

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

*Sponsors: The Republic of France, The Kingdom of Belgium
Signatories: Hungary, Romania, The Republic of Türkiye, Canada*

Agenda Item No. (1)

LEUVEN SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE

*ISSUED BY THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATING IN THE MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL IN
LEUVEN, 6 MARCH 2025*

RETHINKING NATO'S ROLE IN COUNTERTERRORISM: EMBRACING INCLUSIVE APPROACHES IN PERIPHERAL REGIONS

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have gathered in Leuven to reaffirm our unity, solidarity, and cohesion, and to open a new chapter in transatlantic relations, at a time when the security environment we face is increasingly complex. NATO remains the foundation of our collective defence and the essential forum for security consultations and decisions among Allies. NATO is a defensive Alliance and will continue to strive for peace, security, and stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area. We remain firmly committed to NATO's founding Washington Treaty, including that an attack against one Ally shall be considered an attack against us all, as enshrined in Article 5. We will continue to pursue a 360-degree approach to protect and defend our indivisible security and to fulfil NATO's three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security.
2. NATO is the strongest and most successful Alliance in history. It guarantees the security of our territory and our 958 million citizens, our freedom, and the values we share, including individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. We are bound together by our common values, enshrined in the Washington Treaty, the bedrock of our unity, solidarity, and cohesion. We commit to fulfilling our responsibilities as Allies accordingly. We reaffirm our adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We are committed to the rules-based international order. We commit to reinforce consultations when the security or stability of an Ally is threatened or when our fundamental values and principles are at risk.

3. We call for joint cooperation with MENA and Sahel countries through Military Training Teams (MTTs) to bolster local responses to terrorist threats, through training our partners' personnel at their own locations and facilities, on their own equipment, and in the environment and conditions they routinely operate in. The Alliance duly takes into account concerns of local government and engages in a process of constant evaluation to assess their effectiveness and to address the evolving needs of the Alliance and partners in its periphery. By doing so, we encourage cooperation with the Alliance on equal grounds with respect to the principle of sovereign equality of states.
4. We advocate for developing decentralized local task forces for counter radicalization following the model used domestically by Belgium (2015 LIVC-R Policy) both in vulnerable regions and in our own countries where radicalization can occur as well. We plead for integration of non-military solutions within NATO's counterterrorism strategy, condemning the response costs caused by the hardening counterterrorism operations. This policy consists of collaboration between national forces, educational entities and NGOs working in a single municipality. The guideline is the principle of subsidiarity ensuring that decisions are taken at the closest possible level to the local population. It is essential to make an evaluation of the "response cost" meaning that military interventions should be reasonable in terms of objectives, costs and human rights protection, and they must be authorized by the United Nations Security Council according to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. By doing so, the principle of regional ownership should play a significant role with NATO supporting the development of local solutions (resembling, for example, the mentioned LIVC-R policy) instead of imposing external solutions.
5. To propose a generalised counterterrorism-focused approach blueprint in addressing issues of counterterrorism in peripheral regions, inspired by the NMI in the conflict and post-conflict affected areas, focusing on counter-insurgency training, counter-corruption strategies, police training, build accountable and professional strategies, to support strategic planning and force development of national defence bodies, to provide support for countries following the end of the conflict to ensure that there will be sustainable security and stability. To offer gender advice at both strategic and operational levels, serving as essential resources for commanders who are responsible for incorporating gender perspectives into planning, implementation, and assessment, while further contributing to the pursuit of sustainable peace, stability, and counterterrorism efforts. This general blueprint is to be specifically tailored to the requisites, evolving necessities and cultural nuances of the participating state, ensuring that state sovereignty is upheld and respected at all times.
6. We propose to reevaluate, and refine and strengthen the already existing cooperation and collaborations in the stable countries in the MENA regions, including bilateral

partnerships with strategic MENA states, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), given their successful application and the Mediterranean Dialogue. We strive to bring cohesion between these existing collaborations in order to prevent and abolish existing over-lapses of these programs.

7. We propose a tiered-approach when it comes to information and data sharing with peripheral regions. At the first tier there is the NIFC (NATO Information Fusion Centre) body where information is continuously being shared among NATO members. At the tier below the first tier, a body for non-NATO partners to make requests to join a legal partnership to access selected information, which is relevant to their state sovereignty, will be created. This process will be inspired by RFI (Request for Information) as all NATO members must do so in the NIFC. The process of information-sharing and the content of such information must be agreed upon unanimously between NATO members. Partners are to be legally bound by confidentiality and if this is breached there will be repercussions against the breaching state, depending on the severity. Specifically, NATO will be working towards reaching an agreement with the African Union (AU) concerning intelligence-sharing in our common goal to counter terrorism.
8. We recognize the importance of addressing the socio-economic roots of terrorism and will address them through the extension of NATO's cooperation with the European Union in their humanitarian efforts through advisory work, while welcoming efforts by non-governmental organizations which are involved in humanitarian aid to coordinate their work with NATO, and encouraging local leaders to coordinate their socio-economic programs with NATO.
9. We reiterate the possibility of the invocation of Article 5 in reaction to a cyber attack as declared in paragraph 33 of the 2021 Brussels NATO Summit Communiqué, while emphasizing that on all those occasions, evaluation on a case-by-case basis is the guiding principle. Beside that, we will look for opportunities to establish joint cybersecurity task forces, led by NATO, with partner nations aiming at countering cyber threats and disinformation campaigns.
10. We aim towards increasing the efficiency of maritime counterterrorism cooperation between NATO's "Operation Sea Guardian" and the EU's "Operation IRINI". As the mandates of the respective operations overlap, gaps in crucial intelligence sharing occur due to political and bureaucratic barriers weakening real-time response capabilities. By updating the existing maritime counterterrorism cooperation, operational efficiency can be maximized, mission costs can be reduced and specifically Mediterranean security can be enhanced. We strive towards establishing a High-Level EU-NATO Maritime Security Task Force with a jointly appointed EU-NATO liaison officer responsible for aligning "Operation IRINI's" and "Operation Sea Guardian" strategic priorities and organize coordination briefings between the involved operations' commanding officials. Further,

we invite the European Union to work closely together with NATO in revisiting the Berlin Plus Agreement to explicitly include maritime security missions in addition to investigating the possible establishment of a real-time joint intelligence database to provide real-time vessel tracking, suspected smuggling routes, and terrorist-linked maritime activities with restricted access of authorized personnel from both missions. Funding is to be decided upon in due course in agreement with the European Union and reduced costs by updated cooperation structures will be relocated within the maritime counterterrorism mission. Further budgeting of operations set out in the Communique are to be prepared under the leadership of the Resource Policy and Planning Board (RPPB) of the Alliance.