



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

INFORMAL NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

1 June 2023

Policy Brief

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INFORMAL NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING,
1 JUNE 2023:
KEY TAKEAWAYS

NATO Foreign Ministers met in Oslo, Norway on 1 June to **discuss key issues in preparation for the upcoming NATO Summit** of Heads of State and Government, which will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania on 11-12 July 2023.

As it was an informal meeting, no decisions were taken, but Allied ministers had the opportunity to openly exchange views on a range of issues relating to the upcoming Summit's agenda and to improve the understanding of where the consensus can be found.

Key issues

- **Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence & defence investment**
- **Stepping up support to Ukraine in the short and long term, including issues of membership and possible security guarantees**
- **Finalising Sweden's accession to NATO**
- **Enhancing relations with Asia-Pacific partners**

Additional notes

- Ahead of the meeting, the Secretary General paid **tribute to the victims and survivors of the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway.**
- In his public remarks the Secretary General also addressed **recent developments in the north of Kosovo**, notably the violence against KFOR personnel.



Photo source: nato.int

I. STRENGTHENING NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE & DEFENCE INVESTMENT

- Ministers discussed **strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence posture, including through increased investment.**
- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted that, at the Vilnius Summit, Allies "will take decisions to further **strengthen our deterrence and defence**".

- Mr Stoltenberg also noted that Allies are expected to agree on a new Defence Investment Pledge. He expected that **spending 2% of GDP on defence would become “a floor, a minimum for what is needed to meet obligations as a NATO Ally”**.
- II. STEPPING UP SUPPORT TO UKRAINE IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERM – UKRAINE’S MEMBERSHIP – SECURITY GUARANTEES**
- The Secretary General noted that the **focus of discussions** during this informal ministerial was **“on how we can bring Ukraine closer to NATO, where it belongs”**.
 - The Secretary General reiterated that “all Allies agree that the most urgent and important task now is to **ensure that Ukraine prevails** as a sovereign independent nation.” According to him, at the Vilnius summit, Allies will discuss “how to sustain and step up the concrete military support to Ukraine, with equipment, with ammunition, with spare parts, with **everything they need to be able to liberate more land**”.
 - The Secretary General welcomed the fact that, over the last months and weeks, Allies have stepped up the deliveries of **heavy armour, modern battle tanks**, but also **long range cruise missiles** and will start **training Ukrainian pilots** to fly NATO standard aircraft.
 - At the same time, he reiterated that **Allies “will stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes”**. He also stressed that Allies “have the right to support Ukraine without becoming a party to the conflict”, **as Ukraine exercises the right to self-defence**, enshrined in the UN Charter.
 - **Long-term support** to Ukraine was also in focus during the discussions. Mr Stoltenberg announced that the Allies are working on a **multi-year package**, with robust funding, to help rebuild its security and defence sector, to accelerate transition from Soviet-era doctrines, equipment and training and to ensure full interoperability with NATO.
 - Ministers discussed **the idea of upgrading the existing NATO-Ukraine Commission to a new NATO-Ukraine Council**, where all Allies and Ukraine would be sitting at the table as equals to discuss key issues for Euro-Atlantic security.
 - Ministers also discussed **Ukraine’s NATO membership** prospects. The Secretary General reiterated that **“all Allies agree that NATO’s door remains open**. That it is only for Allies and Ukraine to make decisions on membership. **Russia does not have a veto**. And all Allies agree that **Ukraine will become a member of NATO**.”
 - Ministers also discussed **potential long-term security frameworks for Ukraine after the war ends**. In his public remarks, Mr Stoltenberg highlighted that “[w]e don’t know when the war ends. **But we must ensure that, when it does, we have credible arrangements in place to guarantee Ukraine’s security in the future**. And to break Russia’s cycle of aggression.” He made clear that the exact form and details still need to be worked out but that the goal is to “look into what kind of frameworks that we can establish to provide the necessary guarantees that President Putin is not able once again to attack Ukraine”.
 - Discussing the importance of standing with Ukraine for the long term, Mr Stoltenberg noted that the Allies are determined to prove to autocrats that **“democracies are actually able to stand up for their values** and be there when they are needed to defend democracy and freedom as we do when we support Ukraine.” He stressed that **if Putin wins in Ukraine, it would make the world more dangerous** and “send the message that when authoritarian leaders use military force to get what they want, and that also make us more vulnerable.”

