

Joint press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko

22 September 2015

PETRO POROSHENKO (Ukrainian President): [Speaking with translator]. The first Minsk Protocol which initiated the peace process in Ukraine but from the first signing to the first practical results it took one year and a really high price of Ukraine which we paid for Russia's aggression.

And today we have to build strong armed forces with the very high level of training and preparation with your consideration of the experience we have accumulated, taken part in this hybrid war which then transformed in the full scale confrontation with Russian Federation and we are very grateful to the Secretary General and NATO allies for the precious support and assistance they provide to Ukraine in this very difficult times. For Ukraine the stages of our cooperation with NATO is defined as distinctive partnership which is an integral part of our course towards European and Euro Atlantic integration.

Our cooperation with the Alliance brings us practical results and has significant potential for further development. We have very good mechanism of information exchange, 317 Ukrainian servicemen have been wounded went to NATO countries for medical rehabilitation and medical service.

We are receiving the considerable support of NATO partners in solving the most urgent issues in the area of our defence capability. We highly appreciate Secretary General, your readiness to give and enhance our cooperation. After today's meeting we have signed three most important documents which create a qualitively new parameters of our cooperation as North Atlantic Alliance.

The first one is the agreement between NATO and the Government of Ukraine on the stages of the NATO representation to Ukraine and this is a very bright demonstration on our respect to NATO and our mutual trust and respect.

The second document signed today is the road map on strategic communications partnership between National Security Defence Council and NATO International Secretariat which will be a very important factor in our counter action to Russia's aggression.

We also signed a thoroughly prepared joint declaration on enhancing our defence technical cooperation with NATO which also means some practical steps for NATO countries and Alliance as a whole in the area of our cooperation and I would emphasize Ukraine now needs not lethal weapons but new potential, new capabilities to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity and independence of our country.

I am absolutely sure that the documents signed today are of special importance of special stages and today's meeting opens new prospects for our cooperation. Yesterday during our

visit to exercises with the participation of representatives of 34 countries, we saw with our own eyes once again that the efficient cooperation and efficient interaction are of mutual benefit for all of us.

I would remind you that those were the emergency management situations, exercises aimed at the improvement of mutual assistance, mutual support in the situation of emergency and that was rather symbolic.

Once again my sincere gratitude to you, Secretary General, for your visit to Ukraine at my invitation, for your solidarity with Ukraine in the conditions of hybrid challenges to security and democracy. Thank you so much.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much President Petro Poroshenko and thank you for very useful and very constructive discussions both yesterday and today and also thank you for inviting me to the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, it has been a pleasure to meet with them and to discuss the challenges we face together at the meeting today.

This is my first visit to Ukraine as the Secretary General of NATO and I would like to start by commending you President for your strong leadership in very challenging times for both Ukraine and for NATO and we appreciate what you do and you should know that you have the strong support of the whole Alliance in your efforts to find a political solution and to counter the aggressive actions of Russia against your country.

We also very much appreciate the partnership and excellent cooperation between Ukraine and NATO and we have developed this partnership over almost 20 years. And you are a highly valued partner and Ukraine contributes to our Alliance. Your troops have served together with NATO troops in Afghanistan and in Kosovo.

Ukrainian ships have fought piracy in the Indian Ocean together with NATO ships and Ukrainian troops have participated in the NATO Response Force. And all of this really underlines and highlights that Ukraine is contributing to the Alliance and we thank you for your many different contributions.

So NATO can rely on Ukraine and Ukraine can rely on NATO. Our partnership is already very strong and today we took steps to strengthen our partnership even further. NATO will continue to support Ukraine on its reform path, our five trust funds make a real contribution in areas like command and control, cyber defence, logistics and medical rehabilitation.

We also provide advice to the Minister of Defence and to your general staff. All of this is important to modernize, to reform your armed forces and this is important for Ukraine but is also a part of developing our partnership, our ability to work together, our interoperability.

