



Speech by Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Poland

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during the conference on

NATO's NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Global, Transatlantic and Regional Challenges and Tasks Ahead

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Mr Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience at the opening of today's conference. It is a third time when the Ministry of National Defence in cooperation with the Centre for International Relations organizes a seminar directly related to NATO issues. I hope it will be regularly conducted in the years to come. We have again the honour to host the NATO Secretary General in Warsaw. It is, however, the first time you, Anders, are with us. Thank you very much for coming.

This event takes place at a very timely moment. We are approaching critical phase of the work on the new NATO Strategic Concept. Hopes and expectations of the allies are to be translated – at the Lisbon summit in November – into strategic guidance for the Alliance and its politico-military activities. First “reflection” stage of this process concludes in April. The group of the wise men will present at that time a set of recommendations on the new Strategy. Their ideas will constitute a solid basis for the Secretary General to prepare – in close consultation and cooperation with the allies – the final text of the document.

This whole process is of indisputable significance for all allies. Our security in the XXI century continues to be based on vitality and credibility of the Atlantic Pact. This assumption strongly determines also Polish expectations related to the Strategic Concept. We hope that the new document will consolidate NATO's achievements, as well as reaffirm the principles and values that have contributed to its successes. At the same time, the Strategy should help us to further adjust NATO, its structures, institutions and procedures.

This encourages me to focus on the following points.

Firstly, the Alliance has to be able to cope with the whole set of threats and challenges of the new geostrategic environment. This means that NATO has to have in place all instruments necessary to defend its territory. This also means the ability of the Alliance to conduct stabilization operations far away from its borders.

Obviously, if we want to get firm public support for expeditionary missions, our societies have to feel secure at home. It is a precondition for expectation from the member states to be

ready for remote operations. Such operations will be perceived as a direct investment into the security of the allies, only if NATO also persists in providing decisive military assistance for the defence of our territories.

There are a few important things that have to be done to ensure this objective.

NATO should keep vital plans assuming the reinforcement of the allies' defensive posture in the event of any threat related to Article 5. These plans have to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. We need such a planning to be prepared for the worst case scenario, even though it remains less likely in the foreseeable future.

Our command structures and our forces should also be ready to undertake collective defence functions, despite the fact they are increasingly involved in out of area tasks. This applies of course to training and exercises.

Another important issue concerns the NATO military infrastructure. It should be distributed on the territory of the Alliance in a fair manner taking adequately into account geographical differences among NATO members.

I strongly believe that all those ideas could be properly developed without diminishing operational engagement of NATO, today and in the future. It is true that tanks are not a useful tool for responding to the cyber threats. We need them to be sure that the cyber challenge will not turn into more traditional one.

This brings me to my second point. I think is crucial: defence transformation. This process has to properly reflect our priorities with regard to functions of the Alliance, which I shortly described above. It is of fundamental importance to provide NATO with suitable set of capabilities to tackle new and old challenges. We have to be aware that they are rather complementary than contradictory. Any future conflict will probably require sophisticatedly trained, well equipped and immediately deployable troops and capabilities. Economic crisis, which has negatively affected our defence budgets for some time, encourages us to continue the transformation process in a more effective manner. To be successful in this field, we have to apparently find proper formula matching limited resources with NATO military requirements across the full spectrum of its tasks.

Thirdly, the engagement in Afghanistan. At the moment it remains the most demanding task for NATO and other international players. NATO's experience there provides an extremely important input into strategic debate on how to cope with most likely challenges the Alliance is currently facing. The situation in Afghanistan is now at the critical juncture. The Alliance has got a good strategy, more resources and the political will to decisively stabilise the situation in the country. The security of Afghan people has been placed at the top of NATO's activities there. The training of Afghan army and police is progressing. The process of transferring responsibility to the Afghan authorities has been set in motion. On a day-to-day basis we strive to effectively apply holistic approach, putting more and more emphasis on civilian activities in the fields of development and reconstruction. This strategy is starting to bring tangible results.

But ISAF exemplifies also that fair sharing of burdens and obligations among allies is vital for successful achievement of lasting effects. Such a perception strongly determines Poland's

increasing engagement in this operation. Poland has decided to seriously reinforce our contingent up to the level of 2 600, with additional 400 ready to deploy if needed. We will send additional helicopters. We are also extending reconstruction projects, investing inter alia in local infrastructure.

Crucial lesson learned from Afghanistan considers the need for effective, mutually reinforcing cooperation of all actors involved.

This brings me to another important issue related to the new Strategic Concept: partnership between NATO and the EU. This has become even more important with the enter into force of the Lisbon Treaty that opens for the EU the wider window of opportunity for actions in the area of security and defence. That is why all the Euro-Atlantic Community should continue to make every effort to remove the well known political obstacles hindering development of relations between the two organizations, as well as reflect on what we could do in the meantime to improve our practical cooperation. Thank you the Secretary General for your efforts in this regard.

Fifthly, enlargement. There are still nations across the Euro-Atlantic area aspiring to strengthen relations with NATO and to obtain a full-fledged membership. Poland is of the opinion that their membership is in the NATO's interest as it contributes to security and stability of the whole continent. For this reason, it is important to translate "Open Door" policy into noticeable practical assistance in the process of political and defence reforms in those countries. This means strengthening ties with Ukraine, Georgia and the Western Balkans nations and implementing commitments of the 2008 Bucharest summit.

Finally, our relations with Russia should be reflected in the ongoing strategic debate. Russia remains a strategic partner for NATO. We need to act together in many areas of common interests. We should remember, however, that there are substantial unresolved difficulties in our relations. They hamper development of tangible security initiatives between NATO and Russia. This should encourage all of us to seriously consider how to overcome these barriers.

When reflecting on the abovementioned points, it appears apparent that preparation of the new Strategic Concept requires us to formulate answers to some fundamental issues. I think the most general question is how to ensure effective functioning of the Alliance in the XXI century, its coherence and solidarity. To achieve this, we need to find satisfactory compromise in some important areas – which is obvious – but firstly we need an open and frank flow of ideas. Let me assume our discussion today will result in some conceptual input. We especially look forward to your comments and suggestions, Anders, in this regard. Nevertheless, I strongly invite all of you to seize this opportunity and contribute today to this debate.

Thank you.

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