

**„A NEW STRATEGIC REALITY IN EUROPE“**  
**SPEECH BY NATO DEPUTY SECRETAR GENERAL**  
**AMBASSADOR ALEXANDER VERSHBOW**  
**TO THE**  
**21<sup>st</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY:**  
**“DEFENCE MATTERS-NEW CHALLENGES**  
**FOR NATO AND EU SECURITY POLICY”**  
**KRAKOW, POLAND – 4 APRIL 2014**

Let me start by thanking the Foundation Institute for Strategic Studies for organizing today's conference, together with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Polish Institute of International Affairs. It's a pleasure to visit beautiful Krakow once again, and this year's conference comes at an especially opportune moment.

For 20 years, the security of the Euro-Atlantic region has been based on the premise that we do not face an adversary to our east. This premise is now in doubt.

Russia's recent actions against Ukraine have been a wake-up call for everyone in the Euro-Atlantic community. They follow a pattern of behavior that we already observed in Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The pattern is to influence, destabilize and even intervene in countries on Russia's borders, to prolong "frozen" conflicts by supporting corrupt, separatist groups, and to thereby deny sovereign states the ability to choose their own security arrangements and to chart their own political destinies.

President's Putin goal is to create a sphere of influence in Eurasia and to prevent the emergence of stable democracies that could call into question the legitimacy of Russia's authoritarian system. This behavior is more typical of predatory nation-states from the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and it is far from removed from the cooperative and peace-building behavior we expect to see from modern states today. It rips up the rulebook of inter-state relations that we have painstakingly written since the end of the Second War, and it violates the many principles that Russia swore to uphold after the end of the Cold War. It recreates new dividing lines in Europe, some 25 years after all of us – including more enlightened leaders in Moscow – erased them and committed ourselves to the values of liberty and democracy.

Russia's actions – altering legally recognized borders by force and actively subverting the government of a friendly neighbouring state – pose a real threat to an open, rules-based

international system, a system based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and their right to make their own choices without fear of intimidation or interference.

In response, we in NATO have to make a painful and necessary choice of our own. If President Putin continues to guide Russia along its present path of aggression, confrontation and escalation, we will be forced to consider Russia less of a partner and more of an adversary.

This is not a choice that we want to make. Since the end of the Cold War, we have tried hard to reach out to Russia. Our nations provided substantial economic assistance to Russia after 1991 and we made it a full and equal member of some of our leading global institutions, such as G-8.

When the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe sought to join the Atlantic Alliance, we made a special effort to ensure that NATO enlargement went hand in hand with the development of a substantial partnership with Russia. We believed that it was in our mutual interest for a democratic Russia to be a full partner within an all-inclusive Euro-Atlantic security system.

Moreover, to make crystal clear that NATO enlargement was not directed against Russia, the Alliance made series of unilateral commitments to refrain from deploying substantial combat forces or nuclear weapons on the territories of new Alliance member states. We partnered with the Russians as fellow peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo. And we worked hard to engage Russia in dialogue and cooperation on many issues of common concern.

Regrettably, while there were some success stories, NATO-Russia relations never achieved their full potential, much less the strategic partnership we set as our goal at the Lisbon Summit four years ago. The unfortunate fact is that, even before the recent crisis, the scope of NATO-Russia cooperation was narrowing as Moscow assumed an obstructionist, zero-sum stance on virtually all major issues – including missile defence cooperation, non-strategic nuclear weapons and military transparency.

Now, however, Russia has gone far beyond 'agreeing to disagree'. It is expressing its disagreement through unjustified military deployments, illegal referendums, and crude propaganda reminiscent of Stalin's times, rather than engaging in an honest debate and search for common ground. And Russia's leaders appear to be falling victim to their own propaganda, seeing a Western anti-Russian conspiracy behind the legitimate strivings of its neighbours for honest government and mutually beneficial cooperation with the European Union and NATO.

Our NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting earlier this week made clear there is still a broad consensus across the Alliance that engagement with Russia remains our preferred way forward. This crisis is not ideological, and we do not face a renewed Cold War competition

across the globe with the total paralysis of any cooperation that such a situation would entail. Our past cooperation has born real fruit and, in many areas, this cooperation could continue when conditions are right. But we must face the possibility that for the foreseeable future, Russia will present a challenge to our aspiration for a Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

So far, NATO has responded to the crisis in Ukraine in four ways, in tandem with the sanctions and other measures undertaken by our member states and the European Union.

