

Canadian NATO  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
canadienne de l'OTAN

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## **Report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association**

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

**Brussels, Belgium**

**From February 17 to 19, 2025**

# Report

## INTRODUCTION

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (CANA) has the honour to report on its participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly's (NATO PA's) annual Joint Meetings of the Defence and Security, Economics and Security, and Political Committees (the Joint Meetings). The Joint Meetings were held in Brussels, Belgium, from 17–19 February 2025. As well, delegates took part in a meeting of the NATO PA's Bureau.

The following 10 Canadian delegates participated:

- Julie Dzerowicz, MP, Head of the Canadian Delegation, Chair of CANA, and Vice-President of the NATO PA;
- the Honourable Claude Carignan, P.C., Senator;
- the Honourable Donna Dasko, Senator;
- the Honourable Margo Greenwood, Senator;
- the Honourable Krista Ross, Senator;
- the Honourable Judy A. White, Senator;
- Charlie Angus, MP;
- Stéphane Bergeron, MP;
- Sukh Dhaliwal, MP; and
- Annie Koutrakis, MP.

The Association Secretary, Josée Therien, and Association Advisor, Ariel Shapiro, 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 Alliance 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, the NATO PA is celebrating its 70th anniversary, and has launched a campaign to highlight “70 years of parliamentary diplomacy.”<sup>1</sup> As well, in 2024, NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary. At the Joint Meetings, officials discussed the planning for the next NATO leaders’ summit, which will take place in The Hague, the Netherlands, in June 2025.

### A. Opening Remarks from the President of the NATO PA

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<sup>1</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), [70 Years of Parliamentary Diplomacy](#).

The session began with remarks from Marcos Perestrello of Portugal, President of the NATO PA.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Perestrello stressed that NATO is at a critical juncture, amid fears that the transatlantic bond between Europe and North America has been weakened. He remarked that “Europe and North America have overcome their differences in the past. We can do so again today.” Mr. Perestrello also urged Canada and the European NATO member states to increase their defence spending – including, potentially, beyond 2% of national gross domestic product (GDP). On this topic, he noted that NATO parliamentarians have an important role to play in advocating – both to their national governments and to the public – for significant increases in defence spending.

Regarding Russia’s war against Ukraine, Mr. Perestrello reaffirmed the Assembly’s “unwavering support for Ukraine” and its sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination. He highlighted that any potential peace negotiations must guarantee Ukraine’s security, as well as that of Europe.

Mr. Perestrello also drew attention to the threat that authoritarian states pose to democracies around the world and reiterated the NATO PA’s call for the establishment of a Centre of Democratic Resilience at NATO Headquarters.

## **B. Meeting with NATO Secretary General and Permanent Representatives to the North Atlantic Council**

Delegates had the opportunity to hear from Mark Rutte, NATO’s Secretary General, along with Permanent Representatives to the North Atlantic Council. In the context of current challenges to Euro-Atlantic security, Mr. Rutte’s remarks emphasized the importance of NATO member states raising defence spending, increasing defence production, and continuing their support for Ukraine to “ensure that Ukraine is in a position of strength to secure a lasting peace.”<sup>3</sup>

## **SELECTED THEMES**

The main programme of this year’s Joint Meetings comprised several thematic sessions during which NATO PA delegates heard from civil servants and military personnel from NATO headquarters, senior officials from the EU, Belgian government officials, and representatives from NATO and NATO partner states.

Discussions at the Joint Meetings were held under Chatham House Rule, meaning that delegates may share the information they learned, but not the identity of the speakers.

The sections below outline selected cross-cutting themes that were discussed during the various thematic sessions of the Joint Meetings.

### **A. Current Threat Environment and NATO’s Priorities**

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<sup>2</sup> NATO PA, [In meeting with North Atlantic Council, Allied legislators stress need for transatlantic unity, increased European defence contributions, and continued support for Ukraine](#), 18 February 2025.

<sup>3</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), [North Atlantic Council meets members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly](#), 18 February 2025.

