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President after meeting with NATO chief: No discrepancies between us

Polish President Andrzej Duda said "there are no discrepancies between us," after a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in Warsaw on Monday.

The President received Jens Stoltenberg at Warsaw's Belweder Palace on Monday. The NATO chief was in Warsaw for the Spring Session of the Alliance's Parliamentary Assembly.

President Duda added that their meeting focused on "very important matters, or even the most significant ones" from the point of view of NATO actions planned for the near future, as well as a meeting of the Bucharest Nine and a NATO summit in Brussels.

"There is no discrepancy between us; we agree with the secretary general as to all the main aims that the Alliance should work towards in the coming years. Towards a certain profile that has been accepted," the President stressed, noting among other things the mutual satisfaction with the rapid implementation of decisions taken in Wales and Warsaw.



Andrzej Duda noted at the same time that in the context of the forthcoming Brussels NATO summit it is necessary to think "about further decisions that will be taken there in terms of the Alliance's efficient functioning, so-called reactions, which will be followed at that time when it comes to a possible engagement of military forces of the advanced presence, in order for those forces to be reinforced with others." He added that a decision on that subject should be taken at the Brussels summit.

The NATO secretary general underscored that Poland is a "very strong" NATO member. "You participate and

contribute to our shared security and our collective defence in many different ways," he observed. "You lead by example on defence spending, allocating 2% of GDP on defence." He also recalled that Poland is host to a NATO Multinational Battalion Battle Group and contributes to the battle group stationed in Latvia. "I would also like to thank Poland for the many contributions you are making to different NATO missions and operations, in Afghanistan, but also for training activities that NATO conducts in Iraq, and this is about fighting terrorism. When our neighbours are more stable we are more secure," Stoltenberg commented.

Jens Stoltenberg announced that he had discussed many issues with the Polish President that would dominate the agenda of July's summit, including defence conditions and increasing the Alliance's readiness so that its forces could be more rapidly deployed. He noted that at the Brussels summit a decision would be taken on the location of commands related to the adoption of the Alliance's new command structure. He went on to state that the July summit would also concern cooperation with "two close" partners - Georgia and Ukraine. "NATO will continue to provide political and practical support to Georgia and Ukraine (...) because they are highly valued partners where NATO has an important role to play, and we will continue to support them," Stoltenberg declared.

He also stated that NATO wants to "combine deterrence, defence, with political dialogue with Russia." "Russia is our neighbour, Russia is here to stay so we need to continue to engage in dialogue with Russia," he asserted, pointing out that this week will see a further meeting of the NATO-Russia Council. "I believe that these meetings of the NATO-Russia Council are important because they provide a framework to also discuss difficult issues. For instance, the crisis in and around Ukraine. (...) And we have seen the consequences of the crisis in Ukraine, Russia's destabilising efforts in eastern Ukraine with the downing of MH17 (...) and I agree with the Dutch government that Russia should admit responsibility for its part in the downing of the plane and also fully cooperate so we make sure that those who are responsible are held accountable."

The NATO secretary general stressed that the Alliance is currently focusing on cooperation with the EU. "I welcome stronger EU efforts on defence. At the same time it has been clearly stated by EU leaders and by European leaders that this is not about creating any alternative to NATO, this is about complementing NATO, strengthening the European pillar within NATO and I agree that we need stronger EU efforts, stronger European efforts to also strengthen the transatlantic bond and improve burden sharing," he said.

On the subject of expenditures and budgeting, Jens Stoltenberg emphasised that member states' defence budgets have to be in line with the Alliance's outgoings - reduced in the period after the Cold War - as tensions increase.

President Duda was asked about his discussion with Stoltenberg on the subject of the location of the Alliance's new commands. At the preliminary stage, the reforms foresee two new command centres. One will cover the northern Atlantic and is to improve communications capability and defend maritime routes between Europe and America; the other, situated in Europe, is tasked with improving the Alliance's logistical capacities and especially the deployment of equipment and forces in Europe. Poland has announced its interest in this type of command and would like it to be located in Szczecin (northwestern Poland).

"We talked about the creation of a so-called army command," Andrzej Duda replied. "We had indicated to the secretary general earlier, but also today, that we would very definitely be happy for this army command within NATO to be in our part of Europe, in Szczecin." He highlighted that the Multinational Corps North-East is already there, within the NATO framework, conducted by Poland together with Denmark and Germany. Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that a decision on the land forces component would not be taken at the coming July summit but would need to wait for input from the NATO Europe commander, General Curtis Scaparotti, a process he said could take some time.

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