

SMPC 2014 Sofia 17-18 June 2014

Excellences, Admirals, Generals, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure and honor to join you all at this annual Strategic Military Partner Conference. Thank you very much Simeon, General Simeonov for your words of welcome. We are very fortunate and grateful to Bulgaria for its invitation to host this year's conference and I want to express my heartfelt thanks for the high-level of support you have provided us with, , which we gratefully appreciate. Thank you again Simeon to you and all your staff. Already, you deserve a lot of applause.

We were grateful to your President Rosen Plevneliev for hosting yesterday evening's icebreaker, which was really an icebreaker, which proved to be a great kick-off for our discussions.

ACT is particularly honored by the presence this morning of such a distinguished and diverse audience. This is a best testimony of NATO's success at reaching out to a wide circle of Partners; and it is a testimony of our shared success in building a transatlantic community together.

As Bulgaria is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its integration to the Alliance this year, I think it is worth reminding how fruitful its contribution to peace and security in South-eastern Europe has been.

Through friendly, open and pragmatic bilateral relations, Bulgaria has participated actively, as pointed out by Simeon, in numerous regional initiatives and enhanced cooperation with international stakeholders as well as in Europe or through Euro-Atlantic structures. In organizing this conference, Bulgaria contributes superbly to bring the Alliance in line with the Sofia motto; "*it grows but does not age*".

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2014 is really a key moment in the history of partnerships as it marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Partnership for Peace and of the Mediterranean dialogue and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. But 2014 is also an historical inflection point for NATO, as the combat mission in Afghanistan will come to an end at the end of this year and will be replaced by the assist, train and advise crucial Resolute Support mission. We need to keep in mind, what Ambassador Vershbow noted, that the ISAF mission has had a crucial role regarding partnerships because it brought a new dimension by connecting NATO to new partners around the world as well with international organizations and because so many partners have been actively involved in this NATO's led operation, would say has set a new standard. It sets a new standard.

The question now is how to capitalize on this fruitful, outstanding shared experience.

To answer this question, I will first stress that it is time to fully assess the mutual benefit of partnerships, very openly and kindly. I will then consider how we could make a better, pragmatic use of the existing tools – and they are many – to increase our interoperability and security of our future.

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Partnerships have become an essential component of NATO and it seems difficult today to imagine NATO without its partners. I would rather suggest that, after Afghanistan, we can consider that there are actually three pillars within NATO: the NATO Command Structure, the NATO Force Structure and the Partnerships.

When partnership policy was launched, twenty years ago, with the Partnership for Peace, during the NATO Summit in Brussels, the main idea was then to bring the countries from the former Warsaw Pact closer to the Alliance, in order to foster mutual understanding, stability and peace in the Euro Atlantic area. Later that year, the Mediterranean Dialogue was initiated to contribute to southern Alliance security and stability to achieve better mutual understanding and dispel any misconceptions about NATO among Mediterranean Dialogue countries. Ten years later, in the same spirit, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was launched to offer countries in the broader Middle East region, practical, bilateral security cooperation with NATO. And more recently, NATO welcomed the partners across the globe,

which took part in the operation in Afghanistan mission and ones that are outside the existing framework.

I am convinced that in 1994, nobody would have imagined that partners would become such a key component of NATO and that this cooperation would reach its pinnacle in the Hindu Kush. In fact, the partnerships have evolved and partners have contributed, and are still contributing, to Allied operations, in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, off the horn of Africa and in Libya to name a few. They have brought operational effective forces and, we must remember, they have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Obviously, partnership is not an end by itself. What we are all looking for, together, Allies and Partners, is how to improve the global security. As we see our neighborhoods which are burning, from Ukraine to Iraq, to Syria, to the Sahel area, and maybe other places as well, Cooperative Security, believe me, is no longer an option, it is crucial to all of us. It is even crucial for countries that don't recognize that. It is essential that we share our perception, share our understanding, our vision of geostrategic perspectives, which we capitalize on partner's deep knowledge of their regional environment. In that perspective, our different frameworks allow us to consult, prepare and eventually, when needed, act together.

