



Report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

Joint Committee Meetings of Defense Security Committee (DSC), Economics and Security Committee (ESC), and the Political Committee (PC)

Brussels, Belgium

From February 19 to 21, 2024

Report

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to report on its participation in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's (NATO PA's) annual Joint Meetings of the Defence and Security, Economics and Security, and Political Committees (the Joint Meetings), held in Brussels, Belgium from 19–21 February 2024.¹ As well, delegates took part in a meeting of the NATO PA Bureau, and a meeting of the Georgia-NATO Interparliamentary Council.

The Canadian delegation comprised: [Julie Dzerowicz](#), Member of Parliament (MP), Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and Head of Delegation; the Honourable [Claude Carignan](#), Senator; the Honourable [Brent Cotter](#), Senator; the Honourable [Clément Gignac](#), Senator; the Honourable [Rebecca Patterson](#), Senator; [Darren Fisher](#), MP; [Cheryl Gallant](#), MP; [Patricia Lattanzio](#), MP; [Christine Normandin](#), MP; and [Alex Ruff](#), MP.

The Association Secretary, Céline Ethier, and the Association Advisor, Andrés León, accompanied the delegation.

JOINT MEETINGS

Among other objectives, the Joint Meetings seek to provide NATO PA delegates with an update on the activities and operations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO or the Alliance) as well as to provide a forum to discuss key issues that the organization will face throughout the year. Members of the Committee on Democracy and Security and the Science and Technology Committee also attend the Joint Meetings.

This year's Joint Meetings were held at an important time in NATO's history. In 2024, the Alliance celebrates 75 years of collective defence. Founded in April 1949, when Canada and 11 other countries signed the *North Atlantic Treaty*, the Alliance has since expanded.² At the time the Joint Meetings were held, NATO comprised 31 member countries, and Sweden's accession process was ongoing.³

As well, February 2024 marks two years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Participating delegates from NATO member countries and partner countries

¹ Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, [Canadian Parliamentarians meet with the NATO Secretary General and key officials in Brussels](#), News release, 23 February 2024.

² The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) other 11 founding member countries were Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

³ As of 18–21 February 2024, NATO's 31 member countries were: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. On 7 March 2024, Sweden became NATO's 32nd member after all NATO member countries ratified Sweden's accession protocols to NATO. See NATO, [Sweden officially joins NATO](#), News release, 7 March 2024.

reaffirmed their steadfast support for Ukraine, while also calling for Russia to be held accountable for its actions.⁴

Discussions at the Joint Meetings were held under Chatham House Rule.

Overview of Discussion

This year's Joint Meetings opened with a meeting between delegates and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and various permanent representatives to North Atlantic Council at NATO headquarters. The main programme comprised an opening session and 10 thematic sessions during which NATO PA delegates heard from civil servants and military personnel from NATO headquarters, Belgian government officials, and senior officials from the European Union (EU). Each of these sessions is considered below.

Meeting with NATO Secretary General and various permanent representatives to the North Atlantic Council

This session provided delegates with the opportunity to hear from NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and various permanent representatives to the North Atlantic Council about the Alliance's priorities for the 2024 Washington Summit.⁵ These priorities include:

- strengthening NATO's defence and deterrence posture;
- providing continued assistance to Ukraine; and
- engaging with NATO partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

With respect to NATO's defence and deterrence posture, delegates were reminded that NATO's 2023 Defence Investment Pledge, adopted at the Vilnius Summit, committed NATO leaders to spending at least 2% of national gross domestic product (GDP) on defence. While recognizing that Allies have increased defence spending significantly since 2014, NATO representatives emphasized that member countries – especially those not currently meeting the 2% commitment – should not slow their efforts on this front.

Next, delegates were updated on recent events in Ukraine, including the withdrawal of Ukrainian Armed Forces from the town of Avdiivka over the weekend of 18 February 2024. However, NATO officials also indicated that Ukraine has liberated 50% of the territory that Russia has seized since the start of the war. As well, the need for Allies to further increase their support for Ukraine, including through the “ramping up” of production of ammunitions and weapons, was emphasized.

Other issues raised included:

- the status of Sweden's accession to NATO;
- the Alliance's nuclear policies and capabilities; and
- the NATO PA's proposal to establish a Centre of Democratic Resilience at NATO headquarters.

