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SACT's Keynote Speech to

SMPC

***“Partnerships: A Pillar of Success, Innovation, and
Stability in a World of Change”***

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Final

Général d'armée aérienne Denis MERCIER

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Ambassador,

Admirals, Generals,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure and a privilege for me to take part in this year's Strategic Military Partners Conference that brings together representatives and experts from NATO's broadening partnership community.

Thank you General Nicolae CIUCA for your kind welcome words and for your country hosting this event in the beautiful city of Bucharest, in partnership with NATO Allied Command Transformation.

It is also an opportunity for me to thank Colonel Gabriel PURICE from the Romanian Ministry of Defence for the superb support contributing to the organization of this event. Your very efficient help and collaboration are highly appreciated, and contribute directly to the success of the conference.

Thank you to all subject matter experts for participating in yesterday's syndicate sessions focussed on partnerships in the Global Commons of Maritime, Air, Space, Land, and Cyber domains.

We just heard from Rear Admiral Peter Gumataotao that these sessions were highly successful and delivered very relevant findings that will inform and further contribute to today's plenary discussions.

But first, allow me to share some thoughts with you.



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The changed and evolving security environment demands the ability to meet challenges and threats of any kind and from any direction. Indeed, the increasingly complex and evolving security environment has a 360 degree dimension, not only geographically speaking but also in terms of the wide range of actors and threats involved in potential crises.

The lines between peacetime, crisis and conflict are progressively blurred. Crises can mix state and non-state actors, including terrorist groups or organized crime. External factors such as the easy access to new technologies, climate change or economic instability deepen the uncertainty and complexity of our security environment.

We can no longer imagine an isolated crisis in one region that doesn't impact the same actors in another region, so crises are becoming increasingly interrelated.

As no single Nation nor organization has all the abilities required to manage these crises on its own, the complexity of this environment requires the involvement of a wider variety of actors and organizations that can work together.

At the Warsaw Summit, this new security environment triggered the Alliance to further adapt its Defence and Deterrence posture.

To remain politically and militarily credible this posture, based on the right mix of conventional, nuclear and missile-defence forces, requires new levels of readiness and responsiveness, to deliver the effects to meet NATO's three core tasks (Collective Defence, Crisis Management and Cooperative Security), laid out in the Strategic Concept.



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Indeed, in the context of this new and continuously evolving environment, the interrelation of crises will generate an overlapping of these three core tasks.

Responsiveness is a key factor for the credibility of the Alliance's posture. It will result from decision making processes, top-down from the highest political level to the tactical level, our ability to deploy and sustain forces, increase interoperability through training and exercises, leverage partnerships with a wide range of actors, invest in the right capabilities and develop our human capital.

It is within these 6 key areas that we need to identify the potential game changing elements and technological breakthroughs for NATO to maintain its military edge to meet challenges and threats of any kind, and from any direction.

This reflects the importance of Partnerships for the credibility of the posture and it clearly affirms Partnerships as an integral part of NATO's transformation.

To translate this into facts, NATO must be ambitious regarding partnerships. Many initiatives are already ongoing like Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Partners Across the Globe, Partnership Interoperability Initiative or Defence Capacity Building initiative. These initiatives have their own structures and internal procedures and are pursuing their goals through agreed practical arrangements.

The Individually Tailored Roadmaps is the first step for a more tailor-made, individual and flexible approach to partnerships. They are designed to



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Simplify, Optimize and Synchronize military partnerships with a longer-term planning horizon. The bottom line is to make the tools for partnerships easier to use.

But beyond existing initiatives, we must recognize that our peace and security increasingly depends on NATO's success in maintaining, expanding and being receptive for a responsive and adaptable network of most divergent partners.

As we live in an era of constant accelerative change in many aspects, including technology, policy and human factors, NATO's advocacy to connect to a full spectrum of partners as part of a large community of likeminded entities, will require a massive network of a yet unseen order of magnitude.

The game changing feature of NATO's partnership community in the future is undoubtedly scale.