Officials characterized NATO's security environment as the most complex and dangerous the Alliance has faced in many years, and described Russia's war against Ukraine as a defining struggle of the current period. They highlighted that some of NATO's priorities in the leadup to the summit in The Hague include strengthening deterrence and defence, unwavering support for Ukraine and increasing cooperation with global partners.

According to NATO's 2022 *Strategic Concept*, NATO has three core tasks: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security.<sup>4</sup> Delegates were reminded that the deterrence and defence task in particular is of critical importance in the current context. As well, officials emphasized that the cooperation among authoritarian states – namely, Russia, China, Iran and North Korea – poses several interconnected threats to NATO, including because such cooperation could lead to increased support for international terrorism or the proliferation of missile technology in a way that threatens Allied countries.

Participants also learned about how NATO is seeking to help its member states increase resilience to counter the coercive use of non-military tools. Several speakers highlighted a recent NATO initiative to enhance resilience and protect critical infrastructure: an activity called "Baltic Sentry." In the context of threats to the undersea cables linking Estonia with Finland, "Baltic Sentry" involves the deployment of naval ships, drones, and a range of surveillance technologies to protect undersea cables.

## **B. Misinformation, Disinformation and Foreign Interference**

Another key theme was misinformation, disinformation, foreign interference and other hybrid threats, including in the context of the growing alignment of authoritarian powers. Officials clarified that hybrid warfare is not a "lighter" form of warfare; rather, its aim is to instil fear and division among NATO countries and reduce their capacity to respond effectively in a crisis.

As part of this discussion, officials provided examples of specific disinformation campaigns targeting NATO that were exposed by NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. They also considered different approaches to countering disinformation, such as declassifying intelligence in order to "debunk" disinformation campaigns or attribute them to specific actors. For example, they explained that the EU maintains a publicly accessible database that identifies disinformation, including in relation to Russia's war against Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, they noted that the threat from hybrid campaigns remains significant, and adversaries have achieved some gains in disseminating false narratives that are harmful to NATO.

## **C. NATO's Support for Ukraine Amidst Russia's Invasion**

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<sup>4</sup> NATO, [2022 Strategic Concept](#), 29 June 2022, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> European External Action Service, [EUvsDisinfo](#). The Government of Canada also maintains a publicly accessible database that identifies disinformation. See Global Affairs Canada, [Countering disinformation with facts – Russian invasion of Ukraine](#).

NATO's support for Ukraine was a key theme of the discussions at the Joint Meetings. Officials underscored that any outcome of Russia's war against Ukraine that could be seen as a victory for Moscow weakens the Alliance.

Officials highlighted that NATO member states had provided Ukraine with more than €50 billion in military assistance in 2024, exceeding the €40 billion they committed to through the Pledge of Long-Term Security Assistance for Ukraine, agreed to at the 2024 Washington Summit. Officials also noted that approximately 60% of that amount came from Canada and Europe. While recognizing the significance of this achievement, they nonetheless highlighted the challenges Ukraine still faces, particularly regarding delays receiving aid, in securing munitions and strengthening air defence capabilities.

In this context, delegates discussed whether there were additional opportunities for Ukraine and NATO to collaborate on defence production, in a way that benefits both Alliance members and Ukraine. Officials pointed to recent direct investment by Denmark and Sweden into Ukraine's defence industry as a model that other Allies could follow. They concluded by urging member states to consider additional ways to provide Ukraine with the equipment it needs in a timely fashion.

#### **D. NATO's Partnerships and Relationship with the European Union**

Officials discussed NATO's partnerships with non-NATO member states. Currently, NATO is strengthening its relationships with partners in several regions outside of Europe, including the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East and South America.

Ukraine is one of NATO's most important non-member partners. Officials discussed the NATO-Ukraine Council, which is a joint body in which NATO member states and Ukraine engage as equal participants. This council, delegates heard, has allowed NATO to better coordinate the delivery of military assistance to Ukraine.

Officials highlighted that NATO-Ukraine cooperation benefits the Alliance as a whole. Among other examples, they highlighted the Poland-based Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC) that NATO and Ukraine established in 2024. Among JATEC's purposes is to help NATO militaries learn lessons from Ukraine's response to Russia's invasion. At JATEC, military and civilian personnel from NATO member states and Ukraine work together to increase interoperability between NATO and Ukraine.