⁴ NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), [*In meeting with North Atlantic Council, Allied legislators stress the need for continued NATO transformation, based on shared democratic values, and unwavering support to Ukraine*](#), News release, 19 February 2024.

⁵ Ibid.

Opening Session: NATO's priorities in the lead up to the 2024 Washington Summit

The opening session focused on NATO's priorities in the lead up to the 2024 Washington summit. The session began with a discussion of NATO's non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine, with NATO representatives underscoring that the Alliance is committed in providing such assistance for "as long as it takes." Expanding the discussion, they drew attention to the multi-year package of assistance for Ukraine that was agreed to at the 2022 Madrid Summit and the decision made at the 2023 Vilnius Summit to establish a NATO-Ukraine Council to enable joint consultations and advance dialogue between NATO and Ukraine, including during crises.

In terms of lethal assistance to Ukraine, officials recognized the work of the U.S. led Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG), which comprises more than 50 countries, including Canada, and meets monthly at the ministerial level.

Next, delegates heard that NATO is transitioning from its NATO Response Force to a new NATO Force Model and Allied Reaction Force. It was indicated that, upon the full implementation of the new NATO Force Model, NATO will be able to deploy up to 300,000 Allied troops designated for high readiness.

Other issues raised included:

- the establishment of the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic;⁶
- the NATO Innovation Fund; and,
- the effects of Allied sanctions on Russia's economy.

Session 1: Allied assistance to Ukraine

The discussion of NATO's assistance to Ukraine was broad, addressing such topics as the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Council, as well as the importance of NATO's multi-year assistance package. Discussions were also held on the possibility of merging certain support initiatives – including the U.S-led UDCG, and the multinational U.K-led Operation INTERFLEX that trains Ukrainian military personnel – to better support Ukraine's interoperability with Allied forces. Delegates were also reminded that that Article 5 – NATO's collective defence provision- applies only to NATO member countries and not to NATO partner countries, such as Ukraine.

As well, delegates and officials discussed:

- ongoing Allied efforts to train Ukrainian military personnel to operate and maintain F-16 fighter jets;
- Ukraine's use of artificial technologies to deploy and operate drones against Russian armed forces; and

⁶ Canada will host the North American Regional Office of the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic in Halifax, Nova Scotia; the regional office is expected to be operational by summer 2024 and will be DIANA's third regional office following those in London, the United Kingdom and Tallinn, Estonia. See Department of National Defence, [Minister Blair announces defence investments in Halifax at 15th Halifax International Security Forum](#), News release, 17 November 2023.

- NATO's cooperation with the EU to address humanitarian concerns in Ukraine, such as the presence of mines on Ukrainian territory.

Over the course of the session, officials also turned their attention to other topics including China and the Indo-Pacific region and burden sharing.

On the subject of China, delegates were warned that the country might adopt an increasingly aggressive posture towards Taiwan and other Indo-Pacific jurisdictions throughout 2024. While it was noted that NATO's partnerships with regional partners like Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea could "play an important role in showing NATO how to address the China challenge," it was also emphasized that Indo-Pacific countries cannot legally join NATO.

In relation to burden sharing, officials argued that the failure of certain NATO member countries to meet the 2% overall defence spending commitment could affect collective defence. They estimated that 18 or 19 NATO member countries will meet the 2% commitment by the 2024 Washington Summit.

Session 2: NATO's military adaptation and development of Allied defence Industry

This session began with a discussion of the new regional plans that were adopted at the 2023 Vilnius Summit to strengthen the Alliance's defence and deterrence posture across its flanks. It was noted that the following three regional plans are currently being developed and implemented at the tactical level:

- Regional Plan for the High North and the Atlantic, which will be led by Joint Force Command Norfolk, Virginia, United States;
- Regional Plan Central (from the Baltic to the Alps), which will be led by Joint Force Command Brunssum, the Netherlands; and
- Regional Plan Southeast (from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea), which will be led by Joint Force Command Naples, Italy.

Delegates heard that the implementation of these regional plans will enhance the Alliance's ability to address new and emerging defence and security threats, while also helping it to identify gaps in its defence planning processes.