First, we have reaffirmed our full support for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders. In this regard, I'm confident that Allies will maintain a long-term "non-recognition" policy regarding Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Second, we have agreed to strengthen our support for Ukraine through intensified political and military cooperation. This includes helping Ukraine's armed forces transform into modern and effective institutions that can defend their country against external threats while providing credible deterrence. It includes improving the ability of Ukrainian forces to operate together with Allied forces and greater participation in NATO exercises, so that Ukraine can continue to be a contributor to global security as we have seen in the Balkans, in Afghanistan and, most recently, in our maritime counter-piracy mission, Ocean Shield.

Third, we have also reaffirmed our commitment to collective defence, deterrence and reassurance for NATO's own members. We have reaffirmed that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is unbreakable and absolute, and that NATO will come to the defence of any of its members now and in the future. Allies have already deployed additional fighter jets to police the airspace of our Baltic members. We have begun surveillance flights over Poland and Romania. We remain ready to take additional steps if circumstances warrant, and we will apply the lessons of this crisis to future assessments of our strategy and force posture.

Finally, we have suspended virtually all practical civilian and military cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council framework. Our political dialogue will continue to allow us to exchange views on the current crisis and its resolution. But business as usual is clearly not an option.

NATO Foreign Ministers will review our relationships with Russia again when they next meet in June. But in the next weeks and month, we will also assess the implications of Russia's violation of the letter and spirit of its obligations, including those it assumed in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 and the Rome Declaration of 2002. Clearly, our own assumptions about the nature of the relationship with Russia, and the unilateral commitments we made in the 1990s, will need reassessed.

Russia's actions over the past few weeks put our next NATO Summit in Wales in September in a very different light. It will be still about "Future NATO" and set priorities for the Alliance for the period after 2014, following the completion of our decade-long mission in

Afghanistan. Many of our Summit deliverables may, in fact, be the same. But we will need to work towards them with a new sense of urgency, taking into account the additional challenge we now must reckon with to the East.

A first, crucial lesson from the recent crisis is that we must maintain a strong defence and deterrence in Europe. If there was ever any doubt, the crisis now makes clear why we must maintain a strong defence and deterrence in Europe. If there was ever any doubt, the crisis now makes clear why we must invest sufficiently in defence and security, and why we cannot just keep cutting our defence budgets every year while others around the world continue to boost theirs.

NATO's greatest responsibility is to protect and defend our territory and our populations. To do that, we must ensure that we have the full range of capabilities to deter and defend against any threat. This means high-end capabilities to deter and defend against large-scale threats to our territory, and expeditionary forces for future crisis management missions. We need to be prepared for all threats. And our people and platforms need to be ready to deploy wherever required, with the high level of interoperability we have attained through nearly two decades of non-stop operations. This puts a premium on our Smart Defence and Connected Forces Initiatives, including a robust program of training and exercises.

A second key lesson from the recent crisis is that we need not only the right capabilities to project stability, but also the right relationships. And so we must deepen our partnerships with other nations and organizations and explore ways to help others to project stability in their own region. This must include doing what we can to support Ukraine and our other Eastern partners such as Georgia and the Republic of Moldova – in close coordination with the efforts of the European Union and other organizations. And we must keep our door open for new countries to join our Alliance, making clear that no outside power can have a veto.

Finally, the Ukraine crisis has highlighted the importance of the transatlantic bond. In the tough economic climate of the past few years, the temptation to act alone – or in some cases, to opt out – has been strong. But if we want to protect our shared security and our common values, America and Europe must continue to stand together, work together, and act together.

The United States will continue to be involved in Europe's security, and that involvement is constantly being updated and modernized. We now need European nations to make great effort to match the U.S. commitment – both politically and militarily.

Therefore, we need to redouble our efforts to work together to fill key capability gaps, including missile defence, cyber defence, and joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. We need to more closely combine our efforts to address security challenges on our European doorstep – such as Ukraine. And we need continue to work together on challenges beyond Europe. The increased danger in Europe doesn't mean we can pay any less attention to challenges in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

We also need to find a better balance of responsibilities between Allies – both between the United States and Europe and between Allies within Europe. Increased multinational cooperation – NATO Smart Defence, UE 'Pooling and Sharing' – can make a difference. But ultimately, a better balance can only be achieved by adequate levels of defence spending on the part of all Allies whether measured as a percentage of GDP or in terms of increasing the share of defence budgets devoted to modernization and investment.

Ladies and gentleman,

The Ukraine crisis has created a new strategic reality in Europe., and NATO must respond. It's not too late for Russia to turn back from its current path and to seek a peaceful, political solution that respects international law and the rights of sovereign nations. But Russia chooses confrontation over cooperation, NATO will meet that challenge. We will adhere to our principles, we will engage constructively with partners to support their freedom of choice, and we will continue to protect our Allies.s