SACT's remarks to

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"A conversation on NATO's Adaptation and Projecting Stability"

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Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I'm very happy to be here today to exchange some thoughts with you on how NATO as an Alliance is adapting to the rapidly changing security environment.

- **NATO is a political and military organization**, assembling 29 nations from Europe and North America to pursue the common goal of protection and defence of its territory and populations, and more broadly committed to maintain peace and stability.

- The aim to collectively defend itself against any potential aggression forms the cornerstone of the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington in 1949 to, I quote: *"safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, to promote stability and well-being in the North-Atlantic area."*

- In the aftermath of the 2nd World War and the beginning of what would later be called the Cold War, **the ultimate goal was of course the preservation of peace and security by all means.**

- Today, almost 70 years later, the principles and the content of the North Atlantic Treaty still stand, and if you haven't, **I encourage you to read it**. It is very short, but absolutely remarkable. **Should we rewrite the Treaty today, we would probably not change a single word.**

- **This does not mean that the Alliance has not been able to adapt itself throughout its existence.** On the contrary, NATO, like many successful and enduring organizations, has evolved on pace with a changing

environment, devoting the resources and the resolve to ensure a leading role as an international security hub.

- Let me therefore briefly illustrate **4 phases in NATO's history:**
    - **1949-1991: collective defence** (post WWII and Cold War period as I mentioned earlier), defence and deterrence with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, stating that an attack on one shall be considered an attack on all.
    - **1991-2001: cooperative security** with the eastern enlargement but also the development of partnerships (Partnership for Peace, including with Russia).
    - **2001-2014:** and then 9/11 happened (**by the way**: this was the first and only time in NATO's existence that Article 5 was effectively invoked, on 12 September 2001, the day after the terrorist attacks on the United States), and NATO focused on **expeditionary operations and crisis management**, with a strong emphasis on Afghanistan (non- article 5 operations, fight against terrorism).
    - **Since 2014**: Ukraine crisis - **the current phase**, with the returning emphasis on collective defence, and at the same time projection of stability and cooperative security (360 degrees approach, and the interrelation of crises).

- This brief history illustrates the different focus and purposes of the Alliance, in reaction to a changing environment. **And to stay relevant, NATO has to keep adapting.**

- **<u>This brings me to the question: what has changed in the current phase (4th phase)? What makes NATO's adaptation efforts different today?</u>**

- The Wales Summit (2014) symbolizes the beginning of this 4th phase (shortly after the Ukraine crisis) of NATO history. **But the Warsaw Summit (2016) is the one that really acknowledged the complexity of the new strategic environment** and led to critical decisions for NATO adaptation. **In my opinion, Warsaw was a historical summit.**

- Before elaborating on the Warsaw Summit outcomes, it is important to **understand what triggered these decisions**. And the starting point is to have a **proper understanding of today's security environment.**

- This security environment is evolving at a rapid pace, but **several defining trends can be identified**:

  - **The interrelation of crises:** every event in a regional crisis can have an impact on another crisis in another region (example of Russian actions in northern Europe that can influence their actions in Syria and their relations with other countries).

  - **The interrelation of threats:** state and non-state actors present in different crises and following a different agenda, or interacting differently according to the crises.

  - **The variety of threats**, sometimes simultaneously present in one region (example of the Balkans, confronted to Russian influence, rise of radical Islam, massive migrations, organized crime).

  - **The emergence of new operational domains** (cyber, but also space, and information environment)

- ➢ **The blurred transition from peace to crisis** (the difference between peace and conflict is clear, but crisis is in a sort of grey zone).
- ➢ Finally, **the easier access to technology**, which tends to increase the potential danger posed by any threat (Russia, China, non-state actors).
- **Consequently, we have transitioned from a "complicated" world to a "complex" world.**
  - ➢ Complicated meant interacting with many factors, but that we could analyse them, and draw reasonable conclusions to drive our decisions.
  - ➢ Complex means that there are so many factors interacting with each other that it is impossible to comprehend all the possible outcomes, thereby making surprise more possible, decision-making based on imperfect information more commonplace, and failure an option – thus making resilience a necessity.
- These strategic trends, coupled with transnational challenges such as organized crime, climate change or economic instability deepen even further the uncertainty and complexity of our security environment.