Debate then moved to the importance of interoperability among Allied forces, with officials emphasizing that, particularly during crises, military personnel from NATO member countries should use equipment, weapons and military capabilities that are interoperable with those used by other NATO member countries and partners. Regarding progress made on this front, it was noted that several NATO member countries are in the process of acquiring F-35 fighter jets that would allow their respective air forces to participate in joint nuclear interoperability exercises and other activities. The importance of working with national defence industries to identify means of enhancing interoperability was also emphasized.

On the topic of defence production, officials recalled the adoption of NATO's Defence Production Plan at the 2023 Vilnius Summit. Among other objectives, the plan seeks to help deliver standardized military capabilities to Allies and to ensure that defence industrial production capacity is sustained at all times. Delegates also heard about work done by NATO's Support and Procurement Agency (NPSA) to increase Allies' defence

production capacity, including the conclusion of contracts worth around US\$10 billion for the production of such items as 155-millimetre ammunition and Patriot missiles.

As well, delegates and officials debated:

- NATO's efforts to address emerging and disruptive technologies;
- current delays and shortcoming in the defence procurement processes of some NATO member countries;
- the defence industry's increased use of such technologies as 3D printing to manufacture materials and components; and
- challenges that some NATO member countries are facing in transporting military equipment by rail across Europe.

Session 3: Belgium's defence and security priorities

In this session, Belgian government officials provided an overview of defence and security challenges that NATO member countries, including Belgium, are currently facing. Discussing Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Belgian officials argued that Russia must withdraw from the Ukrainian territories it has occupied before a negotiated end to the war can be contemplated.

Regarding priority areas of action, delegates heard that Belgium is focussing its efforts on rebuilding and modernizing its armed forces and military capabilities after decades of reduced spending following the end of the Cold War.

The country's modernization efforts seek to enhance its air, land and sea capabilities, as well as its cybersecurity capabilities so that it can protect its critical infrastructure from cyber-attacks. Among the challenges Belgium is encountering during this undertaking are the country's complex defence procurement processes and the delays it faces in acquiring new military capabilities.

Other issues that officials and delegates addressed included:

- the EU's development of a European Defence Industrial Strategy to enhance its defence industrial base;
- challenges that Russia and other authoritarian state actors pose to the rules-based international order and the Alliance's democratic values; and
- NATO's partnerships with countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to address such transnational threats as terrorism.

Session 4: NATO's review of its southern strategy

In this session, delegates explored issues relating to NATO's southern neighbourhood. Recalling NATO's 2022 *Strategic Concept*, which highlights that the Alliance's southern neighbourhood, "particularly the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions, faces interconnected security, demographic, economic and political challenges,"⁷ officials underscored that NATO's approach to the region is centered on cooperation rather than

⁷ NATO, [NATO 2022 Strategic Concept](#), 2022.

defence and deterrence. Delegates were briefed on various issues affecting NATO's southern neighbourhood, including:

- the presence of Russia's Wagner group and other paramilitary groups in certain African countries governed by authoritarian leaders;
- increased Chinese, Iranian and Russian presence and strategic competition in the MENA region;
- human security, terrorism, human trafficking and irregular migration; and
- Iran's destabilization efforts and nuclear policies.

Delegates were then reminded that, at the 2023 Vilnius Summit, NATO leaders had tasked the North Atlantic Council with launching a comprehensive review of issues and opportunities stemming from the Alliance's southern neighbourhood. Since that time, delegates heard, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has appointed a body of independent experts to conduct the review and to provide recommendations on NATO's engagement in the region. The review is underway and is building on previous work NATO has undertaken, such as the establishment of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 1994 and 2004, respectively.

As part of the review process, delegates learned, the review body has consulted with multiple stakeholders, including governments officials, parliamentarians, policy experts, academics and members of civil society from NATO member countries and partners. A draft report is underway and will be provided to NATO in March 2024; NATO leaders are expected to adopt the report at the 2024 Washington Summit.

Hamas' 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel, and Israel's subsequent declaration of a state of war and complete siege of Gaza, were also discussed. After noting that the NATO Secretary General condemned the attacks, concern was also expressed about the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Moreover, delegates were warned about efforts on the part of Russia and other authoritarian state actors to disseminate disinformation and propagate false information about NATO's stance towards the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Session 5: NATO and the Indo-Pacific Region

Delegates heard that, in recent years, NATO's cooperation with its Indo-Pacific partners has increased in such areas as a cybersecurity, disinformation, maritime security, and climate change. Noting that NATO's *2022 Strategic Concept* underscores that "[t]he Indo-Pacific is important for NATO, given that developments in that region can directly affect Euro Atlantic security,"⁸ officials nevertheless underscored that NATO does not seek to have a permanent presence in the region.

