

Speech by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to the Ukrainian Rada

10 Jul. 2017

Chairman Parubiy, Members of the Rada, Excellencies,

It is really a great pleasure and a great honour to be here today. And I am very happy to be back here in Ukraine, back in Kyiv. And I am deeply honoured to address the Rada today. The first NATO Secretary General ever to do so. And as a member of the Parliament for 25 years myself, I fully recognise and fully understand the importance of parliaments in our modern democracies.

As the great Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko, wrote:

“It makes great difference to me

That evil folk and wicked men

Attack our Ukraine, once so free,

And rob and plunder it at will.

That makes great difference to me.”

It makes great difference to NATO too. That is why we have stood with your country since you regained your independence.

Today, I am joined in Kyiv by all members of the North Atlantic Council. We are here to mark the 20th anniversary of our Distinctive Partnership with Ukraine. Even before we stepped up our cooperation in 2014, we had long been a strong supporter of Ukraine, helping you to strengthen your institutions and armed forces and to implement critical reforms.

We are also marking twenty years of Ukraine’s strong support to NATO. Ukraine has taken part in NATO missions and operations around the world, even while facing major threats at home. Training officers in Iraq, patrolling ships in the Mediterranean and tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia. Supporting our Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and with a heavy engineering unit in Kosovo. So we in NATO are really grateful for you and Ukraine for everything you’ve done in support of our Alliance, thank you so much.

Today we are here to show solidarity with Ukraine and to underline our support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia’s annexation of Crimea dealt a terrible blow to Ukraine. It also has serious implications for all the free countries of the world. It was the first time since the end of the Second World War that one European country had annexed part of another by force. It undermined the decades of progress that all nations – including Russia – had made to establish a rules-based international order, where borders are respected and

where all nations reject the idea that one country should be beholden to another, within a 'sphere of influence'.

I have said this many times before, but let me say it here, in the sovereign parliament of the Ukrainian people. NATO does not, and will not, recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea. Russia, and you know this better than anyone else, is trying to destabilise Ukraine, through its support of the militants in the east, its cyber-attacks, disinformation and not least by the presence of Russian forces in Eastern Ukraine. This must end. Europe and North America are united in their condemnation of Russia's actions and in their continued support for economic sanctions. Russia must withdraw its forces and military equipment from Ukraine's internationally recognised and sovereign territory. OSCE monitors must be given full and unhindered access to the whole of Ukraine and the Minsk agreements must be implemented in full by all parties. Only then can the millions who have been displaced or are trapped in the East return to a normal life, only then can families, torn apart by war, be reunited, and only then can Ukraine truly be free.

Ukraine is a sovereign nation and it has the right to choose its own security arrangements. Last month, NATO welcomed Montenegro as the 29th member of our Alliance. This shows that NATO's door remains open. The road to NATO membership is not easy. For those who seek it, it requires dedication and substantial reform. But in the end membership is a decision for the 29 members of the NATO Alliance and for those who wish to join. And for them alone. No one outside has the right to try to intervene or to veto such a process.

NATO provides political support to Ukraine, but it also provides practical support. Last year, NATO leaders agreed a Comprehensive Assistance Package to help Ukraine to better defend itself and to implement wide ranging reforms. We now have more than fifty people right here in Kyiv, all determined to support you on your journey.

- To strengthen this Parliament's democratic control and oversight over the armed forces.
- To improve command and control within the military.
- To increase military education and training, and encourage the adoption of NATO standards.
- To protect your vital energy infrastructure.
- And to better combat the constant barrage of cyber-attacks.

These are just a few examples of the things that NATO is doing to support Ukraine in your time of need. But while NATO can support, it is for Ukraine to lead. If Ukraine is to truly fulfil its potential, there is much it must do. It must strengthen its institutions, and it must rid itself of the cancer of corruption. Corruption, inertia and resistance to reform stand in the way of real change and of a secure, prosperous future for the Ukrainian people. You have already made some remarkable progress. But there is still a very long way to go. Clear leadership is needed at every level across Ukrainian society. But more than anywhere, it must come from the President, from the Prime Minister, and from you, the elected representatives of the people. I commend you all on how far you have come. And I encourage you to continue on that journey to fight against corruption, to strengthen the rule of law and to bring transparency to all parts of public life.