This is particularly true since the Lisbon Summit, which marked a clear intent to enhance NATO's partnerships. I would called this, the "Berlin spirit" implemented in the wake of the reform of NATO's partnership policy in 2011, now drives our common endeavor. Therefore, cooperation is defined for the mutual interest and benefit of NATO and partners on a case-by-case basis. All the tools developed within the different frameworks are now available to all partners. They are developed in many different, customized and flexible formats that enable pragmatic approaches to complex, diverse and evolving challenges. Today NATO enjoys more than 40 partner nations.

A great number of them are engaged in partnership plans, which integrate Professional development, Defense and Education Enhancement and Building Integrity programs.

And first and foremost, many partners stand their operational commitments on our sides.

Currently, they provide about 4000 personnel to Ocean Shield, ISAF and Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea. Some of them have become regular contributors to the NATO Response Force¹. It is also worth acknowledging that the planned Resolute Support Mission should include at least 10 Partners and perhaps more².

One clear lesson out of the last decade of engagements is that we need to plan and execute operations together, to achieve our objectives, together within the Alliance, together with our partners, together, as well, with numerous international, Governmental and Non Governmental organizations.

Just to take some examples. Regarding Maritime security, the Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) initiative is a mechanism of meetings aimed at coordinating and de-conflicting activities between the countries and coalitions involved in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean. It is an interesting forerunner of cooperation between the Coalition Maritime Forces (CMF), NATO, the EUNAVFOR and Partners. Since the beginning in 2008, military and civilian representatives from more than 33 countries, 14 international organizations, and the maritime industry have joined these meetings.

In Somalia, this is another good example of a security challenge that has required, a combined and comprehensive approach, on and off shore, where the EU has addressed the origins of the crisis as well as its consequences simultaneously with the United Nations, the African Union, NATO and the United States.

Finally, ISAF, itself, has demonstrated the need to work closer with the United Nations and other international actors that were supporting governance, reconstruction and development, with the OSCE for the 2004-2005 elections, with the EU, to coordinate the training of the Afghan National Police with the EU Police Mission, and with various Non-Government Organisations.

As you can understand, after twenty years, Partners have gained a very special place for NATO. Now, it is our responsibility to take forward this joint enterprise, in building upon the lessons we learned in operations. We

¹ Finland, Sweden and Ukraine; Georgia reiterated proposals should be more extensively used in the future

² SWE, FIN, AUS, NZL, GEO, UKR, AZE, ARM, MNE, FYROM

must engage in new cooperation, for our mutual benefit, to be able to take on new challenges together.

And Interoperability is certainly the domain where this cooperation can be, must be, enhanced, as it is in fact the essence of any cooperation.

One positive effect of ISAF is that our forces today are more capable, experienced and interoperable than ever. Our challenge is now to be able to maintain this very high level of interoperability, in the context of possible lower operational tempo post-2014 – lets see.

For this purpose, we need to maximize the existing tools that are offered to foster interoperability in the fields of capability development, training and assistance.

The cost for developing and procuring capabilities is increasing and might even become a deterrent to the transformation of forces. Smart Defense, Multinational projects can help to mitigate this risk and better prepare the future. But, interest of multinational projects is wider than the issue of costs. They offer as well a large room for improving doctrine, training, logistics and the overall readiness.

Regarding training, the Connected Forces Initiative, offers, as it was stressed by Deputy Secretary General and I fully concur, the best opportunity to Partners to train and exercise with Allies. One of its' main aim is to capitalize on the lessons learned from past operations, to maintain and enhance interoperability.

CFI, as we call it, is an ambitious plan that totalizes 150 exercises in 2014, including 50 national exercises offered to NATO. It is also designed to be what I would call a catalyst of the NRF effectiveness and responsiveness. It thus offers a platform for interoperability, essential for partners to maintain and enhance their ability to work with the Allies. It also proposes a unique framework to link NATO exercises with national and multinational exercises, as it will be the case for our major Trident Juncture 15, our major exercise that will be a highlight and a milestone of CFI. It features a high intensity Crisis Response Operation based upon a realistic and challenging scenario. As of today, five partners have already express their willingness to participate but more would be welcomed.