Officials also recalled that, at the 2023 Vilnius Summit, NATO signed Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes with Australia, Japan and South Korea, and announced its intentions to establish a NATO liaison office in Japan. Liaison offices, it was emphasized are not embassies.

⁸ NATO, [NATO 2022 Strategic Concept](#), 2022.

On the issue of China's increased assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, it was noted that the country's coercive policies and ambitions were posing a challenge to the Alliance's interests, security and values. That said, officials reiterated that NATO does not perceive China to be an "adversary" and remains open to cooperating with China on issues of mutual concern, such as arms control and climate change.

Other issues that officials and delegates discussed included:

- South Korea's "strong" defence industrial base that could provide opportunities for NATO to cooperate with South Korea on defence production;
- NATO's cooperation with Singapore and other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in such areas as science and technology; and
- North Korea's missile tests and the security situation in the Korean peninsula; and
- Australia's efforts to acquire new naval capabilities, including new submarines through AUKUS, a trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Session 6: The European Union's neighbourhood and enlargement policies

In this session, EU officials briefed delegates on the regional bloc's neighbourhood and enlargement policies. The EU currently comprises 27 member states⁹ – of which 22 are also NATO member countries – but a widening of the union is envisaged.¹⁰ While noting that there are currently nine candidate countries at various stages of the EU accession process – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine – officials focussed their remarks on the accession processes for Türkiye and Ukraine. Regarding Türkiye, delegates heard that negotiations remained at a "standstill," in part due to the EU's concerns about democratic backsliding and a decline in the rule of law. That said, officials emphasized that the EU continues to cooperate with Türkiye on issues of mutual concern, including irregular migration, and stressed that Türkiye is an important trading partner for the EU. Regarding Ukraine, officials reminded delegates that the country has held candidate status since 23 June 2022.

Among other issues, EU officials also provided an overview of the EU's economic assistance to Ukraine, noting that, in early February 2024, the bloc approved a €50 billion assistance package to help Ukraine with its reconstruction efforts. As well, they discussed ways in which the EU cooperates with MENA countries in such fields as law-enforcement and anti-terrorism. Lastly, delegates were informed that the EU has taken steps to

⁹ As of 18–21 February 2024, the European Union's (EU's) 27 member countries were: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

¹⁰ Prior to Sweden's accession to NATO on 7 March 2024, the following 22 NATO member countries were also EU member countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. See NATO, [Relations with the European Union](#).

develop a strategic and comprehensive partnership framework with Egypt, including to address common security challenges.

Session 7: The European Union's approach to energy security

This session began with a discussion of the EU's efforts to reduce its dependence on natural gas and other energy imports from Russia. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, delegates heard, the EU has taken steps to diversify its sources of energy imports, including by importing natural gas from such countries as Norway, Qatar and the United States. In the context of this discussion, it was also explained that Moldova and Ukraine had synchronized their electricity grids with the Continental European Network in March 2022 to reduce their dependence on electricity imports from Russia.

Next, discussion turned to the EU's efforts to transition to the production, use and import of clean energy and technologies. Among other examples, officials highlighted the development of renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar panels and wind turbines, in certain EU countries. As well, they raised the possibility of increasing imports of clean technologies from partner countries, noting the example of small modular reactors being imported from Canada.

Officials then explained that the EU was working with EU members and like-minded partners to increase its access to the critical minerals used in the production of electric vehicles (EV) and EV batteries. Observing that China processes about 90% of the world's rare earth minerals, they warned of the risks associated with the EU and other regions becoming dependent on China for acquiring minerals for EV production.

Other issues discussed included:

- Russia's continued airstrikes and other attacks on Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure;
- Russia's destruction of Ukraine's Kakhovka in June 2023 and its capture of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant – Europe's largest power station – in March 2022;
- the establishment of an EU fund to support Ukraine's recovery efforts from these and other attacks on its civilian energy infrastructure; and
- EU policies and other measures to protect critical energy infrastructure against cybersecurity threats.

