

**SACT's address on the occasion of
the 70th Anniversary of NATO**

**Norfolk (ACT),
2nd April 2019**

As delivered

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Admirals, generals,
My fellow ACT teammates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We know the price of war. Seventy years ago, Europe was still recovering from the most devastating conflict in the human history.

We should always have in mind what the war is. The younger generations, and I among them, have never experienced anything even close to what the World War II was.

That is why the leaders of the free world, representing the will of their citizens, after that war decided that the ultimate goal must be “*to live in peace with all peoples and governments*”.

They were “*determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law*”.

And, they sought to “*promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area [while] resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.*”

That was the essence of the North Atlantic Treaty, which in only 14 founding articles defined the Alliance, its functioning and its objectives.

70 years ago, the Alliance political centre of gravity was in Washington DC, as it is today in each and every NATO location, demonstrating its cohesion.

We are proud of being members of the world’s oldest, strongest and most successful military alliance of democratic nations in history.

We are an alliance, bound by a shared history, and common ideals and goals.

For 70 years, our Alliance has showed its strengths and relevance based on the values we, Nations, share and are determined to continue to defend. These are, above all, democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.

Moreover, it is our solemn commitment to each other, embodied in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which defines an attack against one Ally as an attack against us all, which is the source of trust, solidarity, and cooperation between member nations.

NATO has preserved peace and stability in its area of responsibility, and maintained its cohesion during these seven decades.

We, 29, soon 30 countries, work together to prevent conflict and preserve peace for nearly one billion people of the most advanced countries in the world!

Our strategic culture represents a voluntary contribution and determination of member countries to work together in tackling the critical challenges with and beyond the Euro Atlantic community of nations.

NATO's success lies primarily in its ability to adapt to evolving circumstances, to unite around our common purpose and shared interests, and to modernise and keep up with the dizzying pace of technological and strategic changes.

This is what makes NATO the most successful alliance in history.

This continuous adaptation to security challenges has been proven throughout NATO's history.

- For forty years, NATO successfully deterred the Soviet Union from aggression against Western Europe.
- In the 1990s, we faced new security challenges in Europe, and helped to end conflicts in the Western Balkans.
- After 9/11, the focus was on crisis management, and NATO took a lead role in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, followed by Resolute Support Mission, since 2015.

Today, we cannot rest. We face an unpredictable and complex security environment.

- It includes peer competitors, particularly Russia, but also China and others, ambitious to reassert their influence regionally and globally.
- It includes challenges and threats that our competitors and adversaries use in their asymmetric approaches, particularly cyber and hybrid attacks.
- The spectrum of challenges is even broader and encompass instability across the Middle East and North Africa, migration crises and a continued terrorist threat.
- Moreover, uncertain and volatile environment, with blurred lines between conflict and peace demands permanent engagement of our forces.

To respond to all these challenges and threats, we develop our Military Instrument of Power.

We also use all opportunities to project stability and work with partner nations, organizations and institutions.

And, we continue to innovate, and remain at the forefront of technological change.

Success rarely comes without challenges, and we are not afraid of talking about them.

Since its establishment 70 years ago, NATO has been challenged many times, and endured much criticism.

During the Cold War, member nations sometimes argued over the form of the Alliance, but never on its substance.

When the Cold War ended, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new type of criticism emerged. It was time, some argued, for the Alliance to fade into ancient history, just like the Warsaw Pact.

But, we should never forget that there was a big difference between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. The members of Warsaw Pact were coerced into that organization, while in the 1990s former communist countries queued to join NATO.

That phenomenon continues to this day.

We still have our door open to new members, to those eager to join our Alliance and contribute to our collective defence, which is the basis for stability and thus for prosperity.

A prosperity grounded on the compromise of accepting common interests, collectively and freely, to ensure the peace in the world, in another word, to ensure freedom.

To tell the truth, welcoming new members into NATO today is a nice symbol, showing that stability achieved by the Alliance constitutes, 70 years later, a guarantee of its relevance.

Obviously some decisions within NATO are easier to take than others, and there are some topics, such as fair burden sharing, that will, from time to time, prove more challenging.

As an alliance of democracies, unity does not mean uniformity!
Balancing different interests and priorities has never been easy.

But, the magnificence of this alliance is rooted in the idea that the general interest is more important than the individual one.

NATO has shown, again and again, that it is an organization capable of solving its internal and external challenges, by offering a security architecture that no other organization can match.

Despite all the challenges NATO has and continues to face, the Alliance has demonstrated its resilience. This resilience is based on its shared values and cohesion, and ability to go beyond individual interests.

Most importantly, NATO has successfully responded to all external challenges. This was a result of its ability to adapt and evolve with the changes in its strategic context.

This is, also, where ACT becomes important.

Since the Alliance wants to maintain a credible Military Instrument of Power this is not a choice, but a necessity.

This is why you are a part of NATO's success, and you, with your work, contribute to it.

As I have said before, I want to assure you that the work of each of you, has been, is, and will always be, important for the success of our Alliance. Be convince of that, because this is truth!

Each of you, at your level, your post, across the most elementary tasks, you carry out the work related to Warfare Development.

It includes everything from strategic foresight to capability development, from development of concepts and doctrines to education, from innovation to exercises, enhancing the interoperability of our capabilities and forces.

But, we still need to do a lot to assess the impact of new technologies, such as, for example, Artificial Intelligence and autonomous systems, on our security. Both as a challenge, and as an opportunity.

However, disruptive technologies are only a part of our broad portfolio, and we will continue to work hard on executing our role of Warfare Development Command.

To conclude, I will say that our world is changing and NATO is changing with it.

But, one thing remains unchanged: our commitment to one another endures, giving us the strength to overcome our differences and rise to any challenge.

With this commitment at its core, NATO has been able to navigate a changing security environment and tackle a range of security challenges over the decades.

Standing with unity and resolve in defence of our values, NATO will remain a pillar of stability in an uncertain world for the next generations.

Far from being obsolete, NATO remains vital for Europeans and North Americans, who benefit from NATO's existence every day.

Should the North Atlantic Treaty have to be rewritten today, changing a single word would probably be impossible!

Now, 70 years after creation of NATO, we know the price of peace! It is:

- a matter of commitment to each other,
- a matter of solidarity between our countries,
- a matter of respect, despite the differences among our individual powers, and,
- a matter of unity, which is, above all, the most important signal we can send.

Happy anniversary and let us look forward towards the next 70 years!

Thank you for your attention.