

Speech by Dr. Karl A. Lamers
President of the NATO Parliamentary
Assembly
At the conference “NATO after Lisbon”
Parliament of Portugal
Lisbon, 2 February 2011

A.

I.

Mr. President,

Admiral,

General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bom dia!

*Muito obrigado pelo convite. É para mim
motive de grande alegria poder estar nesta
lindíssima cidade de Lisboa como vosso
convidado.*

First of all I would like to thank you very much for inviting me to this high-level conference which has been organized by the defence committee of the Portuguese Parliament.

It is a privilege for me to share the platform this morning with such distinguished speakers – the President of the Assembly of the Republic, **Mr. Jaime Gama**, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), **Admiral James G. Stavridis**, as well as **General Valença Pinto**, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces. I am particularly pleased that Admiral Stavridis has travelled here today to give us his thoughts on the issues that confront us. NATO is a military and a political alliance, so it is important to have both aspects represented at a meeting of this high level.

I would also like to recognize some of my colleagues here today who have played especially important roles in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly as well as in their national parliament. **Jamie Gama**, who was

head of the Portuguese delegation to the NATO PA and has a long history of service to the organization. **José Luis Arnaut** who was Acting Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships. And of course, I would like to recognize **José Lello** who was President of the Assembly only a few years ago. José, I am inspired by your leadership as President of the Assembly.

II.

After my election as President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 16th November in Warsaw last year, it was here in Lisbon where I gave my first major speech as President – at the NATO Summit of the Heads of State and Government. And only a few weeks later, it is again here in Lisbon where I attend this very important conference. In November, the adoption of the new Strategic Concept of NATO was the most important topic on the agenda. Today, we speak about the implementation of this

Concept. That is in my opinion a nice coincidence.

The purpose of today's conference is to look to the future and think about how we can move forward from the Lisbon Summit.

I would like to address some specific points where I believe we can make progress, but first allow me to step back to November and remind you of what we achieved in this city.

B. Lisbon Summit / New Strategic Concept

The summit that took place here in Lisbon a few weeks ago was significant for many reasons.

- NATO approved a new Strategic Concept, the first in more than ten years.
- We reaffirmed the Alliance's commitment to the common defence.
- But we also recognized that threats can come from many sources, and not all of them fit the traditional conceptions of what

the Alliance defends against. We therefore identified specific new missions for NATO and we recognized the need to build better partnerships with the European Union and the United Nations so that NATO can be a more effective partner in stabilization missions.

It is fair to say that the Lisbon Summit was an extraordinary – you may call it historic – , and extremely productive meeting.

The Strategic Concept is an important document and I congratulate the Secretary General on his excellent work. But I am also very proud that our Assembly presented its own draft in April last year, which played an important role in ensuring that the new Concept takes NATO in the right direction. Many of our recommendations have been incorporated into the new Strategic Concept. We are very happy about that.

The Strategic Concept is a clear, concise roadmap that sets a direction for this Alliance. But we should not forget that it is

only a document and we need to think hard about how we turn those pages of writing into actions. It is now up to us to ensure that the new Strategic Concept is actually implemented and actively supported by all our member states.

The Portuguese writer and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, Jose Saramago, may have said it best. *“Some people spend their entire lives reading but never get beyond reading the words on the page. They do not understand that the words are merely stepping stones placed across a fast-flowing river, and the reason they are there is so that we can reach the farther shore. It's the other side that matters.”*

That is our challenge – to get to the other side. To do that we need to find ways to turn the Strategic Concept into a reality. The famous German writer Goethe once said: *“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”*

In this spirit, let me now turn to some suggestions of how we can do this, and how the organization that I am privileged to lead, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, can contribute to that effort.

I. Cyber Security

The first topic is: Cyber Security.

1. Attacks on state structures

The security of our information systems is an issue that receives special emphasis in the new Strategic Concept. Several events – over the past few years – have made the threat of electronic attacks on computer systems very real.

I just have to bring to mind the attacks on Estonia in April 2007,

Georgia 2008

or only recently the worm “Stuxnet” in Iran. The Pentagon for example is attacked 3-6 million times – every day. I don’t want to imagine what might happen in future.

Today our societies are increasingly dependent on information systems in ways that were unimaginable just twenty years ago. We know that not only government institutions are targets of such attacks. Cyber attacks have the potential to significantly damage, or even destroy, state and economic structures.

2. Attacks on other structures

An attack on the information systems of banking and financial institutions for example could be devastating.

An attack on the information systems controlling power generation and distribution could darken entire cities.

3. Cyber-security and NATO

Why is Cyber-security important for NATO?

Cyber-security is an important issue for the Alliance to address, because an attack on the information systems of one NATO member country could have cascading effects on many other allies. We need to coordinate defences against cyber attacks,

share information and develop contingency strategies.

Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty is in my opinion the best framework in which this important topic should be discussed. In particular, NATO should consider if, and under what circumstances, a cyber-attack should prompt an Alliance response and how that response could be coordinated with other international organizations and how NATO could react.

This is the sort of complex issue that should be dealt with at an Alliance level.

