



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER  
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## **SACT's Intervention at the MC Conference**

**Split, 17 September 2016**

**As delivered**

**Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER**

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Thank you very much Petr.

Messieurs les chefs d'état-major,

As we have discussed during the first session, Warsaw laid out an ambitious agenda for the coming years.

Please allow me to share some thoughts with you on this topic, from an ACT perspective.

One of the takeaways from Warsaw – and we have highlighted it this morning – is that the 2010 Strategic Concept remains valid today, and so do the three core tasks it defined for the Alliance: collective defence, projecting stability and cooperative security.

However, these tasks are more overlapping than before, considering our strategic environment. This interdependency is an important factor in our approach to coherence.

The Alliance must rely on appropriate forces, structures, and capabilities that are networked and integrated to address crises – not only now, but also in the future. Put differently, we must ensure that the Alliance maintains its edge in a constantly changing security environment.

From my perspective, when considering coherence, there are several dimensions we have to take into account.

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As a first dimension, we have discussed coherence through the lens of the revision of the MC-400, and of the NCS and the functions it has to fulfil. I absolutely concur with the vision that the NFS, as well as the interactions with other organizations and nations, must be integrated in the functional assessment, as the nations – including our partners – will be involved more than ever before in the resolution of crises.

The second dimension to consider is capability development. We cannot disconnect command and control issues from the delivery of appropriate military capabilities to meet NATO's level of ambition. Regarding the NATO Defence Planning Process, the discussion phase to identify the targets for your nations has just started. Although our objective remains to mitigate shortfalls as early as possible, we know that the development of some capabilities will require time. This is why the enhanced NATO Defence Planning Process should include a longer-term perspective, through a better consideration of the nations' long-term plans (15 to 20 years ahead) – provided that you are willing to share them. One aspect of coherence lies in the connection of your national plans and the Alliance's long-term direction of travel.

In this regard, I invite you to send your long-term planning experts to the next Chiefs of Transformation Conference (COTC) that ACT will hold in December. During this conference, we will use a scenario-based discussion set in 2030, with vignettes related to high-intensity warfare, in order to foster our thinking on the potential game-changers in the mid-to-long term.

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This brings me to the third dimension of coherence. Yes, we must implement the decisions taken in Warsaw, but there is a need to link short-term and long-term adaptation. ACT has identified six areas where we believe the most important military game-changers will be in the next fifteen to twenty years: C2, logistics and sustainability, partnerships, training and exercises, capabilities, and human capital.

Why fifteen to twenty years? Because that is approximately the timeline when capabilities being currently planned will enter into service – for example, the Alliance Future Surveillance and Control Capability, the AFSC. This is the future replacement of the AWACS, and it is scheduled to enter into service in 2035. This time horizon led us to reflect on the surveillance and control functions, and to study different possible architectures and options, before we can decide on the capability to meet the requirements.

Let me expand on another example, C4ISTAR. NATO has been developing the Federated Mission Network to enhance our interoperability, but this standard is still focused on land systems. We need to study how we can, in the future, build a federated network that integrates all domains (land, sea, air, space and cyber) and goes beyond to networking with partners and international organizations. This network approach will contribute to shape the future Command and Control architectures, which will have an impact on our future capabilities, and must be considered in the NCS functional review.

Regarding coherence, these examples illustrate the need to identify the potential breakthroughs likely to change the nature of warfare in the 15 to 20

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years ahead, to define a longer-term vision in our military intent integrating a global environment, and to bridge our short-term priorities with this perspective. I will include your NLRs working in ACT in these studies, to ensure that our reflections match your priorities. This will take into account resources, without increasing the budget if we are able to innovate in this domain as well – and we have proposals for this.

I will conclude with a quote from Peter Drucker, which I believe summarizes the approach we are taking in the transformational process: “long-range planning does not deal with the future decisions, but with the future of present decisions.”

Thank you for your attention.