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the Transformation for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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Thank you very much, Dr. Luck, for your kind words of introduction. I feel, indeed, privileged to be here for my first visit to New York as a NATO Strategic Commander, among United Nations representatives, not least because I am a firm believer in the UN-NATO relationship and the potential that still lies ahead.

It is not an exaggeration to say that I was very much looking forward to this visit – my staff here can bear witness to that. Not only because it is an exciting place to be, but also because I feel that the United Nations and NATO can do a lot together in meeting our objectives and goals, and I have come here to pledge my support to that cooperation, as our Secretary General has also done, and to hear your ideas on how we can improve it in practical ways.

I must say that my visits to DPKO and DFS this morning, as well as the visit to New York by our new Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, are encouraging signs for me in this respect. Taking into account the very productive series of Education Days in New York and Brussels, as well as the participation of the NATO Secretary General and his Deputy to the Security Council debate, and the Secretary General's retreat on UN cooperation with regional organizations last January, I think all of this adds up to a very positive trend in UN-NATO cooperation.

The reason for this seems straightforward to me: everybody realizes that even the UN, with its broad mandate, large experience and unique position among international organizations, often cannot achieve everything on its own. This is not a new realization: in many ways, the concept of “regional arrangements or agencies” foreseen by the UN Charter is an embodiment of this idea. However, since the end of the Cold War, this has become ever more relevant as the challenges facing the international community have grown in scope, nature and complexity. NATO, like the UN, has changed in the past twenty years. It has taken over a wide array of crisis management tasks. In this context, the operational cooperation between the UN and NATO is nothing new.

Just to take a few examples, it was practiced in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when NATO cooperated with UNPROFOR and then took over from the UN force; in Kosovo in 1999 with KFOR as part of the “security presence” established by UNSCR 1244 – which is still in force – and since 2001 in Afghanistan, where UNAMA and ISAF have had a significant cooperation.

In every case, NATO sees itself as part of a broader framework for conflict resolution and crisis management that stems directly from the UN in its general role for the maintenance of international peace and security. We in NATO never forget that our engagement in Afghanistan was first decided as a consequence of the 9/11 attacks on this very city, and after Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which itself draws from Article 51 of the Charter, was invoked for the first time. We also recognize that NATO’s presence in Afghanistan has been mandated by several UN Security Council resolutions.

This is a strong expression of common resolve by the international community and also particularly important for our legitimacy in the eyes of our publics. And it offers an ideal basis for increased UN-NATO cooperation.

Indeed, the challenges that the international community faces are such that there is no shortage of work for every security organizations. While the Alliance’s current priority is to succeed in Afghanistan, we know that we cannot turn a blind eye to today’s and tomorrow’s new challenges, be it the resurgence of piracy, the risk of cyberattacks or the disruption of critical supply lines – what the Group of Experts, in their report to Secretary General Rasmussen, calls “unconventional threats”. And we know that these challenges will require our Alliance to remain flexible, adaptable and reactive – in a word, “transformational” – and that it will take strong partnerships for NATO to be successful in the future.

So, just as the UN has been adapting its peacekeeping and peacebuilding tools (through the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission or its “New Horizons” initiative), NATO also needs to keep adapting to a changing security environment.

This is why the NATO Nations decided, at the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit, to launch a new Strategic Concept. It is an important exercise for the Alliance, since this document, whose importance is only second to the Washington Treaty, had not been reviewed since 1999. A lot has changed, obviously, since that date. In order to take stock and to have as broad a reflection as possible on today’s and tomorrow’s Alliance, the Secretary General decided to convene a group of experts from 12 NATO Nations.

This Group chaired by Secretary Albright, conducted a broad reflection in consultation with many actors, including my Command, and completed its report three weeks ago. This report is currently being examined by Nations, and Secretary General Rasmussen will now consult extensively and write the actual draft Strategic Concept for negotiation and approval by Nations at the next NATO Summit in Lisbon in November.

One characteristic of the process so far that I would like to point out is that it goes beyond the NATO Nations' perimeter. One of the reflection seminars organized for the benefit of the Group of Experts was hosted by a partner Nation, Finland, on the topic of Comprehensive Approach. Moreover, participants from countries as diverse as Sweden, Israel, Azerbaijan, Russia and even Japan took part in the reflection on NATO's partnerships in Oslo. Finally, representatives from the UN had the opportunity to attend the Helsinki seminar as well as the one on NATO's core tasks and functions in Slovenia, bringing their insights and expertise in a way that was appreciated by the Experts.