- **<u>These are the challenges we face. So what do we do to overcome them? In other words, how do we adapt NATO to our current environment?</u>**
- First, let us now have a closer look at the Warsaw Summit's decisions that form the basis for NATO's adaptation efforts in our current environment.

- The main theme of the Warsaw Summit was to build a **renewed and robust defence and deterrence posture and to project stability across NATO's borders.**

- What we call projecting stability is **the development of actions to prevent a crisis, and when necessary, the ability to intervene** – not necessarily in our "natural" area of operations – **before it degenerates and reaches our borders.**

- The adaptation of NATO's posture, for which the foundation was laid 2 years earlier at the Wales Summit, was confirmed and reinforced.

- Several measures were decided in Warsaw. I'll describe the most important ones.

- First, in **"defence and deterrence":**
  - The deployment of 4 Multinational Battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland forming the **Enhanced Forward Presence** in the North-East, and the formation of a **Tailored Forward Presence** in Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey, constitute what we can call **a "first wave or line of forces" contributing to deter any potential aggression**.
  - In this context, the renewed commitment of Canadian and US troops in Europe is a very strong sign, and it is the first time since the end of the Cold War.
  - **Cyber defence:** in the Hybrid environment we cannot imagine anything without **Cyber – it is now recognized as an operational domain (together with land, air, sea and space).**
  - **Missile Defence:** the NATO ballistic missile defence system has now been declared Initially Operationally Capable.

> **Nuclear deterrence: a renewed and stronger messaging,** which clearly states that **any use** of **any kind of nuclear weapon** by **any adversary** would "**change the nature of warfare.**"

- Second, in **"projecting stability":**
  > The adaptation of the way we do **Partnerships** is an important effort to improve the support to the projection of stability.
  > The creation of a **Hub for the South**, to increase the understanding of the challenges in the Mediterranean region, and to improve the relationship with Partners, both nations and IOs.
  > A stronger focus to increase our relationship with other International Organizations.
  > In particular, also a **strong focus on NATO-EU:** a Joint Declaration identifies key areas for expanding our cooperation, in seven areas: hybrid threats, operations, cyber defence, defence capabilities, exercises, maritime security, and capacity building for our partners.

- And to ensure that the Alliance would be able to meet all potential challenges up to its highest agreed level of ambition, the nations also ordered the 2 strategic commands to perform a **functional assessment of the NATO Command Structure**, which stated that our structure was only partially fit for purpose to conduct all NATO's core tasks.
- Subsequently, the nations ordered to initiate a functional adaptation, whose conclusions are currently in the approval process at the political level.

- **Allow me to expand on this point.**

- <u>NATO is the only organization of its kind that has a permanent command and control structure,</u> <u>which defines the decision making process from the highest political level (Heads of State and Government) down to the lower military-tactical level (troops on the ground, vessels at sea, planes in the air).</u>

- How does this decision making process work?

- NATO is a political-military organization of 29 Allied nations.

- At the highest political level, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) is composed of 29 permanent representatives or ambassadors. These permanent representatives with their national delegations are in direct contact with their governments.

- At the highest military level, the Military Committee (MC) is composed of 29 military representatives that are in close contact with their respective national Defence Staffs.

- Every day, member countries consult and take decisions on security issues at all levels and in a variety of fields.

- A "NATO decision" is the expression of the collective will of all 29 member countries since <u>all decisions are taken by consensus</u>.