Whilst adopting a more tailored approach to current NATO partners, efforts must be made to expand the partnership community, consisting of both traditional and non-traditional partners. This would build on the already existing networks with Nations, Partners and Organizations through their structures in place, enlarged with non-traditional entities such as academia and industries.

Such a wide network of partners would contribute to the Alliance's global situational awareness.



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Situational awareness is an essential building block of NATO's collective security.

Within the scope of hybrid scenarios it is crystal clear that we need to detect and identify early signs of emerging crisis, and timely attribute responsibilities in the response we will give. This is why we need an extended situational network that goes beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

Indeed, NATO's intelligence process is based on a sharing of information in a formalised and secured network environment. Classified information cannot be shared with partners or other organizations without approval of the North Atlantic Council.

To mitigate this problem, we are working on the possibility to develop an early warning system based on open source and publicly available information. This would allow continuous sharing with a wide range of actors and make the maximum use of the Partnership network.

How to ensure this extended situational awareness against the future threats will be discussed more in detail in the 2nd panel.

A wider network of partners would also contribute to the capacity and responsiveness across the spectrum of operations if mutually shared, flexible and adaptable concepts of interoperability could be established.

To meet the challenges posed by the future operating environment, NATO must establish broader Command and Control networks, integrating people, proficiencies and technologies at all levels, from NATO to nations, partners and other organizations.

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To do this we must build an agile, secure and resilient network that supports political-military decision-making to deliver timely effects with an enhanced 360 degrees perspective and an effective “day-zero” mission readiness.

To achieve this, the interoperability of systems is a key factor. The Federated Mission Networking is a standard designed to enable a wide range of actors to be connected together, so that the operational effect of each organization or nation will be greater than the sum of its composing parts.

Panel 1 will further expand on this issue.

So before concluding, let me come back to the ongoing work that is already shaping the conditions for further improvement and development of the way NATO works with Partners.

As mentioned earlier, we have started to work on mechanisms and practices for a more tailored cooperation. NATO is developing a Capstone Concept that will define mechanisms and practices to produce Individually Tailored Roadmaps.

The aim is to streamline the administration of partnerships in NATO, and offer partners an easier way to plan military related activities with the Alliance. The desired outcome is to make the requirements understandable, modular, joint owned, adaptable and measurable, with a commonly agreed baseline that is scalable and affordable.

The development phase of the Capstone Concept for Individually Tailored Roadmaps, is supported by executing and assessing three pilot projects, in

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partnership with Finland, Georgia and Jordan ,that are already offering very valuable lessons for the future.

The desired outcome is the development of a 3 to 5 years comprehensive plan with these partners.

But from my perspective, we could be more ambitious and analyse how we could – through a broader framework – better integrate Defence Capacity Building with Individually Tailored Roadmaps, as well as other Partnership initiatives, in a more comprehensive approach.

It is important that we continue to streamline as much as we can all partnership activities using a modular structure that can assemble all areas of cooperation with Partner nations in a "win-win" configuration.

This would be particularly relevant for nations such as Afghanistan or Iraq, to offer longer-term perspectives through a robust partnership with NATO.

I would also propose that this comprehensive approach could form the basis for further exchange with other international organizations with the aim to share the same modules and avoid duplication of efforts when dealing with the same partners.

Despite the complexity of the strategic environment, the remaining uncertainties and the high pace of technological innovation both present challenges as well as new opportunities. So we can use these new opportunities offered by Partnership activities to build on common grounds, and to enhance connectivity and improve continuous awareness.

To conclude.

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We live in a moment of profound accelerative change in every sector of human endeavour. This is an era when no single nation or actor dominates the sphere of international security. In response, nations and international organizations, or NATO must foster partnerships that both reflect the scope of emerging security challenges and are capable of sustaining political and operational advantages amidst change and uncertainty.

Our peace and security increasingly depend on NATO's success in maintaining, expanding and being receptive for a responsive and adaptable network of most divergent partners.

Thank you for your attention.