

Introductory remarks by SACT at the NATO Transformation Seminar 2014

Topic: Issues at stake for the Alliance transformation

Mr. Secretary General, Ministers, Ambassadors, General Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should, first of all, like to thank you all for your presence here today at this Nato transformation seminar, as it represents the best testimony of satisfaction for those who, in Norfolk, Brussels and Paris, invested their time to orchestrate this event, that I thank as well today. It is worth highlighting the opportunity that represents this forum in the perspective of the upcoming Summit in September, when a major crisis has simultaneously unfolded at the oriental frontiers of the Alliance, at a time where a crucial transition period emerges in Afghanistan, while we need to prepare, now more than ever, for Nato's future.

I am convinced that current events can only encourage us to resolutely continue the transformation of our military tools, the revision of our capacities, the amelioration of their interoperability and of our reactivity, the development of new international cooperation and the pursuit of constructive partners.

Twelve years ago in Prague, Lord Robertson had already qualified the Nato summit as the "transformation summit". In fact, to be effective, each transformation must retain a sense of duration and continuity, as per a solid life line that acts as linkage from Nato's past to its future.

The last two decades have brought us invaluable knowledge that we need to fully integrate to the building our future, in order to avoid the risk of rediscovering them in the heat of combat, at the expense of the men and women that we send on operations.

In the range of capacities available to us, the strategic intelligence means, the intelligence means, the surveillance means are not an option but a pre requisite to every crisis management, in every decision, in every operation.

The continuous improvement of security for our forces and populations, who are faced with all types of threats, from the improvised explosives to the most sophisticated threats, is a challenge, but above all, a duty.

In order to answer to a broad range of missions that derives from strategic concept, our forces need to be agile, mobile, and adaptable. They need to be ready to intervene very quickly, particularly within the NRF, they need to be perfectly trained.

Their interoperability conditions the success of the Alliance operations but also, increasingly, the agreeable participation of our partners, that allows us, amongst other things, to ensure continuity in the duration of our operations (Afghanistan).

To defeat, we need to be able to employ a decisive force, but this force also needs to be mastered, applied with precision and we need to limit its collateral effects. These essential characteristics of efficient, adaptable, reactive military tools sum up nearly 20 years of ongoing Alliance commitment, and already nourish our prospective work.

In 2014, as in 2002, the Alliance transformation entails high stakes as it needs to shape the military relevance of the future Alliance, it needs to maintain the fundamental balance between the collective defense requirements and the crisis management necessities, which are not, in my opinion, antithetical but demands now more than ever mobile and available forces. The Ukrainian crisis only confirms this statement; it also calls on drawing lessons from new and elaborated operating modes. This hot topic also reminds us that we need to conciliate our ambitions and the financial and human resources we are ready to devote. Similarly, the transatlantic link has been a true line of action of our Alliance for 65 years; it is our role to maintain it, to comfort it. Finally, we need to operate the synergy that our two complementary and interdependent organizations, Nato and the EU, offer us.

In fact, in order to meet all of these challenges, there is no other option than to put in place simultaneously the entirety of available levers, our common programming, our international projects, the connection initiative of forces, our partnerships but also the potential for innovation permitted by the conjunction of new technologies and new generations. When thinking about these young women and these young men that will become tomorrow's Alliance, a quote from an airman and poet, Antoine Exupéry comes to me. He wrote: "If you want to build a boat, plant in the hearts of men and women the desire of the sea". I am certain that this seminar will help us to stay the course in the Transformation, despite the reefs and storms, and will help us direct our alliance to safe harbor, one of peace and reinforced security.

Ladies, Gentlemen, to lead this seminar on the right course, it is with great honor and great pleasure to welcome Nato Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the French Minister of Defense, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian.