

# DOORSTEP STATEMENT BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG AHEAD OF THE MEETINGS OF NATO MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN BRUSSELS

*04. December 2018*

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So good morning.

Today and tomorrow, NATO's Foreign Ministers will meet and address a wide range of issues of importance for our shared security.

We will address Russia destabilizing behaviour, we recently saw how Russia used military force against Ukrainian vessels and arrested the ships and the sailors and we call on Russia to immediately release the ships and the sailors.

We are also concerned about the new Russia missile system which puts the INF Treaty in jeopardy.

It's urgent that Russia ensures full compliance in a transparent and verifiable way. Because the INF Treaty is so important for our security.

We will also discuss the challenges we see emanating from the South. Our partnerships, our work with different countries in North Africa and Middle East.

And also the training mission we have started in Iraq.

We will also discuss the Western Balkans.

And we welcome the progress that Skopje's making moving towards full membership of NATO.

So this will be a meeting with a lot of substance and many important topics to be addressed.

**Q)** Inaudible.

**Secretary General:** We will meet the Foreign Minister of Georgia in a meeting later on today. We will there express our strong support to Georgia, to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. Allies also provide not only political support but also practical support to Georgia. So I look forward to the meeting and I look forward to meeting the Foreign Minister of Georgia.

**Q)** Can Ukraine expect help from NATO if Russia begin open attack on Ukraine?

**Secretary General:** All Allies and NATO provide strong political support and strong practical support to Ukraine. Ukraine is not a NATO member but we strongly support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We also call on Russia to release the sailors and the ships they have seized. NATO Allies will also continue to help modernise and strengthen the

Ukrainian armed forces. NATO is also helping with different trust funds on cyber, on command and control and we also help to modernise the Ukrainian navy. Then I think we also have to remember that because of the aggressive actions of Russia against Ukraine, illegally annexing Crimea, destabilizing eastern Ukraine and now we have also seen what they have tried to do in the Sea of Azov. NATO has implemented the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War, with higher readiness of our armed forces, with combat battalions in the eastern part of the Alliance. Allies are also now investing more in defence. NATO Allies are strengthening our collective defence as a direct response to what we have seen Russia has done against Ukraine.

**Q) 1TV:** Tomorrow Afghanistan will also be discussed. Considering the regional dimensions of the peace process in Afghanistan and the insecurity, is there any chance that NATO is going to contribute with Russia and Iran in order to create the foundation for a sustainable peace process in Afghanistan?

**Secretary General:** So NATO strongly supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. Therefore we also welcome the initiative taken by President Ghani. We welcome the fact that we had a ceasefire this summer. And also the offer by Ghani to sit down with the Taliban and have unconditional peace talks. NATO is there to create a foundation for a political solution, because we train, assist and advise the Afghan security forces, armed forces, to send a clear message to the Taliban that they will never win on the battlefield. So they have to sit down at the negotiating table and engage in a real peace negotiation with the government. And of course we expect all powers, countries in the region, including Russian and Iran, to support this Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and play a constructive role.

**Q) Mitra:** Afghans are concerned about the negotiations with the Taliban, because they feel that the achievements which were gained over the last 16 years might be compromised. How does the peace process look from the perspective of NATO? What would be the red lines for NATO regarding the peace talks with the Taliban?

**Secretary General:** We strongly believe in a political settlement and a peace process which is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. And therefore it's not for NATO to set specific red lines. It's for those sitting around the negotiating table. But we support the Afghans. We also welcome the progress we have seen in Afghanistan when it comes to women's rights, democracy. And we continue to provide support to the Afghan government to modernise its institutions and strengthen its democratic processes.

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Source: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_161106.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_161106.htm?selectedLocale=en)