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Plenary Session 7 **Securing the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC):** **Threats and Responses**

Remarks by
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- I am honored to represent NATO at this prestigious conference and to have been invited to speak on a subject – maritime security – which is both important strategically in its own right and also of shared concern to a large segment of the International Community, including here in Asia.
- As you are aware, NATO has partnerships or is cooperating operationally in Afghanistan with some 10 nations of Asia. Because of our engagement in Afghanistan and because of these partnerships, NATO has become more aware and has attached increased importance to security challenges, but also consultation and cooperation opportunities, with an increasing number of nations in this part of the world.
- In today's world, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans are next door to each other and no longer a world apart. And in an increasingly inter-connected world, a key link between the Atlantic and Pacific communities of nations is the Indian Ocean. Which helps explain the significance of many of our navies, from NATO and from the Asia-Pacific region, cooperating pragmatically in the international fight against piracy in the western half of the Indian Ocean.

* The views expressed herein are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of NATO or NATO member nations.

- I have prefaced my remarks on maritime security with these wider political and strategic considerations, because NATO's approach to maritime security must be seen in the broader context of what the Alliance has designated in its new Strategic Concept, approved at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, as one of its three core tasks – namely, its contribution to cooperative security.
- Turning now to the topic of this panel, as everyone in the audience would be aware, NATO is, in many ways, a maritime alliance.
- NATO is composed, to a large extent, of nations with long coastlines, centuries-old seafaring traditions, worldwide trading interests, and modern and powerful naval capabilities.
- In many ways, NATO is a maritime hub, bringing together naval forces and many other marine actors and agencies to either cooperate operationally – and NATO's Operation *Ocean Shield* in the Indian Ocean is an example of our NATO navies working together side-by-side – or consult and exchange information and best practices, which we do through the holding of many maritime-oriented conferences and seminars – including one in Rome a month and a half ago and another in Halifax a few days from now – as well as through the NATO Shipping Centre in Northwood, in the United Kingdom.
- At the same time, NATO, like others, has not been exempt from what some observers call "sea blindness", a sort of benign neglect of all things maritime.

- Yet, the prosperity of the world is fully dependent on the exercise and protection of the principle of freedom of navigation across the seas and oceans of our planet.
- Maybe our citizens do not realise it, probably many don't, but some 90% of all goods traded around the world go by sea.
- Many operations and missions over the last two decades have been land-centric, and this may also help explain this "sea blindness". But we should not lose sight that even in Afghanistan, carrier-based air support provided by allied aircraft-carriers sailing in the Arabian Sea, as well as logistic resupply coming ashore in Karachi, Pakistan, have been essential to any engagement on the ground. And, last year, the enforcement of the UN-mandated arms embargo in Libya, as well as the prosecution of the air campaign to protect civilians and civilian populated areas, was critically dependent on the contribution of allied maritime forces operating in the Mediterranean Sea.
- This is why, starting in 2008, NATO initiated what I can only call a "maritime awareness revolution", which over the last three years has resulted in the approval by our highest decision-making body, the North Atlantic Council, of an Alliance Maritime Strategy and a Maritime Security Operations Concept.
- These are the highest-level maritime-oriented documents approved by the Alliance since the end of the Cold War more than 20 years ago.

- This is why I have been talking of nothing less than a revolution in NATO's awareness of the importance of the maritime dimension of our shared security.
- And the Alliance Maritime Strategy has been released as a publicly available document for all to see and read.
- An important aspect of this Strategy is the new prominence given to maritime security and to NATO's contribution to an international "comprehensive approach" to maritime security.
- The concept of a "Comprehensive Approach" to crisis management developed by NATO applies as much at sea, as on land – particularly, its focus on consultation and information-sharing – although not necessarily in the same way.
- NATO's naval forces are now authorised and expected, in addition to their traditional military roles, to support law-enforcement efforts at sea, within the legal framework established by either treaties or customary law.
- Again, NATO's Operation Ocean Shield in the Indian Ocean is an illustration of our contribution to the fight against unlawful behaviour at sea, in this case piracy.
- Our UN-mandated maritime embargo operations along the coasts of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and of Libya last year -- Operations *Sharp Guard* and *Unified Protector*, respectively - are another illustration.