It also must be discussed at a parliamentary level in our national legislatures. I believe that this is an area where the NATO Parliamentary Assembly can be a unique forum for discussion and coordination between parliamentarians from the member countries of the Alliance.

4. Visits

In order to give a sign and to gain a personal impression of the work which has

been carried out so far, I intend to visit the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) in Mons on the 22nd of February and the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn in April. This visit is also to show that I will put a strong emphasis on cyber security during my presidency.

II. Russia

Another vital issue that requires our attention is the relationship between NATO and Russia.

1. Condolence

Before I begin I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and the Russian people and offer my sympathy to the many injured in the brutal terrorist attacks at the Domodedovo airport in Moscow last week.

Those who did this are under the mistaken impression that their acts will somehow

weaken international resolve to defeat terrorism. They could not be more wrong. This outrage only strengthens our determination to work together to end international terrorism.

2. Enhancing Cooperation

a.

Secretary General Rasmussen has made the relationship between NATO and Russia one of his top priorities and I strongly support him in this endeavour. I am pleased that the Lisbon Summit included a meeting of the North Atlantic Council with the President of Russia.

There is simply no way to deny the fact that Russia is a critical part of the security picture in the European region.

European stability can only be ensured through close ties between Russia and the West, especially since Russia is vital as an important partner in resolving many international problems.

Therefore, we should build a pragmatic relationship where we cooperate with Russia when it is in our mutual interest, but never shy away from criticism when it is warranted.

We should not avoid discussion of human rights, freedom of the press, or democracy. I only have to think about the conviction of the Russian businessman Michail Chodorkowski.

b.

One of the declared aims of my presidency is to enhance cooperation with Russia and build a new foundation for this cooperation. I will work to re-establish a close working relationship with the Russian Duma and Federation Council. It is my firm belief that we must have as much interaction with our Russian counterparts as possible.

Since the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008, the relations between our Assembly and Russia have not always been easy. In November 2008, we decided to restrict the rights of the Russian delegation and exclude their members from a whole range of activities. It was important to set an example at that time.

But now we have to look forward: At our next meeting of the Standing Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in the

Azores in April this year, I will lend my support to end these suspensions and to reopen all channels of communication. We are of course a democratic organization and I cannot assure you of the outcome of those deliberations, but I believe that many of my fellow parliamentarians share my view. Furthermore, I plan to visit Russia in my capacity as President as soon as possible.

This is our opportunity to work on solutions to our common problems. This is our role and you can rely on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to play its part in building a constructive, pragmatic and realistic relationship with the Russian Federation.

III. Missile Defence

1.

An important topic in the future will be Missile Defence. Missiles pose an increasing threat to our populations, territory and deployed forces. Over 30 countries have or are acquiring missiles that could be used to carry not just conventional warheads, but also weapons of mass

destruction. With that in mind, NATO's leaders decided at the Summit in Lisbon to build a missile defence capability for NATO-Europe in order to protect its territory and populations.

This project will no longer be just an American project, it will be a NATO project and it will be developed in "active cooperation" with Russia. This is a fundamental change in defence and could be seen as a breakthrough in the NATO-Russia relations.

2.

In Lisbon, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) has been tasked to develop a comprehensive Joint Analysis of the future framework for missile defence cooperation. The progress of this analysis will be assessed at the June 2011 meeting of the NRC Defence Ministers.

3.

As Parliamentarians, it will be our task, the task of the NATO PA, to include all our national delegations into this debate and to offer an open forum for discussion.

We have already showed several times that we are successful in doing so.

During the Transatlantic Forum of the NATO PA in Washington last December for example, we were able to reach a consensus on the New Start Treaty with our American colleagues.

Finally, in December, the US Senate ratified the Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation – followed by the ratification by the Russian Parliament last week.

In my opinion, the entry into force of this important Treaty is good news for international security and stability. I also hope that the political momentum will help NATO and Russia to make concrete progress in their strategic partnership, including in the field of missile defence.

IV. NATO-EU Relations

1.

Talking of partnerships brings me to my next point: the relations between NATO and the EU. As we are all aware, these relations were not always easy in the past. At a time, where resources are becoming increasingly scarce, it is even more urgent for both institutions to cooperate closely – to combine forces and to reduce costs. A true strategic partnership needs to be created.

In the new Strategic Concept it is the declared goal of the Alliance to strengthen the partnership with the European Union, to enhance the practical cooperation with it and to cooperate more fully in capability development.

2.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly is determined to make its contribution to create more favourable circumstances in which these goals can be achieved.

3.

The Treaty of Lisbon reinforced the rights of the national parliaments and of the European Parliament. We, as the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO, must take advantage of this. We must further intensify dialogue at the parliamentary level, too.

V. Human Rights

1.

The new Strategic Concept states in the first pages that this is an Alliance based on certain common values.

It is our adherence to democratic institutions and our defence of human freedoms that makes our societies and this Alliance so strong. That is what holds us together: The freedom to speak out and to organize for peaceful political change is a core value of all democracies.

The freedom of expression of the media and of individuals is another core value.

The freedom of belief and the ability of citizens to follow their conscience are also fundamental.

