



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

3-4 April 2024

Policy Brief

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NATO FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING, 3-4 APRIL 2024:
KEY TAKEAWAYS

NATO Foreign Ministers met in Brussels from 3 to 4 April 2024 to **mark NATO's 75th anniversary** and to **prepare for the NATO Summit in Washington DC (9-11 July)**.

Ministers celebrated the 75th anniversary of NATO in a private event on 3 April and in a public ceremony at NATO Headquarters on 4 April. The ceremony at NATO Headquarters also **commemorated the anniversaries of the 1999, 2004 and 2009 enlargements**.

Two additional meetings took place on 4 April:

- **a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council in Foreign Ministers' Session and**
- **a meeting of Allied Foreign Ministers with their counterparts from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea, together with the European Union.**

Agenda

- **enhancing short- and long-term support to Ukraine**
- **threats and challenges from the South**
- **the global implications of Russia's war**

Decisions

- **Ministers agreed to examine a greater role for NATO and assuming more responsibility for coordinating security assistance and training** and tasked the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) with developing a proposal.
- **Ministers agreed a new policy on Women, Peace and Security.**

I. NATO'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

- Allied ministers **celebrated the 75th anniversary of NATO**, founded in Washington on 4 April 1949, in a private event on 3 April as well as in a public ceremony at NATO Headquarters on 4 April.
- Addressing the significance of the Treaty, the Secretary General said: "Never has a single document with so few words, meant so much to so many people. So much security, so much prosperity, and so much peace."
- The ceremony at NATO Headquarters also **commemorated the anniversaries of the 1999, 2004 and 2009 enlargements**.
- **NATO PA Vice-President Theo Francken (Belgium) participated in these commemorations**, representing President Michal Szczerba and the Assembly.
- **President Szczerba released a [video message](#), based on the [statement adopted by the Standing Committee](#) at its meeting in Tallinn on 24 March.**
- **[In his statement](#)**, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reiterated the importance of the unique transatlantic bond binding NATO Allies together: "I do not believe in America alone. Just as I don't believe in Europe alone. I believe in America and Europe together. In NATO. Because, we are stronger and safer together."
- Chairman of the Military Committee **[Admiral Rob Bauer in turn stressed](#)** that: "Together, we are protecting much more than physical safety. We are collectively defending freedom and democracy."

- [NATO's 75th anniversary webpage](#), unveiled this week, includes a broad array of resources about NATO's history and achievements. Delegations have also received a social media toolkit from the International Secretariat, with a host of resources and events to highlight the Alliance's shared history, achievements and future.

II. SHORT- AND LONG-TERM SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

- At a serious and critical moment for Ukraine on the battlefield, **Allied Foreign Ministers discussed how to step up support immediately and to put in place long-term support measures, underpinned by financial commitments.**
- On 4 April, **a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council in Foreign Ministers' Session** took place, which addressed the current situation and Ukraine's short- and long-term needs.
- The NATO Secretary General stressed the "unity of purpose" among Allies on these matters. He also made clear that, for the war to end, it was necessary that the Russian leaders "understand that they cannot achieve their goals on the battlefield and they cannot wait us out". They would have to come to the negotiation table.

Urgent Support to Ukraine

- The Secretary General noted that **Allies had to shift the dynamics of their support**, as Russia is pressing across the frontlines and has stepped up strikes against Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure: "Any delay in providing support has consequences on the battlefield as we speak." He underlined that "Ukrainians are not running out of courage, they are running out of ammunition."
- In the days ahead of the ministerial meeting, **Allies had once again committed substantial military packages:**
 - **Finland** has announced another EUR 188 million military support package.
 - **France** has announced deliveries of additional missiles and armoured vehicles.
 - **Germany** had announced that it would support a Czech initiative to procure ammunition with EUR 576 million.
 - **Sweden** has pledged to deliver another 800,000 artillery shells under the Czech initiative.
 - **The United Kingdom** has promised 10,000 uncrewed aerial vehicles.
- In response to a question on **the urgency of enhancing Ukraine's air defences**, the NATO Secretary General noted that "Allies will now go back and look into their inventories" to "provide more systems, in particular Patriots" as well as to increase the flow of air defence ammunition and spare parts.
- Asked about **additional US support**, the Secretary General noted that a large majority of the US Congress, on a bipartisan basis, as well as of the US public was in favour of increasing support to Ukraine, but that the challenge was now to turn this "into a concrete decision."

