

Saturday 29 May 2010 - Summary of the meeting of the Science and Technology Committee

Hall C, Kipsala International Exhibition Centre
Riga, Latvia

I. Introduction

1. The Committee Chairman, Michael Mates (UK), opened the meeting. The draft agenda [130 STC 10 E Rev. 1] and the summary of the meeting of the Science and Technology Committee held in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, on Saturday 14 November 2009 [235 STC 09 E], were adopted without modification. The Chairman welcomed the comments of the NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council on the Policy Recommendations adopted in 2009 by the NATO PA [091 SESP 09 E].

II. Presentation by Vaira Vike-Freiberga, former President of the Republic of Latvia, ViceChair of the Reflection Group on the Future of the European Union, on West and Russia-Reset Policy and Energy Security. View from the Baltics

2. Mrs Vike-Freiberga pointed out that the wide range of energy situations amongst the different Allied countries was a reason for having more solidarity, not less. Some may be selfsufficient, but others rely on a single supplier for their energy needs. Members should not let their different energy situations obscure the common values and principles that should bind the Alliance.

3. Statements from Moscow indicate that Russia intends to use its energy and other economic assets to increase its political influence over some of its most vulnerable neighbours. According to Vike-Freiberga, a single NATO policy should be established to coordinate the different Allies' priorities, to ensure that the Alliance can "sing the same tune" from the "many different mouths," especially with regard to relations with Russia.

4. Bilateral initiatives could be counterproductive and dangerous in the long term. The more appropriate route, she argued, would be to create a genuine common European energy market. Particular attention should be paid to linking the different gas and electricity grids across European NATO countries.

5. In the discussion that followed, a delegate from Norway indicated the greater role Russia would play in the field of energy security in the future, and he therefore saw the need to work more closely with the Eastern neighbour. Furthermore, questions were raised on how an improved grid system could be established in Europe and what a better NATO strategy on the issue of energy security would look like.

6. In her answers, Mrs Vike-Freiberga pointed to the high level of instability that oil and gas resources could cause to transmission countries such as Ukraine. She agreed with a delegate from the European Parliament on the need to diversify the energy supply. The pettiness of single countries could put the whole Alliance in danger, she reiterated. Besides, she found it shocking that Allies sometimes took far-ranging decisions without previous discussions amongst each other. Finally, Mrs Vike-Freiberga appealed to delegates to act now and to abolish short-term thinking, especially when elections were approaching.

III. Consideration of the draft report of the Sub-Committee on Energy and Environmental Security A Sustainable Energy Strategy for the Alliance [060 STCEES 10E] by Philippe Vitel (France), Rapporteur

7. Philippe Vitel (FR) began his introductory remarks by affirming that in order to guarantee its member countries' security, the Alliance must take an interest in energy security. Nevertheless, a specific role hasn't yet been agreed upon. The Rapporteur then presented an overview of his report in three main parts.

8. Firstly, the issue of energy dependency. While energy demand in NATO and non-NATO countries has significantly increased since WWII, there are only a small number of suppliers. Mr Vitel therefore warned of the potential risks related to the cut-off of energy supplies, as recently illustrated by the oil and gas conflicts between Russia and Belarus, and Russia and Ukraine, respectively. Besides, the economies of the Alliance have clearly relied too heavily on fossil fuels, having devastating effects on the environment.

9. Mr Vitel told the Assembly it was time for NATO countries to rethink their energy policies, given the situation exposed in the first part of his presentation. In the short term, these economies will continue to rely on fossil fuels. As a consequence, it is indispensable to diversify energy supply (the shale gas reserves found in Poland constitute an interesting option), while making sure that environmental damages are kept to a minimum. According to Mr Vitel, improved technologies such as Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) are interesting transitory solutions in this regard. More importantly, more needs to be done to create more environmentally friendly economies. Energy efficiency is probably the easiest and cheapest way to address the issues of energy security and climate change. Besides, Mr Vitel also encouraged the Assembly to closely read the report's chapter on improved nuclear technologies (e.g. ITER) and green technologies, which are much-needed sustainable options for the future.

10. Thirdly, Mr Vitel claimed that NATO has a role to play in the realm of energy and environmental security, specifically as a platform for transatlantic dialogue. The Rapporteur went on to warn that NATO countries need to make sure not to duplicate efforts made by the EU in creating a common energy policy. He then added that NATO could set up a Centre of excellence for energy security (similar to the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Estonia). NATO could also provide, when needed, assistance to the protection of infrastructure such as oil and LNG tankers, and search and rescue operations in the event of an oil spill, for instance.