The fighting in the east has led to the loss of many lives and some 24,000 people have been injured. NATO is supporting the physical and psychological rehabilitation of military personnel injured in the fighting. We have paid for more than 1,700 people to receive training in rehabilitation techniques. NATO funds have helped injured personnel to receive physical rehabilitation and almost 5,000 to receive psychological rehabilitation to help them cope with the trauma of war. This morning I met with some of those men. People who had put their country ahead of themselves, who went to the front to fight for freedom and who paid a terrible price. Their lives will never be the same. But these men were not beaten. They were determined to carry on and to re-build their lives. And with NATO's support, those men will fly to Canada in September to compete in this year's Invictus Games. I wish the Ukrainian team the very best of luck. They, and their brothers-in-arms who lost their lives, are true Ukrainian heroes. Just like the Heavenly Hundred and all those who demanded freedom during the Euromaidan protests alongside many of you here in this chamber. This is a time for heroes and Ukraine needs them more than ever. Not just on the field of battle but right here in Parliament, in government, in business, in civil society. Ukraine needs heroes to stand up to all those who seek to stifle its bright future and to fight corruption wherever – and in whatever form – it exists.

So members of the Rada,

Ukraine needs modern, efficient armed forces. It needs strong, accountable, democratic institutions. It needs strong, accountable and democratic leaders. Ukraine needs you to be the best you can be! For twenty years, NATO has stood by Ukraine's side and NATO will continue to stand with you in the long and difficult years ahead.

Thank you so much.

Moderator: [Interpreted]: Head of the Committee of the Parliament for National Security and Defence Mr. Serhiy Pashynsky.

Serhiy Pashynsky (Head of the Committee of the Parliament for National Security and Defence, Ukraine): [Interpreted]: Thank you very much Mr. Stoltenberg for having visited our parliament, I would like to address you and the ambassadors of NATO. Even though we have cooperation documents signed, documents in place irrespective of agreements that we have with Russia, in 2014 Russia unleashed an open military aggression against us and it's only due to the mass heroism of our military, the national guard volunteers, border guard servicemen we did manage to stop this aggression in the east of Ukraine. Pay the price by thousands of lives of our servicemen, only that stopped the aggressor in his tracks. We keep suffering from this aggression. We are very thankful for the support that we get from NATO, political, technical and otherwise but I'd like to address you with the following question. Don't you think Mr. Secretary General that the agreement of partnership and cooperation which we have with NATO should be upgraded? Basically all NATO member countries have blocked opportunities for Ukraine to get necessary military equipment and spare parts and now the industrial complex is not strong enough to bridge this gap. Please pay attention to that.

Moderator: [Interpreted]: Thank you. We give the floor to Head of the Committee of Parliament for Foreign Affairs Mrs. Hanna Hopko.

Hanna Hopko (Head of the Committee of Parliament for Foreign Affairs, Ukraine): Dear Secretary General, dear members of North Atlantic Council, dear members of parliament and Ukrainian citizens. It's a big honour to have you here today. First of all let me thank you for all your personal efforts, all efforts and all practical supports from NATO to Ukraine. This is crucially important to see the consolidated position of NATO member countries to Ukraine.

Today in the morning during the exhibition in the arsenal I stopped by one poster, poster which, from Bucharest Summit 2008 when NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia Euro Atlantic aspiration for membership in NATO, and also we agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO, today we made clear that Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership. I do hope that after almost nine years that past from Bucharest Summit when in Bucharest declaration it was clearly, clearly written that Ukraine will become a members of NATO. Today Ukrainian soldiers are protecting also NATO and NATO members from Russian aggression. So actually my very straight questions.

Ukraine also seeks or strive for more ambitious partnership and I hope that this visit, this is a start of a real dialogue about the membership action plan and also this is the first step for other membership. I think that Russian aggression against Ukraine is not a limited factor for joining, for Ukraine to NATO. I think this is extra benefit that Ukrainian Army was in this three and a half years of war by everyday practice and countering Russian aggression. So my question is very direct, when you will consider the membership action plan? And I think that Russian aggression is not the limited factor and actually this is really important for our society because there is a strongest support of this. Thank you.

Moderator: [Interpreted]: Thank you. Deputy Head of the Parliamentary Committee for European Integration Maria Ionova. Ms. Ionova please.

Maria Ionova (Deputy Head of the Parliamentary Committee for European Integration, Ukraine): Members of the North Atlantic Council, first of all I would like to thank you for supporting Ukraine in this difficult time. For the awareness of tasks and mission of our country on the borders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and respectively for understanding the need of, for effective cooperation between Ukraine and NATO member in the coming years. And of course we highly appreciate you name a problem as it is and your public position is really very strong in principle and we take it as a position of the North Atlantic Council. We are aware that not all members, member states are unanimous regarding the vision of the NATO support for Ukraine as well as regarding the membership perspective but at the same time the world is witnessing feats and victories of our nation and its soldiers in the name of common values and principles for all of us.