- Our naval forces also contribute to the deterrence or prevention of other forms of unlawful behaviour at sea, such as that involved in conducting terrorist acts at sea and from the sea, or using the sea in support of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their delivery means.
- Here, NATO's Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea, which is a maritime operation to deter and prevent terrorism, comes to mind.
- Looking ahead, a main direction for NATO in the field of maritime security is the further development of our partnerships with our Mediterranean Dialogue partners – countries that extend from Mauritania in the West to Jordan in the East – with our four partners in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative – Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – and with our expanding number of institutional or operational partners here in the Asia-Pacific region, many of whom are important actors in the maritime security field, including Malaysia.
- We would like to see our mutual interaction on maritime security -- from the exchange of information, experience and best practices, to practical, ship-to-ship cooperation at sea – expand and flourish.
- NATO has several maritime-oriented institutions that naval officers and other maritime authorities might be interested in visiting, starting with our Allied Maritime Command headquarters and NATO Shipping Centre in Northwood.

- Or, possibly, these officers, or their civilian colleagues from other agencies, might be interested in attending some of the specialised courses given at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Centre at Souda Bay, on the island of Crete, in Greece, or at one of our three maritime-oriented Centres of Excellence, located in Norfolk, Virginia, in the United States, Ostende, in Belgium, and Kiel, in Germany.
- And there are also regular opportunities to either observe or participate in NATO-led maritime exercises, which we hold in Europe about twice a year.
- Last year, off the eastern coast of Spain, NATO's *Bold Monarch 2011* submarine rescue exercise brought together not only several of NATO's navies, but also vessels or observers from more than 20 non-NATO nations around the world.
- As we survey the evolving security environment, it is becoming increasingly clear that many modern security challenges will either originate or manifest themselves at sea. This is an ubiquitous set of phenomena that can affect any nation, anywhere.
- Risks extend from threats to international sea lines of communication – for instance, piracy directed at merchant shipping in the Strait of Malacca or hypothetical attacks on energy-related infrastructure at sea – to targeted terrorist acts against vessels or ships, such as those that took place a decade ago against the U.S. Navy destroyer USS *Cole* or the French tanker *Limburg*.

- These risks are often difficult to anticipate, in terms of geography and timing, because of the vastness of sea areas and the scale of world-wide ship movements, to deter or to prevent.
- Ocean, seas, straits and littoral areas offer many opportunities for concealment and for the employment of “hit-and-run” tactics by pirates, criminal gangs and terrorists and their nation-state sponsors.
- Small events at sea or in harbors can have disproportionally large consequences, starting with global media impact.
- Many large cities the world over, many critical industrial, transportation and energy-related infrastructures are located along coastlines or in close proximity. They are vulnerable to interference, disruption or destruction originating at sea.
- Climate change might also have consequences at sea and along the littoral that are not yet fully understood.
- While avoiding exaggerated alarmism, we need to reflect further on the implications of a global society, where the connections and mutual dependency between prosperity and security on land and freedom of navigation and security at sea are expanding.
- While the world’s oceans and seas have been, since the end of the World War Two, mostly safe and secure, we cannot take it for granted that this will always be the case, everywhere and at all times.

- Ensuring that the right of freedom of navigation is enjoyed and enforced may well require a greater commitment to international cooperation and a greater investment in the resources and capabilities that contribute to enhanced maritime security.
- NATO is only one among several actors in this field and its area of technical and operational competence is limited.
- Nonetheless, because of NATO's membership and its partnerships, because of their global trade interests, and because of the experience and expertise that NATO has in fusing and sharing information, in the development of doctrine and standard operating procedures, and in the planning and conduct of multinational operations, including disaster relief, the Alliance has an important contribution to make.
- It is with this vision and this ambition in mind that I wish to conclude my remarks.
- The opportunity is there. We should not waste it.
- Thank you for your attention.