Thank you Jan for that very generous introduction. And first of all, thank you very much for your dedicated work for Carnegie Europe and your strong engagement in the public debate on foreign and security policy issues.

And also a big word of thanks to Carnegie Europe for hosting our event.

As you mentioned, my very first speech as new Secretary General in September 2009 was also hosted by Carnegie Europe, so I feel that I have come full circle by delivering my last Brussels speech as Secretary General also hosted by the Carnegie Europe Endowment.

By the way, this Bibliothèque Solvay also gives me sweet memories. Actually it was in this very room that Heads of State and Government of the European Union agreed on the economic framework for concluding negotiations with the applicant countries in October 2002. Denmark held the rotating presidency of the European Union at that time, so as Prime Minister of Denmark, I hosted the dinner for Heads of State and
Government and we reached an agreement on the economic framework for concluding these negotiations which led to the historic decision at the EU Summit in Copenhagen on the 13th of December. An historic decision to enlarge the European Union. And actually the foundation was laid in this very room.

This is my last month in office as NATO Secretary General. And I have to say these past five years have been the busiest and most challenging – for NATO and for me personally.

NATO has carried out demanding and difficult operations on three different continents. And we have reformed and renewed our Alliance to make it fitter, faster and more flexible.


So, I’m confident that I will be leaving my good friend Jens Stoltenberg an Alliance with a solid foundation and a clear compass. And I am sure that he will do a great job in keeping NATO strong.

Keeping NATO strong could not be more important. There is an arc of crisis and instability that stretches from East to South. And it poses a threat to our populations. And our territory.

We see challenges on a scale we have not seen for over two decades. And they will endure for years to come. We need to face this fact.

To the East, there is Russia. We have tried long and hard to build a partnership with Russia. In a way that respects Russia’s security concerns, and based on international rules and norms.

And, as Jan mentioned, in fact my very first speech as new Secretary General of NATO five years ago was about developing a stronger partnership between NATO and Russia.

Regrettably, Russia has rejected our efforts to engage. Instead, Russia considers NATO, and the West more broadly, as an adversary. Russia has trampled all the rules and commitments that have kept peace in Europe and beyond since the end of the Cold War. The pattern is clear. From Moldova to Georgia, and now in Ukraine, Russia has used economic pressure and military actions to produce instability. To manufacture conflicts. And to diminish the independence of its neighbours.

To the South there is the so-called Islamic State. Not a state, but a group of terrorists. Who are committing horrific atrocities against thousands of people across Iraq and Syria. I strongly condemn the outrageous murders of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and of the British aid worker David Haines. All NATO allies stand shoulder to shoulder, resolute and united against the scourge of terrorism.
This group poses even more of a danger as it risks exporting terrorists to our countries. It also controls energy assets. And it is pouring oil on the fire of sectarianism already burning across the Middle East and North Africa. A region that is a tinder box of porous borders. Arms proliferation. Weak governance. And poverty.

We are confronted by forces that reject our liberal democracy and our liberal, rules-based order. Their agendas and ideologies are different. But they are virulent, violent, and viciously anti-Western. They will grasp every opportunity to undermine our values of individual liberty, freedom, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and human rights. And to impose their backward-looking vision on others.

We are on the frontline of a new battle – a new battle between tolerance and fanaticism, between democracy and totalitarianism, between open and closed societies.

In this new age of unrest and revisionism, we must stand strong. And we must stand united as a force for freedom.

Strengthen our collective defence. Strengthen our community of nations. And strengthen our collective engagement.

First, we must strengthen our collective defence – our ability to defend our populations and our countries against any threat.

In response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, we immediately reinforced our defence and deterrence. And at the NATO summit in Wales, we agreed our groundbreaking Readiness Action Plan. To make sure our response to any challenge is firm and fast. Our defence capabilities, military posture and political will must send a clear signal to any potential aggressor.

We must also improve our ability to participate in international crisis management. The threat posed by the so-called Islamic State requires a military response to degrade and defeat this terrorist organisation. And it was the credible threat of military strikes against Syria that persuaded the Assad regime to give up their chemical weapons. And it was the principle of responsibility-to-protect that led the UN Security Council to mandate a military operation in Libya. We must be able, ready and willing to step up to the plate when conflicts can affect our own security.

And we must improve our ability to help partners build their own security forces. If we train local security forces to take care of local security we can project stability without necessarily projecting large numbers of our own troops. So we must do more to help our partners defend themselves, find their own solutions, and prevent crises in their regions before they emerge. That is why at the Wales Summit we launched a new Defence Capacity Building initiative. As an initial step, we extended it to Georgia, Jordan, and Moldova. And if the new government requests it, NATO will consider a new defence capacity building mission for Iraq, as well.