Long-term security assistance and training

- **Allied Foreign Ministers agreed to examine a greater role for NATO and assuming more responsibility for coordinating security assistance and training.**
- **They tasked the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) with developing a proposal for a framework**, which Allies could consider in the run-up to the Washington Summit. Among other, this new proposal should ensure fair burdensharing among Allies and make military support to Ukraine:
 - stronger organisationally and institutionalised;
 - more transparent in order to enable proper political oversight;

- more reliable and predictable;
 - more efficient and effective;
 - more enduring and robust; and
 - less dependent on voluntary short-term offers and more based on long-term NATO commitments with multi-year pledges.
- The Secretary General noted that “NATO Allies provide 99 percent of all military support to Ukraine.” NATO is also already part of the US-led Ramstein group, with a dedicated NATO subgroup.
 - **The Secretary General underlined that the meeting “set the stage for achieving consensus”** ahead of the July NATO Summit.
 - **Allies have also begun discussions on a multi-year financial commitment** to underpin the long-term effort to support Ukraine. When asked about a purported proposal for USD 100 billion dedicated over a five-year period, as reported in the media ahead of the meeting, the Secretary General declined to address specific aspects under discussions.
 - NATO has also already **begun to transform the Comprehensive Assistance Package into a multi-year programme.**

Ukraine’s path towards NATO

- The Secretary General underlined that **Allies “are supporting Ukraine’s reform efforts to bring Ukraine ever closer to the Alliance.”** He reiterated that “Ukraine will become a member of NATO. It is a question of when, not if.”
- The Secretary General was asked about “some kind of invitation [...] where Ukraine is a candidate country but not a member yet”. He argued that, **after the removal of the need for a Membership Action Plan at the 2023 NATO Summit, “it’s very important to maintain the one step process for Ukraine”** and not introduce another two-step process. He noted the difference between the European Union, where accession processes can take years after invitations, and NATO, where accessions should happen rapidly after invitation.

III. THREATS AND CHALLENGES FROM THE SOUTH

- Foreign Ministers addressed **security challenges in the Alliance’s Southern neighbourhood**, including the enduring threat of terrorism.
- They reviewed **the findings of the independent group of experts appointed by the Secretary General in October 2023** to support NATO’s reflection on the South. The report, which the experts are expected to make public, proposes concrete recommendations to shape NATO’s approach to its southern neighbourhood – particularly the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions, including opportunities for further cooperation with partner nations, international organisations and other relevant actors.
- The Secretary General will now present concrete proposals to Allies. **The aim is to agree a set of measures to strengthen NATO’s approach to its Southern neighbourhood in time for the NATO Summit in Washington in July.**
- Asked during one of the press conferences about the **situation in Gaza**, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg replied: “So what we see now in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe. We see suffering, we see that civilians are killed, and we also saw the strike against aid workers. And I condemn the strike. I also welcome the fact that Israel has made clear that they will investigate what happened. It demonstrates that the war which is now going on has very serious consequences for innocent people: the people living in Gaza, but also aid workers. And therefore I welcome the efforts by the United Kingdom, by the United States and by many other Allies to facilitate some kind of

ceasefire and a political solution to this conflict. NATO as an Alliance does not play a direct role, but I welcome the efforts of NATO Allies.”

IV. THE GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIA’S WAR

- Allied Foreign Ministers met with their counterparts from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea, together with the European Union, to discuss the **global implications of Russia’s war against Ukraine, including the support for Russia from China, Iran and North Korea.**
- The Foreign Ministers affirmed their determination to stand united to defend the rules-based global order. As the NATO Secretary General put it, this is about “sending a very clear message to Moscow and to Beijing that actually we see what they do and we see how authoritarian powers are now more and more aligned. And that makes it just more important that democratic like-minded states, nations are working together.”
- Ministers also discussed how to **enhance practical cooperation between NATO and these four Indo-Pacific partners** notably on technology, cyber, hybrid threats and defence industrial production.
- Commenting on the importance of engaging with Indo-Pacific partners, the NATO Secretary General stressed: “this is not about making NATO a global Alliance”, but “**what happens in the Indo-Pacific matters for Europe and what happens in Europe matters for the Indo-Pacific.** The war in Ukraine demonstrates that very clearly. Because we see how China is propping up the Russian war economy, delivering dual-capable equipment which is also used in the Russian military industry. In return, Moscow is mortgaging its future to Beijing. And then we see how Iran and North Korea are delivering ammunition, missiles, drones to Russia. And then in return, Russia is delivering technology for missile and nuclear programmes of these countries.”

V. OTHER ISSUES

- During their meeting, Ministers agreed a **new policy on Women, Peace and Security.**
- Asked about **the Georgian ruling party’s plans to reintroduce to reintroduce a “Transparency of Foreign Influence” law, which it had pledged to “unconditionally withdraw” after mass protests and strong international reactions,**, the NATO Secretary General noted: “I oppose any attempt by the Georgian government to reintroduce the draft legislation on foreign agents or foreign influence, because this will actually contradict the whole effort of strengthening the democratic institutions in Georgia. And Georgia should work on reforms to move closer to NATO and to move closer to the European Union. And therefore also the European Union has been very clear on this. I visited Georgia, Tbilisi, just a few weeks ago. And, of course, one of my main messages was the importance of reforms, of strengthening democratic institutions. And the Georgian people have also made it clear that they want a democratic prosperous future within the European and Euro-Atlantic family. So any law that introduced this idea of foreign agent, that I’m also afraid will actually have an impact for a lot of media outlets, operating also internationally but also then in Georgia, will undermine the whole idea of making Georgia a stronger democratic society.”