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Statesmen's Forum: Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General

ADDRESS ON THE CHALLENGES FACING NATO AND THE ADAPTATIONS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE FREEDOM AND SECURITY FOR NATO STATES.

Europe's security environment is changing. Russia's aggressive actions challenge the post-Cold War peace order. New hybrid threats, including cyber warfare and non-state actors, require NATO to adapt in order to preserve the freedom and security of member states. Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary-General, provided his insights on these questions and NATO's response at an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies on May 27th, 2015 as part of the Statesmen's Forum Series, which fosters conversation between global political leaders and the U.S. community.

Offering a keynote address, His Excellency **Jens Stoltenberg**, NATO Secretary General and former Prime Minister of Norway, outlined the challenges facing NATO and the adaptations deployed in response. The central challenge consists of a "resurgent" Russia whose "illegal and insurgent occupation" of Crimea and military actions in Ukraine represent a direct threat to the European peace order, in Mr. Stoltenberg's opinion. NATO fully supports a "political situation" to the crisis, beginning with adherence to the Minsk II cease-fire agreement in addition to four principles that might contribute to the resolution of the conflict, as outlined by Mr. Stoltenberg. The first principle is **respect for sovereign borders**. Blatant and repeated disregard for the sovereign territory of neighboring states, as demonstrated by the 2008 invasion of Georgia and the annexation of Crimea, represents a major challenge towards a peaceful, political resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. Along with respect for sovereign borders, Mr. Stoltenberg stressed the **importance of state independence**. Russia's expansion of its sphere of influence through political interference in

neighboring states has created a "sphere of instability" that prohibits states the right to "decide their own destiny", including the right for states like Georgia to join the NATO alliance.

The third and fourth principles consist of military challenges. Drawing a stark contrast between NATO and Russia, Mr. Stoltenberg emphasized that **transparency and predictability** are crucial for any military activities in Europe. NATO exercises, including the upcoming 'Trident Juncture 2015' exercise, are easily accessible online, with schedules, maps, and observers – steps which Mr. Stoltenberg attributes to NATO's commitment to conducting exercises in a transparent manner. On the other hand, recent "snap exercises" conducted by the Russian military threaten regional stability due to their unpredictability and lack of transparency. Mr. Stoltenberg stated that Russian snap exercises were used to annex Crimea and directly support separatists fighting in eastern Ukraine. Escalating military actions by the Russians, including breaches of the Treaty on Open Skies and increased military activity in the Arctic, threaten regional stability. Such escalations threaten attempts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis through **dialogue**, the fourth principle of Mr. Stoltenberg's address. The prevalence of nuclear rhetoric, combined with an increase of proactive flights by nuclear-capable bombers and the decision to place missiles in Kaliningrad, constitutes dangerous "saber-rattling" along NATO borders. "Aggressive nationalism" within Russia raises concerns in Mr. Stoltenberg's view, about the regional consequences should "might become right". Mr. Stoltenberg recalled the progress made in the NATO-Russian relationship during the pursuit of a "strategic partnership" beginning in the 1990s, which included economic and political benefits for both

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parties and contributed to greater security. The militarized approach of Russia towards Europe and NATO threatens to unravel the fabric of the European security order. Mr. Stoltenberg stated that he has no desire to return "to the Cold War"; however, he maintains that NATO must adapt to new security realities, while continuing support for peaceful political solutions.

To maintain security and preparedness in response to the changing European security environment, Mr. Stoltenberg emphasized three ways in which NATO could adapt. The primary step is to **reinforce defense** to ensure that NATO remains "as strong and as relevant as ever before." Active commitment to northern member states, as demonstrated by a doubling of the NATO response force and continuing allied participation in OPEN SPIRIT exercises in the Baltic, reflects the alliance's commitment to preserving the security and independence of its member states as well as providing deterrence against increased Russian military action. Mr. Stoltenberg indicated that achieving the 2% of GDP target for defense spending by all member states would ensure sufficient material and reinforce NATO defenses. The United States' one billion dollar European Reassurance Initiative signals that "America stands with Europe". Europe is "in lockstep" in addressing a variety of issues, including cyber warfare and other hybrid threats, and committed to increasing intelligence sharing among member states. Addressing questions regarding Article 5 activation, Mr. Stoltenberg indicated that NATO would react to any attack, whether conventional or hybrid, in a "proportional" manner as determined by democratically elected officials, who must be confident of NATO's readiness to respond to conventional or hybrid triggers of Article 5.

A strong **NATO represents the best foundation to balance the West's relationship with Russia** in Mr. Stoltenberg's opinion. Although "[NATO] do[es] not seek confrontation," Mr. Stoltenberg stated that the reality of a

changing Russia requires NATO to adapt as well, particularly in the area of information: transparent, accessible information, not propaganda, must combat misinformation surrounding the crisis in Ukraine. Mr. Stoltenberg argued that ensuring the strength of NATO's military capabilities provides a foundation for continuing a diplomatic relationship with Russia and brokering a peaceful, political solution to the conflict. Finally, Mr. Stoltenberg reaffirmed NATO's **commitment to support European partners** to ensure the relevance of NATO in the evolving security order. "Stable and independent neighbors," regardless of NATO membership status, enhance European peace, not because they serve as "buffer zones", but rather because stable, self-determined neighbors provide security for all of Europe.

On a related note, Mr. Stoltenberg addressed the topic of **NATO enlargement**. NATO's current priority, according to Mr. Stoltenberg is Montenegro's application for membership. Noting that NATO's previous enlargement rounds represent "historic successes" that have increased democracy and positively impacted Europe, Mr. Stoltenberg emphasized the principle of self-determination as a cornerstone of NATO's Open Door Policy. Accordingly, only "the aspirant country and NATO countries have a voice" in a nation's decision to apply for membership – Mr. Stoltenberg implied that attempts by third parties, notably Russia, to interfere with a nation's decision to join NATO violates commitments made in the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security. Mr. Stoltenberg reiterated this point in response to multiple questions regarding the possibility of applications, from nations such as Sweden, Finland, and Georgia and the potential for such enlargement to be viewed provocatively by Russia. Despite the political implications of NATO enlargement, Mr. Stoltenberg underscored existing and expanding partnerships with non-member states promoting security and defense capabilities throughout Europe.

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Challenges to peace and security are not limited to the East. Mr. Stoltenberg addressed **emerging non-state challenges arising south of Europe** and NATO's role in addressing these non-conventional threats. Migration, political unrest, and ISIL, as Mr. Stoltenberg referred to the group, present complicated challenges for the NATO alliance. Mr. Stoltenberg suggested that NATO's interoperability, "knowledge and experience" make the alliance a valuable resource for the US-led coalition against ISIL. Additionally, Mr. Stoltenberg stressed that NATO must encourage and support improvements in self-security efforts, including building national defense capabilities, across the region. Ensuring that local forces are adequately prepared to confront regional security challenges will increase stability. Already, NATO is working with Jordan to build defense capabilities, and is prepared to work with Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan in order to establish a mutually beneficial security order.

In the face of a shifting security environment, Mr. Stoltenberg indicated that NATO has the "determination to stay and stand united" in order to preserve freedom and security for all member states. While urging that defense capabilities not be taken for granted, Mr. Stoltenberg also demonstrated a clear commitment to peaceful, political solutions to the challenges facing the alliance and Europe.