And that is why my questions are, today the president, today President of Ukraine made a statement with regard to NATO membership action plan in 2020, given the plan is not a ticket for membership shouldn't, shouldn't membership action plan be guaranteed for Ukraine earlier? And my second question is how NATO can help us to fight for liberation of hostages appealing to Russia Federation? Because there are 132 hostages in control by Russians territory Donbass, 10 political hostages in Russian Federation and 30 Crimea Tartars also. Thank you.

Moderator: [Interpreted]: Dear colleagues thank you for your questions. We give the floor to the Secretary General Stoltenberg for answering the questions from the MPs.

Jens Stoltenberg (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much for the comments and the questions and let me briefly respond to them. First to the first question from Mr. Pashynsky I would like to say that I will pay and NATO pays great tribute to all those Ukrainian soldiers who have served and many have paid the ultimate price in Donbass fighting the aggression against Ukraine. And that's also the reason why we continue to provide direct support for you, not least in helping you to modernise and strengthen your armed forces. Partly by modernising your defence and security institutions but also with 10 trust funds which have allocated around \$48 million euros for different activities on logistics, on command and control, on medical rehabilitation and also on cyber defences.

On top of what NATO provides in direct support through the trust funds and through the different programs of course we also encourage NATO allies to provide support on the bilateral level. So the total support from NATO is partly what NATO as an alliance provides but also very much what NATO allies provide within bilateral arrangements and bilateral support programs. All of this makes a big difference and all of this has helped you to modernise and improve the quality of your forces and I think there is a very strong link between modernising the armed forces as such but at the same time highlighting the importance of implementing reforms of your defence and security institutions including civilian democratic control over the armed forces. This is for NATO two sides of the same coin.

Then you asked me about weapons. Well NATO as an alliance does not possess weapons or equipment so this is not for NATO as an alliance. But of course NATO allies have equipment and different weapons. I know that there are talks going on between Ukraine and some NATO allies on this issue and I also discussed it with the president earlier today, the question of weapons based on the bilateral consultations and talks which are going on.

Then Madam Hopko, you asked me ... first of all you referred to the exhibition and I think the exhibition we inaugurated this morning illustrates that, and demonstrates that our partnership has lasted actually for more than 20 years, we are celebrating the distinctive partnership, the 20 years of distinctive partnership today but actually we had the partnership also before that and NATO has been there and especially after 2014 we have significantly stepped up our support both politically and our practical support. I think actually both the question from you and also from the last speaker, Madam Ionova, was related to membership and the membership issue and the question of MAP so I will answer that together.

For NATO it is an absolute and fundamental principle that every nation has the right to choose its own path including whether it wants to be member of a security arrangement, an alliance or not. We respect the decision when they decide to be neutral countries or when they decide to try to strive for membership in an alliance and of course also if a nation decides to strive for membership in NATO. Then it is a decision by 29 allies and the applicant country whether there's going to be membership or not. An important message today from me is that no one else, no other country, no one outside the 28 [sic] allies and the applicant country, the country which is striving for membership, has the right to decide on that. What we have seen with Montenegro is that NATO's door is open, we pursue an open door policy.

At the same time what I think that Montenegro has taught us is that it requires a lot of reform, it requires a lot of effort and it requires that NATO standards are met. So I think that the decision of Ukraine now to focus on reforms, to refocus on strengthening your security institutions, to fight corruption, to modernise, that is exactly the right focus and especially

because you are also focusing how can you meet NATO standards, how can you increase interoperability because all of that is important and good for NATO, good for Ukraine regardless of membership. Because the more you modernise, the more you succeed in the fight against corruption, the more you are able to meet NATO standards, the more you are able to interoperate, meaning work together with NATO soldiers, the better it is for Ukraine even outside NATO and the better it is for NATO regardless of whether Ukraine becomes a member of NATO or not later on.

But at the same time it makes you move closer to NATO and therefore my message is that be focused on reform, be focused on meeting NATO standards, be focused on the fight against corruption, that's the best thing you can do and that's the best thing you can also do to move closer to the NATO alliance. You have the tools and we have the tools with a annual national program, with the comprehensive package to further strengthen our cooperation and to do more together. So we have the frameworks, we have the tools, I think our common challenge is to fill the tools, the comprehensive package, the annual national program with as much content and as much activities as possible.

That's for NATO but it's also very much up to you and all NATO allies to provide the necessary resources and the contributions to the comprehensive package and our cooperation programs. So once again thank you so much for having me, thank you so much for letting me speak to the Rada and I really appreciate the very close and good cooperation we have between NATO and Ukraine. Thank you.

Source: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_146017.htm?selectedLocale=en