We call the basic freedoms human rights. I underline the word human.

They are not European rights, or American rights, rather they apply to all people.

I do not have any illusion that this Alliance can or should force other countries that fail to recognize human rights to suddenly adopt our values.

But that does not mean we should pretend that there is not a problem in many countries around the globe.

- In China: You only need to think about the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo.

- In Russia: You only need to think about the already mentioned Michail Chodorkowski.

- In Iran: You only need to think about the two German reporters who have been imprisoned since October.

I urge Iran to release the two German reporters immediately. Freedom of the press is the indicator of liberty.

We should use every opportunity to influence those countries that do not respect human rights to release political prisoners, to allow freedom of expression, and allow freedom of conscience – in an adequate way, without jeopardizing the cooperation we require with those countries!

2.

Please allow me to address the current dramatic upheavals in Northern Africa which evoke powerful emotions:

Tunisia, Egypt and there might be even more affected states tomorrow.

Especially the young people arise and demand freedom and democracy.

We, the NATO member states, stand for the basic rights, for basic liberties.

A clear signal should be sent from here, from Lisbon, a signal towards the governments of all states to abstain from any form of violence directed at peacefully demonstrating people.

Give freedom a chance,
give human rights a chance.

VI. Strategic Concept / NATO Headquarters

Ladies and Gentlemen,

there is another issue that we should consider: That is the implementation of the new Strategic Concept at NATO Headquarters.

A look at the Lisbon Summit Declaration shows how much there is to do. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is tasked with preparing an action plan for the implementation of cyber-security policy, missile defence policy and a comprehensive approach to security strategy all in the next six months.

This is a huge task list for the NAC and I believe that, as they debate these issues and develop policies, there should be more discussion with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

2.

The officers of the NATO PA and I will meet with the NAC in Brussels in a few weeks to discuss these issues. This could be a helpful contribution to the implementation of NATO's ambitious agenda as it was set down in the Lisbon Summit Declaration.

C.

Communication

Ladies and Gentlemen,

every government, every parliament requires the support of its population. Only with this support can good policymaking take place.

To achieve this, communication with the public on security issues is more crucial in today's world than ever before, but it is also more difficult than ever before.

It is no secret that NATO is seen by many in our countries as a remnant of a past era. When I speak to my constituents at home,

and when I ask: what is NATO, I often hear three things: war, Afghanistan and the United States. To many, NATO is simply a tool of the United States to wage war in Afghanistan.

This is wrong but it is also dangerous. In politics, perceptions can matter as much as reality and we need to shift those perceptions so that our citizens understand the full range of what NATO is and what it does.

I. What NATO is

Our citizens need to understand that NATO is much more than a defence Alliance, it is a politico-military Alliance, based on common values.

Talking to the public, we should focus on these common values and the role which the Alliance plays in promoting values. This will resonate with the public and particularly with the youth. This is a very important segment of the population. Only if we convince young people of the value of

NATO, then the future of the Alliance is secure.

II. What NATO does

We also must be clear with our publics about what the Alliance does. Only yesterday I spoke with students in my constituency in Heidelberg about NATO and its manifold responsibilities:

- NATO is assisting the government of Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism,
- it is contributing to seaborne security in the Mediterranean and
- combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden.
- The Alliance is training and equipping Iraqi defence forces and
- helping to construct more stable societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.
- NATO aircraft carry relief supplies (Hilfsgüter) to conflict areas in Africa.

- It helped Europeans after the flooding in Poland this past year, and Americans after Hurricane Katrina.
- And NATO also assisted in relief operations in Haiti and Pakistan after those countries suffered devastating earthquakes.

These stories are often untold and it is no wonder that many citizens do not understand what the Alliance stands for or what it does for them and others.

III. How NATO and NATO PA work for the security

And so, as a last point, we all have to explain again and again that NATO is still vital to their security and that the peace and freedom they enjoy is the product of our common efforts.

The communication with our publics is an important area where I can assure you that

the NATO Parliamentary Assembly will work for the Alliance's broader aims.

We as parliamentarians have a direct connection to citizens who elected us to office.

As elected representatives of the peoples of our nations, we meet our constituents all the time.

We can encourage public discussions about NATO's missions and build support for them. Parliamentarians can help the public understand why NATO acts and why it is important for their security.

I suggest the introduction of an international NATO Day. A Day we must use to go into schools and universities, talk to the people and explain NATO's role for peace and stability in the 21st century.

D.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

the new Strategic Concept has tremendous potential and shows the way forward. But as another Portuguese author, Fernando Pessoa, once said “*Success consists in being successful, not in having potential for success.*” It will require a lot of effort to turn the ideas on the page into real actions, but the NATO Parliamentary Assembly can, and will, help.

We will work on the critical issue of cyber-security,
we will help to build a constructive and realistic relationship with Russia,
and we will serve as a bridge to the general public to communicate the aims of this Alliance.

But above all, we will constantly remind others of the values that are the foundation of our democratic societies and of this Alliance. So let us take the steps that will make us successful in deed, not just on paper.

Muito obrigado pela atenção dispensada!