

NATO Building Integrity Discipline Conference 2015

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“Corruption as a threat to stability and peace – a Norwegian view on the role of NATO”

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends and colleagues,

It is a pleasure and great honour for Norway to host *NATO’s Building Integrity Discipline Conference 2015*.

The focus of last year’s Oslo conference was institution building. I am proud to say that as a result of that conference, NATO today has obtained a new tool – a handbook on how to design and implement an integrity action plan. The handbook was written by Centre of Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS) in close co-operation with Transparency International UK and their Defence and Security Programme.

I would like to recognize this co-operation and the fact that the new director of TI’s Defence and Security Programme, Katherine Dixon, is with us today.

Tools are what a programme like Building Integrity needs. Tools that can guide and boost reform efforts. Tools that can help us fight corruption. Therefore, I am glad to say that a second handbook is now completed – one that is launched here at this conference today.

And let me also acknowledge the close co-operation between CIDS and Difi – the Norwegian Agency for Public Management and eGovernment. This second handbook is an example of how co-operation and synergy between two different institutions may provide excellent results.

No doubt it has been a productive year. And it has been a challenging year when speaking of the new security environment in Europe.

In today’s international setting we are once again forced to think of how we best can protect our common values – our democratic and free societies. Here, credible collective defence remains at the core, together with the principle of co-operative security. But there is more to it.

We need to protect, promote and adhere to values, standards and principles on which the international system is built. During the past year we have witnessed that violation of these principles seriously undermines our security. Therefore, we urge Russia to adhere to the established rules for how all countries should live together in peace and mutual respect.

History has taught us what to expect from an international system that disregards international law, uses military power to advance one’s own interests and domination by the strong over smaller or weaker neighbours.

We do not want to return to that.

Also combating corruption and promoting integrity and high ethical standards – in short, fighting for good governance – are vital means to protect our common values. Co-operative security and collective defence are about much more than protection of political sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is about the protection of our way of life – of free peoples deciding their own future through democratic elections, the rule of law, and respect for civil and political liberties.

It is about governments that are responsible to the people, governments that are transparent, responsive and accountable.

It is about respect for differences – tolerance and pluralism – but also about the need to co-operate on all that unites us.

And we do stand united in a common cause: to protect our values and principles of good governance. This is what building integrity and fighting corruption is all about.

And that brings me to another key message: corruption creates instability, undermines economic development, and threatens peace and security.

That raises the question: what should be the role of NATO?

Obviously, the Alliance does not have a direct role to play when the people of a country take to the streets to demonstrate their anger and lack of trust in elected politicians.

On the other hand, such popular revolts may create conditions or situations that are conducive to instabilities that have international repercussions. It is therefore in the interest of all countries to co-operate on measures that will counteract instability by preventive means.

This brings to the forefront our institutional capacity to co-operate through joining good forces.

In Europe today, NATO and the European Union are the key institutional pillars in that effort. Based on the notion of co-operative security both organizations reach out to partners and neighbours who share the political perspectives and ambitions.

NATO has developed a network of partnerships to promote values that unite us. So has the European Union. And as umbrellas providing institutional frameworks on a larger scale, we have the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe – OSCE.

And not to forget – at the global scale, we have the United Nations. The challenge is to have all these institutional frameworks pull in the same direction, concerted and in accordance with their respective competences and roles.

Let me now turn to NATO's role more specifically.

NATO has actively contributed to – and has itself been part of – the transformation of Europe and international security after the end of the Cold War. For a while, it seemed like the vision of a peaceful, stable and co-operative international community based on respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, and self-determination was within reach.

Some observers even spoke enthusiastically about “the end of history”. That is not what happened.

Instead, an important part of what we experienced was a return to history. Once Marxist-Leninism collapsed as the ideological superstructure in many countries, the vacuum was in some places filled by brands of illiberal nationalism. Rather than looking at close international co-operation as an opportunity, in order to pursue common goals, neighbours and the external world more generally were by some considered as threats.

The return to bad habits of history in some parts of the world fed political tensions, created new instabilities, and antagonism. The wars in former Yugoslavia became a wake-up call for us all.

The response of the international community has been attempts to build on what unites us, to forge the conditions for peaceful resolution of conflicts, and a focus on co-operative security. And in this, NATO has had – and still has – an important role to play.

New democracies aimed for Euro-Atlantic integration and became members of both NATO and the EU. Others are close partners. This development we could only dream of thirty years ago.

Have we succeeded in creating the foundations of a new and better world order? In some areas yes and in some no. There are success stories as well as regrettable setbacks. In Europe the successes far outweigh the issues that still remain to be resolved. We should not forget that.

On Europe's peripheries – North Africa, the Middle East, and Caucasus – the picture is mixed, at best. And the hopes in connection with the Arab Spring have withered, although we do not know whether there are seeds that might grow in the longer term.

The main setback, however, is coming from Russia. Its will to apply armed force to achieve political goals, its use of intimidation and pressure to change internationally recognized borders represent both a wakeup call and a major setback for European security.

As I already mentioned, Russia's threats and actions have put credible collective defence back on the agenda. But in addition to a renewed focus on hard security, we should not reduce our attention assigned to soft security.

Therefore, we must reinforce our emphasis on co-operative security. Again, the overall objective is clear – to protect the values that unite us.

NATO's Building Integrity Programme promotes some crucial elements that are an integral part of those values. While anti-corruption measures by some may be perceived as aiming at investigation, prosecution and court procedures, including jail sentences, building integrity implies a focus on preventive measures.

Building integrity aims at countering and reducing the risks of corruption and other kinds of fraud and unethical behaviour. The message is a positive and constructive one. Prevention is the key, and the objective is ensuring a political system based on good governance and high ethical standards.