In addition to what NATO does several NATO allies provide support for Ukraine in different ways. Allies are supporting your country in, by providing training and equipment and humanitarian aid and as we also discussed during the meeting we met some of the soldiers yesterday, we actually had dinner with them, the Canadian soldiers and soldiers from the

United States and I think this is a very concrete expression of, that NATO and NATO allies support Ukraine in many different ways.

We will enhance our defence technical cooperation so forces can work even closer together, this will help modernize your defence industry and open up new possibilities for even more cooperation between NATO, NATO allies and Ukraine.

We have also signed an agreement on the status of the NATO offices in Kiev and another agreement to boost Ukraine's government communication capabilities. Strategic communication is important and we would very much appreciate to be able to work even closer together with you in developing your capabilities on strategic communication.

Mr. President, we have discussed the security situation in Eastern Ukraine, NATO stands firm in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and its military actions in Eastern Ukraine are a serious challenge to Ukraine but also to the security of Europe.

The Minsk Agreement remains the only way out of the crisis and to restore Ukrainian sovereign control over its own borders. NATO fully supports the efforts within the trilateral contact group and the Normandy format to find a political solution. I welcome the renewed effort to fully implement the Minsk Agreements.

The ceasefire is mainly holding, this is encouraging but the situation remains fragile. Russia continues to support the separatists, not only politically but also militarily, this must stop. Heavy weapons have to be removed from the contact line and OSCE monitors must have full access so they can do their job.

You President Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Government have taken bold steps towards constitutional changes for more decentralization and for more self-governance. These are difficult political decisions but they show Ukraine's commitment to find a peaceful solution. A secure, prosperous and independent Ukraine is in everyone's interests. So thank you once again for excellent meetings, discussions and for hosting me and my delegation here in Kiev. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Now we have opportunity to ask questions. We have a possibility for two of them, first to Ukrainian side.

Q: [translated]. So in the context of visit to the US and UN session attendance, what about the peacekeeping mission prospects and did you discuss this issue with Secretary General? And the question to Secretary General about the proofs of the aggression and military presence of Russia in the east of Ukraine, do you think that those proofs are compelling and what would be the reaction of NATO to these proofs that you were given today?

PETRO POROSHENKO [Speaking with translator]: Thank you very much for this question. You would be aware of my position and this is the position of all the government, that for steady de-escalation of the situation we need to deploy peacekeepers who at the initial stage should provide certain functions around the contact line and after that they should start

de-escalating the situation along the border line between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. We have to understand the difference between OSCE mission from peacekeeping missions. OSCE is just a monitoring mission, they can detect some violations and inform the world community and relevant bodies about that. Once the ceasefire regime starts the observers leave the area and very important element of this is that if now we are withdrawing light weapons, artillery with a calibre less than 100 millimetres, tanks and mortars, there should be permanently operating 24/7 posts which should ensure full implementation of obligations undertaken by the parties of the conflict. Therefore the relevance of a peacekeeping operation remains important and I am sure that during our meetings in New York, during the trilateral meetings, we will revisit that issue and keep raising it over and over again. Having said that be it fragile but, and a workable regime of ceasefire is there and this gives us grounds for cautious optimism that if the remainder of Minsk Agreements is implemented then the necessity to deploy peacekeepers will no longer be relevant. I have, I see two components that we have to focus on. First withdrawal of foreign military formations from the territory of Ukraine and ensuring a reliable control over the Ukrainian Russian border. All other issues, humanitarian, cultural, language, what have you we will sort them out no problem. And, but this is not an internal conflict, this is an aggression of the Russian Federation against an independent country Ukraine.

