

Beat: News

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

Doorstep statement

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USPA NEWS - Doorstep statement

by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg prior to the meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in the format of Ministers of Defence and Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Good morning.

I'm glad to be back at the European Council.

And I think it is an expression of the close cooperation between the European Union and NATO.

Last week High Representative vice president Mogherini participated in the NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting in Antalya.

Today I will meet with the Defence Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the European Union.

And I think this close cooperation is very natural because we are facing the same security environment, the same challenges.

To the east we see more assertive Russia, responsible for aggressive actions in Ukraine.

And the important thing now is to make sure that the Minsk agreements are fully implemented. And I call all parties to respect the ceasefire and to allow the OSCE monitors full access so they can monitor the ceasefire and the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

To the south we see turmoil, we see violence.

And I strongly support the efforts by the UN to reach a political agreement which can establish a unity government in Libya and to establish ceasefire.

NATO stands ready to help the government of Libya to build defence capacity, to increase their ability to defend themselves, and to create stability when conditions allow for such defence capacity building efforts by NATO in Libya.

I also welcome the decision that the European Union will take today on establishing an operation at sea to dismantle the criminal networks that are responsible for smuggling people across the Mediterranean.

And I welcome these efforts by the European Union.

And also the dialogue between the European Union and the United Nations to create necessary mandates for such operation.

Lastly, I am looking forward to the EU Council on defence in June. I think that would be a new opportunity to develop the close cooperation between the European Union and NATO. And also an opportunity to address defence capabilities, and also defence industry, and how we can work together to augment and to increase our collective defence.

Q: Sec Gen, is there any planning at NATO to how they could look at supporting an EU operation at sea?

JENS STOLTENBERG: We stand ready to help the Libyan government with defence-capacity building when the situation allow for that kind of cooperation. We'll also strongly welcome the efforts by the UN to try to find a political solution to establishing a unity government and a ceasefire.

Then I welcome the efforts by the European Union to develop a more comprehensive response and also to establish an operation at sea to dismantle the criminal networks which are responsible for smuggling people across the Mediterranean. There has been no request for any specific NATO contribution. I will participate in meetings today. And then we stand ready to help if there is a request.

Q: There are some reports suggesting that ISIS is sending high terms [? Inaudible] through the smugglers, through the port. Can your intelligence... can you confirm this?

JENS STOLTENBERG: First of all, this is a human tragedy. People lose their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean. And therefore, it is important that the European now acts. This is about criminal networks. It's about border control. It's about migration. And therefore the European Union is now working on how to respond to this.

Of course, one of the problems is that there might be foreign fighters. There might be terrorists also trying to hide... to blend in among the migrants. And this just underlines the importance of... that we have to respond to this turmoil, to these threats in many different ways.

And NATO is working on the root causes of the problems by working with partners both in the Middle East and North Africa to help them increase their capacity to stabilize their own countries. We work with Jordan. We work with partners in North Africa. And we stand ready to do so also in Libya.

JENS STOLTENBERG: We are following the developments in Macedonia very closely. And we have a NATO liaison office in Skopje. And Macedonia is an aspirant country for NATO membership. And therefore, we have also close cooperation with Macedonia.

I very much believe that peaceful demonstrations are part of democratic society. The important thing is to avoid more violence, to make sure that the democratic institutions are developed and that the rule of law is implemented in full. And that we avoid escalation of the crisis and the conflict in Macedonia.

Q: Secretary General, you are always working on special measures to fight against Russian propaganda. How do you evaluate this race? Russian propaganda...

JENS STOLTENBERG: The best way of countering disinformation is by information. And what we are doing in NATO and also what we are doing in cooperation with the European Union is to provide facts about what we are doing; and also to counter the disinformation we see.

And we do so by telling exactly what we are doing. And what we are doing is that we are implementing reinforcement of our collective defence in NATO. It is the strongest reinforcement of collective defence since the end of the Cold War. But everything we do is defensive. It's proportionate. And it's fully in line with our international commitments.

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