Session 8: NATO's Military Priorities

Acknowledging that most NATO member countries have increased their defence spending in recent years, NATO representatives nonetheless maintained that the Alliance's defence industrial base "is not as strong as it should be." Delegates were reminded, therefore, that all NATO member countries need to "ramp up" their defence production levels" and increase defence spending to develop new military capabilities and equipment. The nexus between increased levels of defence and increased economic stability was also explored.

Another issue raised was the challenge that several NATO member countries face in recruiting and retaining military personnel. Officials suggested that some affected

countries may wish to consider implementing conscription – of both men and women – to increase the number of people entering the armed forces.

Turning to new and emerging defence and security challenges, delegates were reminded that, as per Article 3 of the *North Atlantic Treaty*, “collective defence starts at home.”¹¹ Officials stressed the importance of a “whole of society” approach and emphasized the need to involve a wide range of stakeholders in addressing emerging challenges.

Participants also reflected on the death of Alexei Navalny – a prominent Russian political dissident – who died on 16 February 2024 in a Russian prison after being arbitrarily detained by Russia’s security forces upon his return to Russia from Germany in January 2021. Navalny was described as an individual “who dared to challenge” the status quo in Russia as he sought to free his country from tyranny.

With respect to EU and NATO cooperation on defence matters, it was stressed that the EU should not “encroach” on NATO’s defence responsibilities. Officials noted that almost 90% of the EU member states are also NATO member countries.

Delegates and officials also discussed:

- terrorism and other growing threats to Euro-Atlantic region;
- the integration of the United Nation’s (UN’s) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into all aspects of NATO’s activities; and
- Russia’s use of hybrid threats against Ukraine and other countries.

Session 9: The Alliance’s enduring value and democratic principles

This session opened with a reminder of the significance of 2024 for NATO. Not only does the year mark NATO’s 75th anniversary, it is also the 25th anniversary of Czechia’s, Hungary’s and Poland’s accession to the Alliance. As well, it is the year that the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative will celebrate their 30th and 20th anniversaries, respectively.

Moving on to the substantive theme of the session – the Alliance’s enduring value and democratic principles – delegates turned their attention to such topics as cybersecurity attacks, disinformation campaigns and other forms of hybrid threats that Russia has allegedly conducted against NATO member countries and partners in recent decades. Disinformation campaigns, it was asserted, have been conducted in multiple languages, in part to facilitate the dissemination of false narratives throughout Africa, Latin America and other regions.

Reference was made to paragraph 64 of the Vilnius Summit Communiqué, which recognizes the “growing hybrid threats and challenges from state and non-state actors” and the negative effects of those threats on the democratic systems, economies and security of NATO member countries. Among other matters, delegates were reminded, paragraph 64 also states that “hybrid operations against Allies could reach the level of an armed attack and could lead the [North Atlantic] Council to invoke Article 5” and indicates

¹¹ For more information on Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, see NATO, [Resilience, civil preparedness and Article 3](#).

that the Alliance remains committed to addressing and countering disinformation, including “through positive communications.”¹²

As an example of positive communications, officials noted that NATO’s Public Diplomacy Division has developed communication policies and initiatives to address such issues as disinformation. In this context, the continued need to publicly and clearly communicate NATO’s history, priorities, values and actions was emphasized.

Session 10: Current NATO operations and missions

In this session, delegates were briefed on various NATO operations and exercises, including:

- NATO Mission Iraq (NMI);
- Kosovo Force (KFOR); and
- Steadfast Defender 2024.

NATO Mission Iraq was established in 2018, at the request of Iraqi government officials, as a non-combat advisory and capacity building operation to help Iraqi security institutions and forces to address terrorism and other defence and security issues. Its objectives, delegates were reminded, included providing training to Iraq’s military and security forces on the protection of civilians and the prevention of corruption, as well as the implementation of the WPS agenda and the strengthening the rule of law. As of February 2023, participants heard, NMI comprised several hundred personnel from NATO member and partner countries, including Australia and Sweden. Of note, Canada held the command of NMI from November 2018 until November 2020, with about 250 Canadian military personnel deployed over that period.