- Both civilian and military experts help prepare these decisions, in cooperation with the national delegations, the international staff and the international military staff at NATO Headquarters.
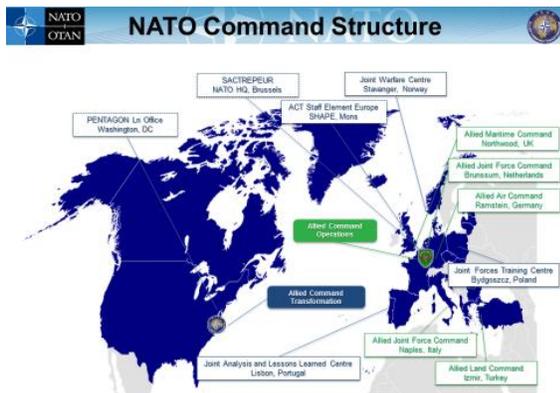
- The NATO Headquarters is connected to the two Strategic Commands (one in Belgium, responsible for the day-to-day operations – and my Command in Norfolk, responsible for the adaptation for future operations). Both Strategic Commands are then further connected to subordinate military commands that form what we call the NATO Command Structure (NCS).

- Connected to the NCS are national headquarters that form what we call the NATO Force Structure (NFS). It is within the NFS that we find the member nations' capabilities that contribute to NATO's core tasks and missions.

- In the complexity of the environment that I described earlier, NATO must be able to execute its three core tasks, and be prepared for a major conflict, while at the same time conducting projecting stability efforts.

- This is a huge task that requires a NCS that is fit for purpose.

- **How did we proceed?**
  - ➢ We must look at how the most innovative private companies, especially in the digital world, have adapted faster than us to the

complexity of the 21st century. They have developed principles, allowing them to succeed in this complex environment.

➤ Of course, they have different objectives. But they are confronted with the same environment. So, we studied these principles, and we applied them for our own adaptation:

- No organization or state holds alone every key to solve a crisis. This is why we are developing **a large ecosystem of partners**, and we **are increasing our ability to federate** the military capacity and expertise owned by our nations.

- **This is illustrated by the developing partnerships we have with Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, Georgia, or Jordan, to name a few**. Other Partnership initiatives are also ongoing with Mediterranean countries and in the Middle-East region.

➤ **Strategic awareness** is essential and must be global – we already talked about this point.

- NATO's area of operations is centered on the Euro-Atlantic space, but we cannot dismiss the possibility that **early signs of a developing crisis may appear outside of this space** – in Asia, or in Africa, or elsewhere.

- To be able to react accordingly, the Alliance must ensure that it has the capacity to monitor situations across the globe, and the global nature of threats may lead us to consider scenarios that would engage a wider range of partners, out of the Euro-Atlantic area, explore innovative decision-making architectures to face future transnational challenges, and help define the

required needs to empower all parties who could play a role in global security.

- Partnerships is also essential for global situational awareness.
- **Strategic awareness also requires an increased exchange of information with a broad range of actors, and the ability to process tremendous amounts of publicly available information** – we cannot limit ourselves to the traditional boundaries of intelligence anymore, and a much broader information sharing is not only valid between countries but also with other international organizations or even with the private sector.

➢ Complexity renders surprise inevitable, which requires flexibility and resilience at all levels, to turn potential setbacks into opportunities. **Flexibility and resilience** are key drivers of the adaptation of our command structure.

➢ In spite of an extremely demanding operational agenda, adaptation remains essential. The successful organizations are the ones that preserve their ability to **operate and adapt at the same time.**

➢ These principles have driven our thought process on the adaptation of NATO, with the objective to operate while at the same time adapting at the speed of relevance: ACO will focus on Warfighting (Operate) while ACT will focus on Warfare Development (Adapt).

➢ Operate

    - We conducted a **functional analysis**, and identified a number of deficiencies or missing functions, but also overlapping of functions and tasks (Joint Effects, Targeting, SLOCS Atlantic, Logistics and Sustainment, Cyber, etc.) within the existing structures, and between all headquarters that are part of the NCS.

    - We then developed an **outline design** that takes into account all three NATO core tasks and the corresponding roles/responsibilities/authorities. The main focus was put on the functions, tasks and requirements that the NCS <u>must</u> fulfil to be fit for purpose.