11. Members from several NATO nations took the floor to discuss the draft report. Rafael Roman (ES) notably welcomed Mr Vitel's conclusions on the necessity not to duplicate the EU's efforts in this domain. He then added that the Centre of excellence for good practices and training suggested by the Rapporteur needs to be conducted jointly with the EU, simply because the EU has more expertise and funds in this regard. Lord Jopling (UK) agreed that this idea is fairly controversial, after having congratulated Mr Vitel for the draft report's study of new green technologies. Pierre Claude Nolin (CA) also took the floor to note that people should look at the bigger picture in Alberta: the environmental damage is, according to him, minimal compared to the economic opportunities created by oil and gas extraction in the region. Finally, Bato-Zhargal Zhambalnimbuev (RU) said that real steps have been taken in Moscow to promote global energy security in a responsible and cooperative fashion, including a bilateral agreement with Ukraine on the transit of gas.

IV. Presentation by Michael Ruehle, Head, Speechwriting, and Senior Political Advisor in the NATO Secretary General's Policy Planning Unit, on Strengthening the Global Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime

12. Michael Ruehle stressed that his speech presented his personal view, not NATO's official view. He began by asking delegates to focus more on political and practical solutions, rather than just contemplating what would need to be done in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Global Zero, the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, he said, has gained momentum and moved from an erstwhile fringe position into the centre of the current security debate. Proliferation would remain a high priority for a long time to come.

13. Firstly, Mr Ruehle presented a summary of the emerging proliferation landscape. He welcomed that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference had resulted in a common document the previous evening, re-emphasizing the fundamental bargain between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. Since the NPT was a product of the 1960s, it needed to be updated, e.g. by establishing more intrusive inspections, and to be complemented, e.g. by a fissile material cut-off treaty or the internationalization of uranium enrichment. He reiterated that an effective non-proliferation policy would need to reach beyond strengthening the NPT and include more factors.

14. According to him, the following developments reinforced the need to establish further measures to counter nuclear proliferation. Firstly, the diffusion of technology and technical progress commercialised the trade with many components and allowed non-nuclear weapon states to access the "nuclear market". Secondly, the rising number of countries with civilian programmes would grow and indicate a new quest for civilian nuclear power. Although most of them would not deliberately seek a nuclear military option, they could be ready to convert their civilian nuclear programmes into military ones at very short notice. Finally, the "cascading" effect of the nuclear programmes of specific nations (such as Iran) in certain regions was another development that had an impact on the direction and speed of proliferation.

15. Secondly, Mr Ruehle spoke about the elements of a future nuclear order and, in doing so, valued the NPT as a central framework for non-proliferation. Due to its flaws, he expected, however, that the world would have to live with an imperfect treaty. Dealing with proliferators would continue to vary and largely remain outside the Treaty's provision. The UN Security Council would become the focal setting for dealing with proliferators, but self help and coercive measures would become an accepted tool in that process, he suggested. Finally, Mr Ruehle stressed the growing relevance of nuclear security assurances and the United States' crucial role therein.

16. Thirdly, Mr Ruehle identified the implications for NATO, which he qualified as a nuclear Alliance that acknowledged the war-prevention aspects of nuclear deterrence. He expected the renewed focus on non-proliferation to trigger difficulties for Alliance cohesion in the short run. He thought it would be crucial to prevent the discussion within the Alliance from degenerating into a politically or morally charged battle between the nuclear and non-nuclear states.

17. After being asked by a French delegate whether Mr Ruehle expected Israel to take part in a conference on a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East, he judged Israeli participation as unlikely. He said that denuclearisation could not happen until the regional issues had been resolved.

18. The Chairman suggested changing the order of the agenda, since the next speaker, the General Rapporteur, had not yet arrived. Accordingly, points 9 to 11 of the draft agenda were brought forward.

V. Consideration of the draft Special report Climate Change: Post-Copenhagen Challenges [061 STC 10E] by Pierre-Claude Nolin (Canada), Special Rapporteur

19. Mr Nolin began his introductory remarks by stressing that the global climate change response effort finds itself at a critical juncture. Several recent developments have reduced our optimism that the international community will tackle this challenge in a concerted and comprehensive manner, specifically the global economic crisis, the mistakes found in the 2007 IPPC report (or so-called 'climategate'), and the ongoing confrontation between the industrialised and developing worlds in the climate negotiations. On top of that, this increasing scepticism comes at a time when the international community is discussing how to

replace the Kyoto Protocol, which will expire in 2012.

20. The Rapporteur insisted that while human mistakes sometimes occur, even in respected scientific documents such as the 2007 IPCC report, the central tenets of climate science have stood up to scrutiny. The concentration of CO₂ in our atmosphere has risen by roughly one-third since the 18th century. If unchecked, this concentration could more than double before the end of this century. According to physical laws, the doubling of greenhouse gas concentration would increase the global average temperature by roughly six degrees Celsius.

