



NATO Livestream: NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg visit to Finland

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with Finnish President Alexander Stubb in Helsinki on Thursday, 6 June 2024, in his first visit since Finland joined NATO. The meeting was livestreamed on NATO official website and members of the ATA network were invited to join.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg remarked that less than a year passed from Finland's submission to join NATO to the final ratification of Finland's membership, which is very quick compared to the average joining process. He also confirmed that Finland commits more than 2% GDP on defence spending to help ensure NATO's continued military readiness. As we know, the minimum of 2% GDP defence spending became a commitment of all member states after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the following armed conflict in Donbass in 2014. Secretary General Stoltenberg also said that both mentioned events represented a defining moment in NATO's military and strategic thinking.

Regarding the status of the war in Ukraine and NATO's support for the attacked country, Secretary General Stoltenberg mentioned the importance of strong military support for Ukraine and improvement of the defence capabilities of NATO members, especially those that border Ukraine and the Russian Federation. He also emphasized that NATO has two primary goals in Ukraine: to secure Ukrainian victory (he did not specify what does it actually mean) and to prevent further escalation of the conflict that could result in direct confrontation between Russian and NATO's troops. He also admitted that NATO does not regret trying to bring Russia closer to the alliance after the Cold War, an action that enjoyed large support between member states before Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

To secure NATO's Eastern Flank and to prevent the war between the alliance and Russia, he stressed that NATO already increased the number of troops in its eastern member states to 8 Battlegroups and is cooperating with the EU in the field of defence. Both organization are working on prevention of capabilities' duplication and are promoting military equipment standardization for better interoperability between various allied armed forces. While the cooperation between both organizations is increasing, the question remains if EU has the ability to ramp-up its joint military industry to the level of the Russian Federation. In light of other global issues Secretary General Stoltenberg reminded that NATO is in its core a regional organization, but it is increasingly facing global security threats like advanced cyber-attacks, small arms proliferation, terrorism and competition between NATO member states and other



regional and global great powers. He also mentioned that recently NATO increased its cooperation with its Asian partners in the field of defence and broader security.

Finland's President Alexander Stubb stated that Finland joined NATO as a part of its deterrence policy against Russia assertive actions in the region. He said that there were multiple signs of revived Russian expansionism in the recent years like the first (from 1994 to 1996) and second (from 1999 to 2001) Chechen war followed by large counterinsurgency campaign in the broader Northern Caucasus, invasion of Georgia and support for the Abkhazia and South Ossetia breakaway regions in 2008, annexation of Crimea and internal conflict in Donbass in 2014 and invasion of the rest of Ukraine in 2022 that is still ongoing. In regard to the latter, he warned that Russia will retain its expansionistic policy along with its long-term plan of subjugating Ukraine. This will be conducted through kinetic and conventional warfare in Ukraine, which will be supported by different variations of hybrid warfare in the Western countries. He also said that Russia will need 5-10 years to rebuild its forces to pre-war levels after the war in Ukraine is over and despite its mobilization to wartime economy together with expanding its military and defence industry, there remains possibility that Russian military forces could de-modernize to the levels of the 1990s.

Regarding Finland's contribution to the overall NATO military capabilities, he remarked Finland's willingness to provide its military land components to NATO alliance and that Finland's capabilities can determine NATO's future involvement in the Arctic. Furthermore, he said that NATO's goals in the region can be achieved through the very strong Nordic component, which will include combined forces and capabilities of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. He also reminded all present at the meeting that since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine NATO became more united and interconnected. President Stubb also emphasized the importance of deciding how Ukraine's assistance will be financed, and that Finland supports eventual Ukraine's membership in NATO. When he was questioned about possible outcomes for NATO if the results of upcoming US presidential elections turn the US on the path of the isolationism, he stated that in current global situation US cannot remain a superpower without its allies in Europe, especially those in NATO and that the end of US support for Ukraine would create fractures between US and European NATO members. He also mentioned that in his opinion concept of the multipolar world already evolved into a new phase, which he called the "multi-aligned" world.

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