JENS STOLTENBERG: I listened very carefully to the information and the briefings we got during the meeting of the Ukrainian National Defence and Security Council. Proving that Russia continues to support the separatists and also that Russian troops are present in Eastern Ukraine. And the information we got today confirms and underlines and provides more details to a picture which we have seen for a long time and that is that Russia is present, Russian troops are present in Eastern Ukraine and they continue to support the separatists with training, with equipment and with command and control. And this is something which is based on the information I got today but of course also based on our own intelligence from NATO sources but also from open sources, from the media, from families and of Russian soldiers who have served in Eastern Ukraine and also from other sources. So the fact that Russia continues to support the separatists is not only based on one source it's based on many different intelligent sources, we got some more detail and some more information today, but actually it just reconfirms and strengthens the documentation for what we have known for a long time and that is that Russia is present in Eastern Ukraine. And therefore I call on Russia to redraw all its forces from Eastern Ukraine and fully implement the Minsk Agreements and this is crucial because this is the path to peace in Ukraine, important for Ukraine but also important for the rest of Europe.

MODERATOR: The next question.

Q: Secretary General you clearly have a good relationship with Ukraine but do you believe that Russia is a true partner in peace? And Mr. President the Secretary General has said that Ukraine can rely on NATO and yet we've heard over the past couple of days from both yourself and your Prime Minister that there is very much more that you want from defensive weapons to now a call for peacekeepers. Do you really feel that Ukraine can get to where it wants to be without that additional support from your allies?

JENS STOLTENBERG: NATO does not seek a confrontation with Russia. Actually NATO continues to strive for a more cooperative and constructive relationship with Russia. The problem is that such a constructive and cooperative relationship has to be based on some fundamental values. Like for instance the respect of the border of your neighbour. If there is going to be cooperation between two neighbours, a minimum requirement is of course that the borders are respected and that's not the case in Ukraine where we have seen Russian troops being responsible for violating the borders and violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We are not in the cold war situation but we are neither in the strategic partnership we strived for establishing after the end of the cold war. And NATO has decided to suspend practical cooperation with Russia but to maintain channels of political contact, political engagement open because we believe it is important especially when times are difficult and challenging as they are now to continue to have a political engagement and to continue to push for, for instance the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements which are the only way to a lasting peaceful solution in Ukraine.

PETRO POROSHENKO: Thank you, my answer will be following. 17 months ago we appeared in front of the annexation of the Crimea and military aggression on the east of my country without army, without weapons, without effective form of the cooperation with our strategic partners and NATO member states and that was the most difficult time for my country, maybe the most difficult in the whole history. And for this 17 or 16 months we go past very big distance, of course we will defend our country, even without weapons because this is our land, this is our motherland and we need, this is the, we as a patrage should defend it. But for these months we build up a new very effective army, brave and decisive, we build up the national military technical conflicts and increase four, five times the capability for our national opportunities to deliver the armed weapons, tanks, multi rocket launch system and different others. But that was the war of my country with the weapons of 20th century against a country who has 40 time more military budget that we are, which most modern samples of the weapon were sent to Ukraine. Most prepared units of Russian Armed Forces were send it to Ukraine, special forces there have a unique combat experience both in Chechnya, from outside of Russia, but day by day we demonstrate rising our capability of Ukrainian Armed Forces. That's happened on the 3rd of July near Marinka (sp?) when thousands of the Russian troops and Russian backed terrorists had taken position of my armed forces during the Minsk Memorandum and that was in the last but that was in some other things and of course we demonstrate that we are a reliable partner, we are a responsible partner both in implementation of Minsk Agreement and both in the defending our country. And for this 17 months we now have opportunity to share the information with our NATO member state partner to supply some defensive weapons already, I mean some drones, some counter battery radar, some radar, some weapons for the electronic warfare. I want to attract your attention, this is not a lethal weapon, this is a defensive electronic weapon which we do not produce but the action of our defensive capabilities is rising. That's why I think this is a unique importance, the documents which we signed today and the cooperation which we will have in future. We rising of the trust, we rising of the our partnership relationship and I think that the effective cooperation in building up the defensive opportunity for the Ukrainian Army, this is

not just for this war, this is for the regional, continental and global security. Because Ukraine now is a fore post of the democratic forces on the east.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, thank you press.