This openness, however, did not translate into a desire to create a "second UN". The Experts pointed out, very wisely in my view, that "NATO is a regional, not a global organisation" and that its resources and mandate are limited. This means that the Alliance needs a strong network of partnerships that will enable it to bring its contribution to international security and to work efficiently and in a complementary fashion with other countries and organizations. And this is where, in my view, a reenergized UN-NATO partnership comes into the picture.

This philosophy of drawing on each organization's strengths and experiences is also what should be at the heart of a Comprehensive Approach, in order to tackle today's security challenges.

I know that there is no single understanding, among organizations, or even sometimes within organizations, of what a comprehensive approach should be. And even if such an understanding was reached, there would still be those who would resist taking sides or implementing what they see as a "political-military agenda". These reservations are serious and should be taken into account.

But we also know, mainly through our respective operational experiences, that there is no alternative to effective civil-military interaction. While the military tools are needed to deal with any important crisis, whether natural catastrophe or man-made disaster, it is also true that no crisis can be solved without a significant civilian intervention.

What we need is therefore a mindset of network and dialogue, bringing together civilian and military actors who have different backgrounds and sometimes diverging goals. The UN already encompasses a wide variety of expertise, ranging from the military to humanitarian assistance and development specialists, not to mention police and security sector reform experts. It also has a unique legitimacy among international actors in a theatre, and it is uniquely placed to promote a unity of effort among the different stakeholders. I am convinced that NATO can help the United Nations in this respect, once on the ground but also, crucially, in the planning phases, before an operation actually takes place.

And I do believe that ACT is well placed to bring its contribution to UN-NATO cooperation. Within NATO, we are competent both for preparing the future, which includes drawing lessons from past and current operations, and for bringing concrete support to today's operations in areas such as exercises, training and education. And I am pleased to see that these are among the areas in which the UN would like to further the UN-NATO cooperation, as pointed out on various occasions by UN officials, and again this morning during my meetings at DPKO and DFS.

In this context, I think that it is very opportune to move this relationship to another level, and develop a practical, day-to-day cooperation for which I would like to offer a few proposals from an ACT perspective:

- first, a much more systematic information by NATO, and particularly ACT, about the courses offered in our Training facilities and Centers of Excellence, as well as about our online Advanced Distributed Learning courses. All of these courses are open to UN participants, but many of them may not know it or may not have the time or interest to take part in them. So, we need to do a better job in advertising these opportunities to the UN public, particularly the Advanced Distributed Learning courses that do not involve travelling, and also in tailoring the courses to a wider audience, in the spirit of a comprehensive approach;

- second, a more frequent participation in each other's exercises. Exercises are often time-consuming and overruled by many other day-to-day priorities. But it is a crucial step in order to create a better mutual understanding and to bring the mindsets closer. All of our exercises are open to UN participants, and we need to further build on that. This year NATO greatly benefited from UN's active participation both in the planning and conduct phases of our strategic crisis management exercise and we hope to be able to continue on the same path;

- third, facilitated access to each other's lessons learned databases. We in NATO have been accumulating lessons learned, particularly in our dedicated center in Monsanto, Portugal, which is in ACT's chain of command. On the UN's side, the Best Practices Unit within the Department for Policy Evaluation and Training could develop a useful interaction with our center in order to identify common lessons learned from past engagements, especially those where NATO and the UN were side by side – and there are many of those, as I pointed out earlier;

- and fourth, taking into account the favourable geographical location of my Command, which is easily accessible from New York, I offer that ACT could become one of the privileged hubs of interaction between NATO and the UN. This could be done by having more frequent exchanges between New York and Norfolk, with the support of our Liaison Officers to the UN, who have just been reinforced with the welcome arrival of a civilian expert. We could imagine visits to Norfolk of UN Secretariat subject matter experts, for instance, on training and lessons learned, to meet their counterparts and identify the possibility for pragmatic avenues for cooperation.

I hope that these introductory remarks will elicit a lively discussion on how we could take forward UN-NATO cooperation, and I thank again the International Peace Institute and Dr. Luck for bringing together such a distinguished group of people today. I am more than willing to take any suggestion into consideration and to answer any question you may have about what we do in Norfolk and how what we do may benefit the United Nations. I am looking forward to our discussion.