Speaking about the tools to help partnership, in order to facilitate the integration of Partners into CFI, a group of seven nations has initiated an

Advisory CFI Task Force. So far, it has been co-chaired this year by Sweden and Belgium, which they will testify later today. Its aim can be characterized along four lines:

- Support NATO's ability to involve partners in the development and implementation of CFI.
- Provide NATO with information regarding partners' needs.
- Assist partners in understanding the objectives of CFI and function.
- And to offer partners' lessons-learned and expertise that might simplify and speed their contribution.

The CFI Task Force, that I thank very much, has already produced two very useful food for thoughts papers to make proposals to enhance, pragmatically, cooperation.

Focusing on interoperability, and just coming back from Bydgoszcz, I would like to stress the importance of CWIX, the Coalition Warrior Interoperability, eXploration, eXperimentation and eXamination eXercise, which is organized every year in June by ACT at the Joint Forces Training Center, Bydgoszcz. It enables to test and validate the interoperability of C2 communication systems. I would like to invite you to consider participating next year. This year, 3 partner nations have attended, and played a major role in, CWIX and we expect to see more in the future. This is how we will build concrete partnership.

As a matter of fact, we have already many tools designed to foster interoperability. Let me mention some of them.

The individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme defines agreed Goals and objectives that is based on the common interests of the partner and NATO and on each specific cooperation framework. The latest IPCP was signed by Japan last May.

Another tool is the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC). It is used to develop and train partner forces that are declared for NATO-led operations and the NRF, in accordance with NATO standards. This is interoperability. Many partner nations use the OCC as a transformation tool and 15 nations have already enrolled 90 units and 13,000 personnel in the OCC pool of forces ready at the NATO standards.

The Planning and Review Process (PARP) provides a structured basis for identifying partner forces and capabilities that could be available to the Alliance for multinational training, exercises and operations. The PARP also serves as a planning tool to guide and measure progress in defense and military transformation efforts.

Obviously, NATO will also continue to propose through the Partnerships Cooperation Menu, a unified and streamlined collection of activities and through the Military Training and Exercise Program numerous training and exercise opportunities, once approved, I would say, by the North Atlantic Council.

Partners can also benefit from the Partnership Training and Education Centers (PTEC). Bulgaria for instance, offers the NATO PfP Training and Education Center for English language training.

I would like also to mention the Defense Capacity Building concept which is being developed. It could become a powerful tool to assist partners in improving capability and interoperability. This is nothing really new as some sort of Defense Capacity Building has been provided to partners and non-partners as part of Stabilization and Reconstruction missions for more than two decades, through Crisis Management and Co-operative Security missions. Today, Defense Capacity Building must be considered within the wider scope of the new partnership policy, including a clear definition on common agreed objectives in terms of security co-operation, in terms of interoperability and eventually in developing capacity together on a case-by-case approach.

To achieve that, ACT has proposed to capitalize on already existing structures – we don't need new structures – we must capitalize on namely the Bi-SC's Military Partnerships Division - MPD in Mons as the military hub for assessing and planning DCB Missions in full cooperation with all military stakeholders. Must stress on the importance of this BI-SC organisation.

Eventually, I wish to mention the value of our network of Centres of Excellences in supporting partnerships with experts in specific domains and open to partners according to their MOUs.

As you can see, we have many tools in our inventory and it is for us, together, to make the best use of each other.

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To summarize, NATO's Partnerships is a great achievement that goes certainly beyond the initial expectations, twenty years ago.

Partners have brought a great contribution to the success of operations and stabilization in recent years. The end of the ISAF mission shall not trigger a disinterest in partnerships but rather initiate a new era where NATO and partners will enrich mutually and contribute, more and more, to security in a turbulent and instable environment. This calls for a continuous improvement of mutual relationship that will be based on the sharing of lessons learned, a better use of existing tools, leveraging our ongoing initiatives and concentrating, time and again, on interoperability.

Partners are definitely part of the future of NATO. This is why we need to explore all the possibilities to enhance cooperation in order to be able to prepare together and when needed to act together, and then to win together.

Vassil Levski a leader of Bulgaria's independence movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century once said "if I win, I win for all". May this motto permeate our conference.

I am looking forward to sharing ideas and experiences and I wish we have the candid and frank debate that our partnerships deserve.

Thank You