- When asked about diplomatic peace initiatives, the Secretary General reiterated that Allies “will leave it to **President Zelenskyy and to the Ukrainians decide the format and the conditions for any peace talks.**”

III. FINALISING SWEDEN’S ACCESSION TO NATO

- The Secretary General reiterated that “**Sweden’s swift accession** will contribute to Alliance security.”
- He noted that Sweden’s **new anti-terrorism laws** that came into force on the day of the meeting demonstrate that “Sweden has delivered on what they committed to do under the Trilateral Memorandum concluded last year in Madrid.”
- He noted that, during the ministers’ meeting, “in general, **Türkiye has expressed that they are supportive of Swedish membership and Türkiye stand by the decision they made together with other Allies to invite Sweden**”.
- Mr Stoltenberg also reiterated that **Türkiye has legitimate security concerns**, that no other Allies has suffered more terrorist attacks than Türkiye and that it remains **important to “work together with Türkiye to fight terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations”**.
- On the **Hungarian parliament’s ratification**, the Secretary General noted that **he was “confident that also Hungary will ratify the Accession Protocol.”** He has had “no indication that [the Hungarians] have changed their position that they will not be the last to ratify so when Türkiye ratifies, I’m absolutely certain –I’m confident that Hungary will do that because they have said it before.”
- Following the ministerial, the Secretary General **travelled to Türkiye on 3-4 June** for the inauguration ceremony for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. During his visit, he discussed Sweden’s accession with President Erdogan. They agreed that the **Permanent Joint Mechanism between Türkiye, Finland, and Sweden should meet again in the week beginning on 12 June**. Mr Stoltenberg said he looked forward to finalising Sweden’s accession as soon as possible.

IV. ENHANCING RELATIONS WITH ASIA-PACIFIC PARTNERS

- The Secretary General stressed the importance of **increasing engagement with Asia-Pacific partners**. He reiterated that “security is not regional, security is global” and added that “**[w]hat happens in Asia matters for Europe and what happens in Europe matters for Asia**, and therefore it is even more important that NATO Allies are strengthening our partnership with our Indo Pacific partners.”
- He announced that **all four partners** (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea) **will attend the Vilnius Summit at the level of heads of state and government**.
- Mr Stoltenberg also announced that, following a request, NATO is looking into the possibility of opening **a liaison office in the region**. (Media has reported that the office could be located in Japan, but the Secretary General did not specify the location in his public remarks).
- In his remarks, the Secretary General condemned the **military satellite launch by North Korea**, noting that “this blatantly violates several UN Security Council resolutions” and “poses serious risks to the security of the region and beyond.” In a statement, he said that “NATO calls on the DPRK to cease these provocative actions and to return to dialogue in order to achieve sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable

denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.” He added “We stand together with our close partners in the region, the Republic of Korea and Japan.”

V. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NORTH OF KOSOVO

- In his public remarks, the Secretary General also addressed **recent developments in the north of Kosovo**. After the “**totally unacceptable**” violence against NATO personnel, NATO has deployed its operational reserve of around 700 additional troops, and Allies are readying an additional reserve force in case it will be needed. He added that the peacekeepers have a clear UN mandate and that “NATO will remain vigilant [and] we will be there to ensure a safe and secure environment and also to calm down and reduce the tensions.”
- **The Allied message to Belgrade and to Pristina remains to engage in good faith in the EU-facilitated dialogue**. It was “the only path to peace but at the same time, NATO has responsibility to ensure stability in Kosovo, and that is reason why we have been there for many years and why we now are increasing our presence in the region.”

VI. TRIBUTE TO THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF THE 22 JULY 2011 TERRORIST ATTACKS IN NORWAY

- Ahead of the Informal Meeting, **the Secretary General paid tribute to the victims and survivors of the 22 July 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway**, praising the resilience of the Norwegian people and the strength of democracy on Wednesday. He noted that “[t]here is a line between Utøya and Ukraine [...] between a brutal act of terrorism and an illegal war of aggression.”
- He added that “[w]e will not let authoritarian states break down the rules-based international order. We will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. And we will not let terrorists crush our free and open societies. We will stand united to protect our values and our people”.

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