

**Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the EU Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy**

**3 march 2021**

Thank you so much President Rodrigues.

And thank you for inviting me to address the Inter-Parliamentary Conference.

For many years, I was a parliamentarian myself,  
and I know how decisive and important your voices are.

So it really is a pleasure to join you all today.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank Portugal – a staunch NATO Ally and a committed European Union member.

You contribute to our shared security and to our collective defence in many different ways.

Portuguese jets and ships are part of our air policing missions and our maritime operations.

Portuguese forces take part in our multinational brigade in Romania.

And you host a number of different NATO facilities, including our cutting-edge cyber academy.

You are also a lead and host nation for exercise Steadfast Defender

2021 later this year.

This is an important defensive NATO exercise which will demonstrate Alliance readiness and transatlantic solidarity.

Portugal is also a champion of strong NATO-EU relations.

My address to you today is a testimony to that.



The Portuguese EU Presidency has made strengthening transatlantic relations one of its priorities.

And I strongly welcome this.

Because strong transatlantic relations are the only way for our countries to address the great challenges of today and tomorrow.

Russia's destabilising behaviour.

Brutal forms of terrorism in our neighbourhood.

Sophisticated cyber-attacks.

Disruptive technologies.

The rise of China.

The security implications of climate change.

And a health pandemic.

All of these challenges are far greater than any of us can address alone.

In recent years we have lifted NATO-EU cooperation to unprecedented levels.

We are working side-by-side in many areas.

Helping to stabilise our neighbourhood in the Western Balkans.

Dealing with illegal migration in the Aegean.

And addressing a range of hybrid threats, from cyber-attacks to disinformation campaigns.

But we can do even more together.

To bolster our resilience.

Champion new technologies.

Combat climate change.

And protect the rules-based order.

It makes sense for NATO and the EU to join forces.

As I have stated many times, I welcome EU efforts on defence.

And the fullest possible involvement of non-EU Allies in PESCO and the European Defence Fund.

I also welcome the recent US decision to join the project on military mobility, which is a flagship of NATO-EU cooperation.

This can enable US and other NATO troops and equipment to move faster across Europe.

For instance to reinforce our NATO battlegroups in the Baltic Sea region.

A European Union that spends more on defence and new capabilities, and that reduces the fragmentation of the European defence industry, is not only good for European security.

It is also good for transatlantic security.

But European unity cannot replace transatlantic unity.

And the European Union cannot defend Europe alone.

More than 90 percent of EU citizens live in a NATO country.

But EU members provide only 20 percent of NATO's defence spending.

It is not only about money.

It is also about geography.

Iceland and Norway in the North are gateways to the Arctic.

Turkey in the south borders Syria and Iraq.

And in the west, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom link together both sides of the Atlantic.

All of these countries are critical for the defence of Europe.

And most of all, it is about politics.

Any attempt to divide Europe from North America will weaken NATO.

But it will also divide Europe.

Only a strong NATO can keep our almost one billion people safe in a more dangerous world.

So I do not believe in Europe alone.

Or North America alone.

I believe in Europe and North America together.

In NATO.

In strategic solidarity.

There is no denying that in recent years, serious questions have been asked on both sides of the Atlantic about the strength of our bond.

And we have seen competing visions of transatlantic relations.

But now, we have a unique opportunity to open a new chapter in our relations.

I welcome President Biden's clear message on rebuilding alliances and strengthening NATO.

We all have a responsibility to seize this opportunity.

That is why we launched the NATO 2030 initiative.

Aimed at making our Alliance even stronger for the future.

I have engaged with parliamentarians, as well as independent experts, civil society, and young people.

To provide inputs for an ambitious and forward-looking agenda for NATO leaders, when they meet at our Summit in Brussels later this year.

Let me briefly set out what I see as the main priorities for NATO 2030.

First, we must reinforce the unity between Europe and North America.

Our unity derives from our promise to defend each other.

The time has come to update NATO's Strategic Concept.

So that we can chart a common course going forward and reaffirm the fundamentals of our Alliance.

We must also strengthen our commitment to collective defence, and fund more of deterrence and defence on NATO territory together.

And we must strengthen our political unity.

Using NATO even more as the unique platform that brings Europe and North America together every day,

to consult on all issues that affect our security.

Second, we must broaden our approach to security.

So that we address the full spectrum of threats.

For this, we need strong militaries.

But also strong, resilient societies.

And more investment in innovation,

to maintain our technological edge,

and remain competitive in a more competitive world.

Lastly, we must safeguard the international rules-based order,

which is being challenged by authoritarian powers.

The rise of China offers opportunities, for instance for our economies.

But it also poses challenges for our security and way of life.

That is why we should deepen our partnerships with countries like Australia and Japan.

And reach out to other like-minded nations around the world.

Protecting the rules-based order starts with protecting our values at home.

So we ourselves must recommit to our values, strengthen our democracies and protect our institutions.

As members of parliament, you can help reinforce the ties between Europe and North America.

You can help shape a bold new transatlantic agenda.

And you can help push for more ambitious and practical joint efforts between NATO and the EU.

Strengthening transatlantic relations and working hand-in-hand is the right thing to do. Now is the right time to do it.

I look forward to our discussion.