21. Mr Nolin then turned to the issue of climate diplomacy. He stressed the shift of paradigm that occurred at the Copenhagen summit: instead of an international system of emission targets for each country under the aegis of the United Nations, the Copenhagen framework leaves it up to each nation to decide the amount that they contribute.

22. Finally, the Rapporteur acknowledged that the world is facing a dilemma with regard to climate change. According to him, it is too early to give up on hopes of an ambitious and universal climate pact. There are several reasons to doubt that the above-mentioned alternatives will be as effective. The development of low-carbon technologies, even if heavily subsidized, will take many years to have an effect on a global scale. On the other hand, he stressed that action on emissions is needed now.

23. During the discussion, Mr Nolin recognised that his report was realistic rather than idealistic and insisted that the international community lacks sufficient leadership and willingness to act.

VI. Consideration of the draft General Report Nuclear/WMD Proliferation and Missile Defense: Forging a New Partnership with Russia [059 STC 10 E] by David Scott (United States), General Rapporteur

24. In a report focused on Russia, David Scott (US) explained that the Committee could best contribute with its expertise on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Moreover, this was the area, he said, where the West and Russia traditionally found a common ground and from which cooperation patterns might be transferred to more sensitive political areas. He underlined his dedication to tangible and pragmatic forms of co-operation.

25. Mr Scott sees Global Zero as an inspiring concept that could represent a sense of direction, although it is unlikely to be implemented in the near future. Unless two preconditions are met. Firstly, the nuclear non-proliferation regime would have to be robust enough to ensure that no new nations or non-state actors could develop or acquire nuclear weapons. Secondly, the Alliance would need effective missile defence systems as a last line of defence against breaches of the non-proliferation regime. Mr Scott considered nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as two sides of the same coin, as laid out in the NPT.

26. With regard to nuclear disarmament, Mr Scott underlined the importance of the recently concluded START Treaty between the United States and Russia. He stressed that the US had made other steps that were consistent with Global Zero, e.g. the disclosure of the precise number of the United States' nuclear weapons.

27. In terms of nuclear non-proliferation, Mr Scott stressed that the West and Russia had a common interest in curtailing ambiguous nuclear programs such as the Iranian one. Both Russia and the West ascribed high importance, for instance, to making the Additional Protocol mandatory or to ensuring that no NPT member could easily withdraw from the Treaty. Both sides had to work together to counter the Iranian nuclear challenge, firstly through dialogue and, if rejected, by agreeing on effective sanctions. Apart from the NPT, Mr Scott planned to focus more on efforts that both sides could make in other non-proliferation initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative or the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Finally, he also judged biological and chemical non-proliferation as key elements of a new partnership with Russia.

28. In the field of missile defence, Mr Scott strongly urged his Russian colleagues to reconsider their opposition to the proposals. In fact, a missile defence system in Europe represented a unique opportunity for mutually beneficial co-operation. The anti-missile system to be installed in Europe would not pose any threat to Russia's nuclear deterrent. Mr Scott pointed out that the revised missile defence plan proposed by President Barak Obama, in particular, would be less controversial, since it would be installed closer to the Middle East than envisioned in former plans.

29. In sum, Mr Scott judged that the joint effort of the Euro-Atlantic community and Russia to pursue Global Zero through disarmament, the strengthening of the WMD non-proliferation regime and the development of anti-missile shields would constitute a promising way to revisit and improve the Alliance's relationship with Russia. Finally, he asked members to consider whether Russia's engagement would be crucial to achieving the Alliance's own objectives, whether both sides had common threat assessments, and in which format co-operation should take place.

30. The Chairman thanked the General Rapporteur and noted that he had recently seen less animosity and suspicion from his Russian colleagues than before. Discussions would lead to solutions. A French delegate asked for greater focus on China and the country's commitment to disarmament, which Mr Scott promised to consider in the report's final version. He added that Russia was as a partner with the necessary capabilities to diffuse difficulties with China. Members from the Russian associate delegation suggested including the issue of outer space in the report and to mention the need for engaging Israel, India and Pakistan in the global disarmament efforts.

VII. Committee and Sub-Committee activities in 2010 and 2011

31. The Committee discussed the visit to the NPT Review Conference in New York, as well as its future activities, including a visit to Ukraine in June-July 2010 (Kyiv, Chernobyl), another one to France (which includes meetings at Airbus, ITER and Eurocopter) and the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on 'Environmental Security in the Arctic Ocean', in October 2010, at the University of Cambridge, UK.

32. The Chairman thanked the participants and closed the last meeting of his successful term. The Committee members warmly thanked him for his contribution and expressed their regrets for his departure.

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.