All this will require more investments in defence and security. At the Wales summit we turned a corner. The commitment to gradually increase defence investment over the next decade is a strong and united response to the arc of crises surrounding us. Security
comes at a cost. But insecurity is much more expensive. And freedom doesn’t come for free.

Second, we must strengthen the global community of free societies that are devoted to democracy, market economy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for the liberal, rules-based international order.

Europe and North America are at the core of the global community. The transatlantic bond is the bedrock of our shared security and our common values. We must continue to strengthen that community, and reach out to like-minded partners across the globe.

We should invigorate our economies by enhancing economic ties. More trade. More mutual investments. I welcome the free trade agreement between the EU and Canada. And I hope to see a rapid conclusion of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the United States.

Freer trade and greater investments will create jobs and set a strong example for others to follow. And a stronger economic partnership will boost our ability to protect and promote an international rules based economic system, whose benefits we all enjoy.

We should strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO. We share 22 members. We share a positive vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace. But we also share difficult neighbourhoods. So we should work even more closely together to deal with those threats and to project stability.

By bringing new members into NATO and the European Union, we have spread peace, prosperity and progress across this continent. We made clear in Wales that we are actively supporting our partners in Europe to choose their own path. We will keep NATO’s door open for new members. We continue to help partners to walk through that door if they so wish, and if they make the necessary reforms. And no third country can have a veto.

Our shared vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace cannot be complete without the integration of the Western Balkans. Montenegro could be an important next step. That’s why our door must – and will – stay open.

The United States and Europe are core partners and allies. But this is not an exclusive club. We should continue to reach out to like-minded partners across the globe. A stronger global community of democracies would help us protect and promote freedom, democracy, free trade and a rules-based world order. Those are the values that forces of oppression violently oppose.

By working together, the world’s free societies can better preserve and bolster our core values. Because to preserve the rules-based global order and our way of life, the forces of freedom, cooperation and modernity must prevail over those of division, dictatorship and destruction.

Third, we must strengthen our engagement in world security. Stand up for our fundamental principles and values. Defend the rules-based international order.
For decades, the world has profited from a liberal international order, a cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing freedom, market economy and democracy, and renouncing territorial conquest. A rules-based order that can manage the peaceful rise of new powers. A liberal international order that has facilitated global peace, progress and prosperity.

We, the citizens of free societies, need to show greater self-confidence in our own values, principles and way of life. Of course, our societies are not perfect. But freedom and opportunities for each individual have tapped undreamt-of resources, and unleashed progress and innovation. The right to choose your own way of life stimulates creativity and energy. The freedom to pose critical questions about established truths and dogmas ensures progress, renewal and development. And the right to speak against those in power contributes to a more open society and a more efficient and transparent government.

I see these values and principles now coming under pressure from forces of oppression. Forces of oppression that want to limit the liberal democracy and trample the liberal international order. Recent events show only too clearly that freedom, democracy and peace cannot be taken for granted. It is for us to stand up for freedom, and defend our freedom.

We have to be willing and able to use both soft and hard power to protect and promote our values. However, as we approach the end of over a decade of combat operations in Afghanistan, we see pressures to turn inward.

But the world will not become less dangerous just because we wish it to be. Challenges will not go away just because we look away. So now of all times, we must keep a global perspective. And counter isolationism and retreat.

Any lasting solution to a crisis will always be political. And so diplomacy remains vital. But to give ourselves the best chance of success, we must be prepared to back up diplomatic soft power with military hard power, when necessary.

We must not only develop the capabilities we need. We must also demonstrate the political will to use them when required. So, I welcome the important efforts by the United States and other Allies and partners to act against the so called” Islamic State”.

We have seen, again and again, that crises breed crises. Force is still a factor. And if we fail to defend freedom and democracy, forces of oppression will seize their opportunity. We have seen, again and again, that appeasement does not lead to peace. It just incites tyrants. Any failure to counter oppression will only invite further oppression. That is the lesson of the 20th century – a lesson which we must never forget. So while military action remains the last resort, we must be able to resort to it when we need to. Not to wage war, but to build peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very proud to have served this unique Alliance. NATO is the only permanent framework where 28 democracies of North America and Europe consult, decide and act every day to ensure our collective security. After 20 years of challenging operations, we
have the most capable and connected forces in history. And we are at the centre of a wide network of security partnerships with countries and organisations across the globe.

This is a challenging time. A time when our values and our will are being tested. We must rise to the challenge. Resist the pressures to retrench. And remain resolute.

Over the past year, we have seen why we need NATO. The question is no longer “why NATO”. The question now is about “more NATO”.

Our Wales Summit has set out a clear course. We need to pursue that course. Urgently. To reinforce the rules-based international order. And remain united today and in the years to come.

We must preserve our freedom. Protect our people. And promote our values.

Thank you.