and Control, Communications and Information Systems, Intelligence and Surveillance, or Ballistic Missile Defence, to name just a few) we must ensure coherence and interoperability between the NCS and the national capabilities as part of the NFS.

We have to seize the opportunity to use these disruptive technologies to our advantage, because our potential adversaries already do, and they are less or not at all hampered by ethical or legal barriers that we still face. We must be aware of that.

Let me give 2 examples of how we could begin doing this.

- In the NDPP we generate huge amounts of data, and although big parts of the process already rely on information management tools, we could go a step further by introducing big data analytics to produce

faster results, allowing better integration of pure military judgement without giving in on the required transparency. In this way we could replace the so called "blue books" by big data and reduce the sometimes lengthy parts of the process allowing better linkage between the NATO Targets and the national plans.

- In the Lessons Learned process, we could implement new big data analytics and artificial intelligence to improve the effectiveness of a future single NATO Lessons Learned Portal. As you know, this portal is available since early November last year, and we must continue the ongoing work to improve its transparency, accountability and coherence. It would greatly serve ACT's intention to make Lessons Learned an integrated part of any activity within warfare development and warfighting.

In doing so, we must include the human factor. This will be our last topic tomorrow.

Our Human Capital, together with Data, is our most important strategic resource.

Disruptive technologies, as mentioned above, will change future warfare. We must therefore take into account the way we will educate and train, including the inclusion of new ethical and legal policy developments. We must start exercising this too. Trident Juncture 2018, CWIX18 and UV18 will include experimentation with Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems to test how we can improve the desired effects.

The implementation of autonomy will create new operational situations requiring our human capital (our personnel) to increasingly interact with intelligent systems. We must prepare for this, and include it in our education, training and exercising.

I'm looking forward to good discussions on all the above mentioned topics, and address all the issues we may have, as we will not be able to all meet again in this format anytime soon.

I will now pass the floor to my Chief of Staff, to kick off our first topic of the day.

Graham, the floor is yours.

Thank you.