    - At the same time, we applied a federated approach between the NCS and the NFS (=nations), optimizing the use of what already exists and defining the levels of authority to use these assets when needed (the NCS does not have to own everything).

    - It is a huge work, but it must be done. There is also a sense of urgency connected to its implementation, driving us to move forward in a prioritized and incremental processed way.

➢ Adapt

    - The **emergence of disruptive technologies** presents us with threats, but also with opportunities. We have to consider both in order to stay on pace with our potential adversaries. **<u>However, all decisions we take today must remain relevant in the</u>**

future, so we must integrate a medium and longer-term perspective in our current decisions.

- I would like to quote the famous economist Peter Drucker: "*long-term planning is not about future decisions, but about the future of current decisions*".

- This brings me to one last point I want to cover with you, because as the commander in charge of transformation, it has been one of my priorities over the last months: **innovation.**

- I know it has become a buzzword in military circles recently. But innovation is not just about new ideas, it is above all about the implementation of new ideas.

- My headquarters' staff has developed several initiatives to develop a culture of innovation, both internally and when engaging with the outside world.

- **But sowing the seeds is not enough, we must foster this culture**, because if we don't, we condemn innovation to remain a buzzword, without substance or concrete results.

- **And we cannot afford to fail in this regard, in a world in which technology is transforming profoundly the way we plan, prepare, and conduct operations.**

- Let me illustrate this necessity with an example. The US Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, is a retired US Marine General, who served in uniform for more than forty years. He has had extensive experience in combat and in high administrations. He is also one of my predecessors in Allied Command Transformation.

- A couple of weeks ago, he gave an interview during which he was asked about artificial intelligence and the emergence of disruptive technologies.
- He answered that he had spent his entire career being absolutely convinced that the principles of war were set in stone and would never change. But now, he believes that we have to be extremely agile and open-minded when considering future challenges, because they are likely to transform profoundly the way we operate.
- **This necessity for open-mindedness is essential to me,** and if someone as experienced as Secretary Mattis has changed his mind about these questions, then innovation cannot be a simple buzzword. It has to lead to concrete developments.
- **For example,** we have initiated a project on **autonomous systems**, and we will integrate issues related to Big Data and artificial intelligence in our works and programs.

➢ In a world increasingly driven by technology and artificial intelligence, **human capital is essential**. The ability to attract, train, educate and employ people is even paradoxically bigger than it ever has been. The difficulty for NATO is that we can only recruit civilians, because the military personnel is provided by the nations

- **To conclude:**

- NATO is working hard on a successful adaptation because the security environment calls for it. The Warsaw Summit acknowledged the complexity of the environment at the scale of the Alliance.

- Defence and deterrence, and Projection of Stability form the bedrock of NATO's strategy to prevent crises, and in case of failure to deescalate conflicts and enforce peace.

- The Warsaw Summit decisions can only be enduring if the adaptation measures are put in a larger and longer term perspective, to bring coherence and to leverage a global network of likeminded people and organizations that can help foster innovation through the Alliance.

- Innovation by the use of **new "so called disruptive" technologies** in our military capacity are essential to "keep the edge", because they will change the nature of warfare.

- Today there is a **sense of urgency**, because for the Alliance, our potential adversaries are already integrating autonomous systems, artificial intelligence and data analytics in their future capabilities.

- It is a **"technological race"**, and if we combine the strength of our 29 nations and partners Research and Technology to fully explore the new opportunities, nobody can compete with us.

- It is a very important effort in the adaptation process, and it will require the appropriate **policy changes** (political, legal and ethical) to fully exploit these advantages in our future military capacity.

- The principles we use are the same than most innovative companies use in their respective businesses. This should not be a surprise: we have

different purposes, but we live in the same environment, complex and unpredictable. Therefore, my Command, Allied Command Transformation, is always very open to share our work with a wide spectrum of actors.

- I am looking forward to hear your thoughts.

Thank you for your attention. I will be happy to answer your questions.