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President: Poland is a proud and responsible member of NATO

Speech by President of the Republic of Poland Mr Andrzej Duda / National Press Club, Washington.

Thank you for the kind words of introduction. I am delighted to be here among so many distinguished experts and friends.

Let me begin by thanking the National Press Club for providing the venue, the Atlantic Council and the Center for European Policy Analysis for organizing this event. Poland has a long and positive relation with your organizations. We appreciate the cooperation so far and kindly ask for more.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poles and Americans share many perspectives, stand united and speak with the same voice on issues of importance. In this spirit, I would like to share with you today some of my thoughts in regard to our foreign policy and security cooperation.

I'd like to start by presenting a few principles, which the foreign policy of my country is based on. They are longstanding – not motivated by current political opinions, political party affiliation or ideology. They are rooted in the deep historical experience of my Country.

Polish foreign policy is based on 3 fundamental pillars:
I. The principle of obeying international law. The principle that cannot be violated. This implies the respect for internal sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. No matter how strong or weak they are.

II. The principle of partnership and dialogue among nations. We reject a system based neither on the transaction between the mightiest nor on the balance of opposing powers, in which stability is achieved by means of appeasement and sacrifice of the weaker ones. History teaches us that such a system has never guaranteed a permanent peace in the world.

III. The third pillar is the principle of Euro-Atlantic unity in international politics. For the last 26 years Poland has been a consistent and committed advocate of transatlantic bonds. No wonder we are a proud and responsible member of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance.
We apply these three principles when assessing the contemporary international situation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Poland appreciates the continuous interest on the side of the American administration, the U.S. Congress, as well as the Washingtonian expert community in favor of strengthening the transatlantic bond in the area of security. Our goals are the same. We need to keep NATO strong and united and the United States engaged in European security, as the leading guarantor of the credibility of the Alliance.

It is our goal to significantly strengthen the security of the member states, with particular focus on the Central and Eastern-European countries. For Poland, this implies strengthening the NATO's presence on the Eastern flank.

We subscribe to the principle of engagement and responsibility. We realize that every member state of the Alliance is both: the recipient as well as the provider of security. Everyone has the right to expect support from the allies. At the same time, everyone has an obligation to think about the security of others and in fact provide that security. This is what allied solidarity is all about.

Poland is taking its security and the Alliance`s obligations very seriously. We have contributed our share to NATO defense capabilities. We stood by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, we are one of few countries in the Alliance with a defense spending of 2% of our GDP and we're pursuing the modernization of our Armed Forces. We are also contributing to the Baltic Air Policing mission. We will not withdraw from our obligations in the global counterterrorism efforts. Whenever we speak about strengthening of the Eastern flank, we want this strengthening to be of a regional nature and to cover all the states which feel a real threat.

We are led by solidarity and responsibility in saying that NATO Summit in Warsaw must have a UNIVERSAL dimension. It must provide response to all challenges to the allied security, no matter which direction they are coming from.

I wish to stress the following in a very clear way: we should avoid dividing the security of the Alliance into South, East or North. There is one Alliance and equal security for all members is a must.

We should not waste our energy on debating which is more dangerous: a tank battalion or a bunch of terrorists on the streets. It is natural, that our national positions are often determined by geography and history. We have different experiences and different perception of threats. Yet we are in the same Alliance and share the same values and principles.

Warsaw Summit is the place to prove that we are ready to defend them together.

I'm deeply convinced that the threat to the contemporary security has one basic source and that is why it concerns us all. This threat name is: the violation of human dignity and international law. The law of force has replaced the law itself. We can see this in Eastern Ukraine, we are also seeing this in Syria. We have to counter it because NATO is the alliance that defends fundamental values, freedoms and human rights.

It is the aggressive outside political and military posture that has brought the transatlantic security to a turning point. The security environment in Europe has deteriorated dramatically.

I wish to say it loud and clear: Poland cares about best possible relations with all its neighbors. What threatens Europe today is neither a particular state nor a particular nation. It is the policy of a certain state which results in permanent violation of the international law.

Poland, just like the whole of Europe, does not seek to isolate Russia. We do not want a come-back of the Cold War, which Prime Minister Medvediev talked about a short while ago in Munich. Societies and nations do not want to live in "the balance of fear". However, we need to bear in mind that in order to build a partnership and a dialogue, mutual respect for common rules is needed. In other words – in order for a dialogue to be possible, law has to be respected.

Experience tells us that often what provokes aggression is the vacuum of security, military weakness and unsolved, so called "frozen conflicts".

This is why we need to give a clear message to the world. Sanctions must be imposed and maintained on every country that violates the international law. Sanctions are universal legal instrument, which aim is to defend the principles of international relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to think about NATO`s relations with aggressive outside countries, we have to be strong and feel safe in the first place. The Alliance should once-again be able to define the security situation in its own territory on its own conditions. We cannot afford to be one step behind.
And this is exactly the reason why the Warsaw Summit must demonstrate that we are capable of building an adequate and cohesive DEFENSE potential based on RESILIENCE and DETERRENCE. Today this involves increasing the presence of troops and allied infrastructure on NATO`s Eastern flank. Real deterrence means real presence.

The US engagement in reassurance activities has been and will remain crucial. In the wake of the crisis in Ukraine, the US has visibly expanded its military presence in Poland and in the region. The European Reassurance Initiative, announced by President Obama during his visit to Warsaw, has extended the measures adopted by NATO. We welcome with satisfaction the announcement on increasing the presence of the US military equipment in Central and Eastern Europe. We declare our readiness for extensive co-operation with a view to bringing the equipment to Poland and boosting the defense system of both: our own country and that of the entire region.

However, as I said before, at the same time, we fully recognize seriousness of challenges from the South. Terrorist activities of the so-called Islamic State pose a threat which undermines the foundations of our civilization. Poland consequently stands by the countries fighting terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are 3 months left to the Warsaw Summit. We are strong and effective when we act together and stand at each other`s side.
Poles and Americans have a history of successful cooperation in this regard. Today, when we face numerous threats and challenges for our security, we need to preserve our strategic partnership which is built on mutual respect.

Allow me to sum up this presentation with the words of the US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy:
“There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction”.

With this understanding, Poland is looking forward to meaningful results of the upcoming NATO Summit.

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