Established in 1999, KFOR is NATO’s multinational peace support operation in Kosovo. This section of the briefing focused on rising tensions in the Western Balkans, noting that NATO had deployed additional forces to reinforce KFOR following an attack against KFOR peacekeepers and Kosovo security forces by ethnic Serbians in 2022. As of February 2023, KFOR comprised more than 4,400 military personnel from 28 countries, including Canada.¹³ Still on the topic of the Western Balkans, concern was expressed about secessionist rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a NATO partner that has declared aspirations to become a NATO member.

Finally, delegates were updated on Steadfast Defender, NATO’s largest military exercise in the Euro-Atlantic area since the Cold War. Scheduled to run between 24 January 2024 and 31 May 2024, Steadfast Defender 2024 brings together about 90,000 military personnel from all NATO member countries, including Canada. This exercise, delegates heard, is part of NATO’s ongoing efforts to enhance its defence and deterrence posture across a number of locations, including the Atlantic Ocean, Central and Eastern Europe and the European Arctic.¹⁴

¹² For more information, see NATO, [Vilnius Summit Communiqué](#), 11 July 2023.

¹³ For more information, see NATO, [NATO’s role in Kosovo](#).

¹⁴ For more information, see NATO, [Steadfast Defender 24](#).

MEETINGS OF THE NATO PA BUREAU AND THE GEORGIA–NATO INTERPARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL

In addition to attending the Joint Meetings, MP Dzerowicz – in her capacity as NATO PA Vice-President ex-officio – took part in two other meetings: a NATO PA Bureau meeting on 18 February 2024 and a meeting of the Georgia-NATO Interparliamentary Council (GNIC) on 21 February 2024.

Agenda items for the NATO PA Bureau meeting included the consideration of a draft statement from the Bureau marking the passing of two years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Among other matters, the Bureau statement –released on 24 February 2024 – highlighted the NATO PA's support for Ukraine and reaffirmed the Assembly's call for the establishment of a special international tribunal to prosecute Russia's crimes of aggression.¹⁵ Participants also discussed the Assembly's upcoming activities, including the 2024 Spring Session in Bulgaria and the 70th Annual Session in Canada. As well, bureau members reviewed two draft declarations to be proposed to the NATO PA Standing Committee in Tallin, Estonia in March 2024.

At the GNIC meeting, several NATO PA Bureau members, including MP Dzerowicz, met with Georgian parliamentarians to discuss defence and security threats affecting Georgia, as well as the country's Euro-Atlantic path and partnership with NATO.¹⁶ Georgia has declared its aspiration to join NATO. Since 2008, NATO leaders have reiterated that Georgia will become a member of the Alliance in the future, without elaborating on a timeframe. Georgia is both a member of the NATO Partnership Interoperability Initiative and the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme.¹⁷

OTHER MEETINGS

While in Brussels, the Canadian delegation held meetings with Canadian military and diplomatic officials to help prepare them for their participation at the Joint Meetings. On 19 February 2024, the Canadian Delegation met with Canada's Military Representative to NATO, Vice-Admiral Scott Bishop, and Canada's Deputy Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, Mark Richardson. They discussed Canada's priorities for NATO. Furthermore, on 20 February 2024, the delegation met with Canada's Ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg, Alain Gendron, to discuss bilateral relations.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The NATO PA's Joint Meetings allowed Canadian delegates to hold in-depth discussions with senior NATO and other officials, as well as with fellow NATO parliamentarians, on defence, economic and political issues of concern to the Alliance. By doing so they learned about key issues on the NATO's agenda, contributed to the debate and advanced Canadian interests on issues such as the war in Ukraine, the strengthening of NATO's

¹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), [Bureau statement on the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine](#), News release, 24 February 2024.

¹⁶ NATO PA (@natopapress), "[Meeting with @IrakliBeraiaMP & the GEdelegation, #NATOPA Bureau members @MarcosPerestre1, @JulieDzerowicz @SverreMyrli...](#)," X, 21 February 2024, 10:56 a.m.

¹⁷ See NATO, [NATO's partnerships](#); and NATO, [Relations with Georgia](#).

defence and deterrence posture in Europe, and the implementation of the UN's WPS agenda.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses associated with this activity can be found in the delegation's financial report. This report is available in the [Financial Disclosure](#) section of the Parliamentary Diplomacy website.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Dzerowicz, MP
Chair, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association