



“NATO AND THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE CHANGES AHEAD”
SPEECH BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL
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AT THE SPANISH SENATE
MADRID, SPAIN – 16 JUNE 2011

I am delighted to be back in Madrid. And would like to thank both the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, and the Elcano Royal Institute, for organising this seminar.

I was here only nine months ago. And if anyone had asked then what changes there would be ahead for NATO and the Mediterranean, I don't think anyone would have answered the question accurately.

No one would have anticipated the Arab Spring on the Mediterranean's southern shore. And no one would have forecast that NATO would be leading an operation in Libya to protect civilians under a United Nations mandate.

These changes were totally unexpected. And they are momentous. They bring new responsibilities for NATO. And they bring new hope for millions of people.

In my remarks this morning, I will focus on what needs to change so NATO can fulfil its responsibilities. And so it can help the people of North Africa and the Middle East fulfil their aspirations. But before looking at the future, let me briefly bring you up to date with our mission in Libya.

Operation Unified Protector is less than three months old. Yet in that short time, we have already made considerable progress. And I want to thank Spain for its valuable contribution in making that progress possible. I welcome Minister Chacon's announcement that the Government will seek parliamentary approval of extension of the Spanish participation.

Our operation has the political and military support of many countries in the region. Together, we have prevented a massacre. We have saved countless lives.

We have seriously degraded the ability of the Qadhafi regime to attack civilians. We have opened air and sea access for humanitarian assistance. And we have closed it to arms and mercenaries.

Last week, NATO’s Defence Ministers met with their colleagues from the partner nations supporting our operation. Carmen, you were there. And I’m sure you will agree with me. There was solid determination to fulfill the historic mandate of the United Nations Security Council.

Our message to the people of Libya is clear. We will protect you for as long as necessary.

Our message to the Qadhafi regime is clear. Your time is up. You must go.

And our message to the international community is clear. We will keep up the military pressure, in strict conformity with our mandate, to pave the way for a speedy political solution in Libya.

So that’s where we are today. But, what about the future? What needs to change in relation to NATO and the Mediterranean? What do we need to do better to fulfil our responsibilities and to help the people of North Africa and the Middle East?

I believe there are three areas. First, we need to improve NATO’s own capabilities. Second, we need to increase the practical support we offer to the countries of the region. And third, we need to enhance NATO’s political dialogue with those countries.

Let me take those points in turn. First, capabilities.

Technology is changing rapidly. And NATO’s capabilities need to keep pace. In our operation in Libya we have had to rely on some of the highly advanced military assets of the United States. Capabilities such as drones, intelligence and surveillance equipment, and precision weapons. Simply because no other Ally has them available.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that each Ally should have those high-end capabilities. But I would like to see more of them across our Alliance. And that is why I am concerned about the low level of defence spending – especially in Europe. Of course, in times of economic crisis, defence budgets cannot be exempt from cuts. But I see a real risk that European Allies will fall even further behind the pace of technological progress.

This is why we need to change the way we spend our defence money. And this is why I am encouraging the idea of “Smart Defence”.

The “Smart Defence” approach means doing together what we cannot do alone. It allows us to deliver better security for all. Not by spending more money. But by spending more time and effort on multinational cooperation and coordination.

Many nations are unable to provide some of the high-tech equipment we need. If we encourage them to adopt multinational solutions, then they will be able to field capabilities together that they can't afford alone.

With NATO providing the coherence, we can ensure that every Ally is able to make a worthwhile contribution. And with NATO providing strong integrated command and control capabilities, we can make sure that we get the very best out of those individual contributions.

At our Lisbon Summit last November, we agreed to improve our command and control capabilities. And our operation in Libya has particularly reinforced the need to enhance our air command and control capability.

Last week, Defence Ministers approved a new integrated military command structure. The new structure will be more effective, more affordable and leaner. Many of our current headquarters will close. Some new ones will be created. And one will move.