For most of us present at this conference, a particular responsibility rests with our Ministries of Defence, our Armed Forces, and our defence sectors at large.

Corruption and unethical behaviour in the defence sector, as well as in the public sector in general, are not limited to NATO's partners, new democracies or states in transition.

On the contrary, the endemic nature of corruption makes no regard of whether you are allied or not. Admitting rather than ignoring the risk of corruption is therefore crucial. No one can claim to be immune to the risk of corruption. We can all improve.

Historically we have experienced incidents in the Norwegian defence sector, at some points raising public doubt about the integrity of Norway's defence institutions. High and sustained attention is key to avoid this.

Among other things we have in place a comprehensive action plan with a focus on attitudes, ethics and leadership. Today, all employees and especially leaders go through compulsory learning programs.

We do this to increase awareness, to promote discussions of moral dilemmas, and to stress the core values that we want to hold high and live by. We have ethical guidelines for contact with business and industry, as well as ethical guidelines for suppliers that want to do business with the Norwegian defence.

Let me also mention that we some time ago established an Ethical Advisory Group. The group is an independent body that reviews and provides input to the ethical issues that the defence sector faces. As such, this group's mandate is not limited to corruption but addresses integrity in the wider sense.

That is why I think that all Allies ought to participate actively in NATO's BI Programme. I am glad to see so many of you here. 31 countries represented, and also ACT, SHAPE, JFC Brunnsund, JFC Napoli and NATO HQ. But we have room for even more Allies.

That corruption represents a common challenge is compounded by the European Commission's report on corruption in the EU's 28 member states last year.

Let me also point out that Transparency International's corruption perception index shows that a clear majority of Europeans think that corruption is widespread in their own country.

The conclusion is simple: we must counter this together.

Corruption erodes trust in public institutions and in democracy. Where widespread mistrust prevails, it seriously may challenge the stability of a nation.

The defence sector is a large spender of public money. European Allies annually spend almost 190 billion Euros on defence and security. This presents us with a great responsibility. We need to ensure accountability and transparent budgeting.

We know that corruption affects the effectiveness of our Armed Forces. This is one of the sad lessons learned by Ukraine during the past year.

And as we have seen in Afghanistan, it does not help to succeed in reaching military operational objectives if we fail to establish good governance and accountability. Worst case we may involuntarily feed systemic corruption, and thus undermine our overall political objectives behind the mission.

One obvious lesson is that both NATO and partner countries need to have a better understanding of the nature of corruption, its manifestations and effects, and what to do to avoid it when planning an operation.

For this, both a policy and a doctrine are crucial. NATO has started working on both fronts. Norway has already included attention to the risks of corruption as part of our Joint Operational Military Doctrine.

Therefore, I very much welcome the active support and involvement by NATO's Military Authorities in the BI Programme. A particular welcome to the representatives of NATO's military command structure who are present at this conference. We need your competence and advice to formulate good education and training programmes.

I have already stated that the BI Programme needs the active involvement by all Allies. But what about NATO as an institution, and the various elements that make up its organizational structure?

To set a good example is always a very powerful move. To live according to what you preach gives credibility. The message "Do as I say, not as I do" is never convincing.

In my view NATO should require every major unit in its organization to develop comprehensive integrity plans. That is what large international corporations do.

They do it to gain credibility. They do it to become better. They do it to be seen as reliable and trustworthy business partners. In short, they promote corporate responsibility at the same time as they promote the interests of their shareholders and other stakeholders.

That is what NATO, too, should do.

And the Alliance has slowly started along that path. In 2013 the North Atlantic Council agreed on a NATO Code of Conduct. It is based on five core values – and the principles that exemplify them: *integrity, impartiality, loyalty, accountability, and professionalism*.

A comprehensive integrity plan may set up, in a systematic way, how the organization intends to implement those values and put them into practice.

Another good start is the fact that NATO, during its Agency reform process, has introduced basic principles of good governance into the statutes of the new agencies.

I am extremely pleased to see these principles stated in the agencies' statutes. Next step, in my view, should be for them to develop integrity plans or strategies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Trust between people is an essential social capital. Trust between countries and within an organization.

We need to recognise this. There is a need to make defence institutions more conscious of the risks that corruption poses to the defence sector itself and to its public legitimacy. Public trust needs to be deserved.

And we need to be conscious of what corruption entails for international peace and stability.

I think that this sets the appropriate context for the NATO Building Integrity Programme, and for this conference. It invites us to foster greater awareness of some basic truths and values.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. To perform effectively, the Alliance must have 28 member states with reliable and well-functioning state institutions.

It requires hard work from everyone. No one can claim to be immune to the risk of corruption. We can all improve – we can all do better.

The Building Integrity Programme highlights the very core of NATO – our fundamental values as the Washington Treaty put them forward in 1949: liberal democracy, the rule of law, and individual freedom.

It reinforces the need for an impartial and professionally independent civil service.

It underpins the principle of good governance as reflected in a number of international treaties and conventions that the vast majority of countries have signed.

It addresses the issues of NATO's credibility and legitimacy.

It supports our efforts in safeguarding our common values at the international level, through joint action and other mechanisms that foster co-operative security.

Good governance and high integrity in the public sector are not in themselves linked to NATO. Whether a country is already a member of the Alliance, whether it would like to become a member, or whether it simply prefers to co-operate with the Alliance as a partner, is not the issue.

The point is that good governance and high integrity in the public sector are values we share, challenges that we should address together. And in these efforts NATO should be able to be in the forefront.

I wish you all a very successful conference.

Thank you for your attention!