Overall, it makes a significant reduction in the number of headquarters. It represents a 35% reduction in manning. It will save about 5000 posts. But critically, it will be more flexible, and more deployable. And it will deliver an enhanced capability, particularly in the air.

The Combined Air Operations Centre that will move to Torrejon is a key part of this. And I believe you can be proud that such a vital asset will be hosted by Spain.

The second area where I believe we will see change ahead, is in the practical support NATO offers to Libya and to our partner countries in the southern Mediterranean.

Sooner or later, Qadhafi will go. It's not a question of IF. It's only a question of WHEN. The international community needs to start planning for that day. And I believe that planning should be led by the United Nations.

Once the crisis is over, it will be necessary to reform the military and security sectors. NATO has extensive experience in this field. We should stand ready to respond to any calls for help. And that support should be available to other countries in the region too.

Naturally, our support would complement assistance from other organisations, such as the United Nations and the European Union. It would be tailored to the request of each country. And it would be developed in close cooperation with them.

But what type of support could NATO offer? Let me give you some examples.

We could support the introduction of civilian oversight of the armed forces. We could advise on defence procurement and force structures. And we could assist with education and training.

We could also consider establishing Trust Funds. These could be used to help retrain former military personnel. Or they could be used to finance the safe destruction of surplus weapons and munitions.

We could provide workshops and practical advice to help develop strategic documents such as national security concepts and defence policies.

The range of possibilities for practical support is wide. But the intention would be the same. We want to enable -- not to impose. We want to help build local capability – not international dependency. And we want to encourage regional cooperation – not national isolation.

For practical support to be most effective, it needs to be delivered within an appropriate political framework. And that leads me to the final area of change – enhancing NATO’s political dialogue with the countries of the region.

I know that Spain is a strong and steadfast supporter of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue. I know Spain would value widening our political consultations with our Mediterranean partners. And I am sure our partners would value it too.

But to get the best out of our political consultations and our dialogue, I believe we need to do more. We need to take a pragmatic and flexible approach.

We must change the way we engage with our partners, so that we can work across, and beyond, the existing frameworks.

We must not be constrained by membership. Instead, we need to involve all who are committed to bringing security and stability to the region.

And we must not limit ourselves to predetermined subjects. We need to discuss a far broader range of issues.

Proliferation and energy security, for example, are two areas where NATO and many of our partners share common concerns. We should discuss these issues openly. And with any partner who is interested.

A wider range of subjects. Flexible participation. These are two changes that I believe are key to enhancing the quality, the value, and the benefit of our political dialogue with our partners in the southern Mediterranean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The changes we have seen in North Africa and the Middle East were unexpected. But they are welcome. And they make me optimistic about the future.

Let me be clear. It is for the people of the region to shape the future of their nations. However, the international community should stand ready to assist them in the transition to freedom and democracy. The United Nations should coordinate and lead that work.

And if called upon, NATO can help. I have outlined this morning the changes that I believe are necessary for NATO's help to be most effective.

With your support, I am confident that we can make those changes successfully. And by doing so, we can help the Arab Spring to well and truly blossom.

NATO member states form a unique community of values, committed to individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We consider these to be universal principles that apply to all people of the world, including in North Africa and the Middle East. That's why NATO Allies support the legitimate aspirations of people throughout the region.

Individual liberty releases human creativity and enterprise.

Democracy promotes accountable governance.

Human rights guarantee that democracy is not just the right of the majority to rule, but also the right of minorities to be protected.

The rule of law protects the individual from indiscriminate abuse by the authorities.

These fundamental principles have created progress and prosperity for people in our nations.

People in North Africa and the Middle East too can enjoy freedom and democracy.

They have shown that this is what they want. They have inspired us all.

Now is the time for us to strengthen friendly bonds across the Mediterranean.

Now is the time for us to work together politically, economically, and culturally, so that the whole region can flourish.

Thank you.

*Madrid, Spanish Senate
16 June 2011
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