Delegates also discussed Ukraine's path towards NATO membership, underscoring that Ukraine views its future as being within the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO's 2024 Washington Summit Declaration notes that "Ukraine's future is in NATO," and that Ukraine will be invited to join the Alliance "when Allies agree and when conditions are met".<sup>6</sup>

A recurring theme of the discussions was the EU's role in defence and security, including its relationship with NATO. Of NATO's 32 member states, a majority – 23 – are also members of the EU. Officials discussed various efforts aimed at increasing the collaboration between NATO and the EU, and reiterated that the two organizations have complementary responsibilities relating to defence, with the EU playing a critical role in the financing and coordination of Europe's defence industry.

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<sup>6</sup> NATO, [Washington Summit Declaration](#), 10 July 2024.

Another subject of the discussions was NATO's relationship with its "southern neighbourhood," a region that includes the Middle East, North Africa and West Africa – regions in which China and Russia are increasingly influential. Recalling the interconnected nature of global threats as well as NATO's core task of "cooperative security," officials spoke about the significance of conflicts in Gaza, the Red Sea and Lebanon to NATO. Officials also highlighted NATO's increased cooperation with such countries as Jordan and Kuwait.

### **E. Upgrading Allied Defence Capabilities**

Defence spending, the defence industry and burden sharing were key themes of the Joint Meetings.

Officials highlighted that NATO member states have made significant progress in increasing defence spending since the target to spend 2% of national GDP on defence was adopted in 2014. However, they explained, when considering the range of military capabilities necessary for NATO to achieve effective deterrence or respond to various scenarios, it is likely that spending beyond 2% of GDP would be necessary.

Officials discussed how NATO can enhance its defence capabilities, noting that increased spending will not alone suffice. Rather, they argued, NATO member states must also increase and coordinate defence production to develop capabilities and avoid competing with each other for defence resources.

Delegates were told that the current international environment requires a transformative approach to building up the defence industrial base among NATO countries. Officials highlighted the importance of focusing on air defences, munitions, logistics and transportation capabilities, among other areas.

In this context, officials discussed NATO's 2023 Defence Production Action Plan, which focuses on three key areas: aggregating demand and encouraging joint procurement projects; addressing defence industrial challenges; and increasing interoperability. In reviewing steps NATO and its members have taken towards implementing this plan, they highlighted the joint purchase of Patriot interceptor missiles by a coalition of several European NATO member states as an example of such joint procurement projects.

Member states were also encouraged to reduce regulatory barriers that could impede defence spending or defence industrial cooperation with other member states. As well, member states were encouraged to find ways to help small and medium enterprises participate in the defence industry.

### **F. Women, Peace and Security**

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda continues to be a priority for NATO. Officials described the WPS agenda as a strategic asset that helps ensure NATO's collective strength and its ability to detect, deter and defend against a range of threats.

Officials also discussed the implementation of the updated *NATO Policy on Women, Peace and Security*, which NATO member states adopted in July 2024. This policy outlines how NATO will integrate WPS within its three core tasks. At the centre of the

WPS agenda is the recognition that conflict and instability have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, and that women play an essential role in peace and security. Officials explained how NATO reflects the WPS agenda in its planning for a range of scenarios, including traditional collective defence scenarios as well as cyber and hybrid threats.

In a context where NATO member states are increasing their defence spending and their military recruitment, officials discussed ways member states can better enable women to serve in militaries and in the wider security and defence sector. Examples include flexible training and promotion opportunities, providing military equipment that fits a range of different bodies, and recognizing knowledge and implementation of the WPS agenda as a leadership trait for senior officers.

Despite NATO's efforts to implement the WPS agenda, officials also acknowledged that there are still areas for improvement, including as regards developing a gender-sensitive budget for NATO itself. Delegates also highlighted that harassment and assault persist within NATO militaries and asked whether NATO could play a greater role in helping member states address this concerning issue.

## **MEETING OF THE NATO PA BUREAU**

In addition to attending the Joint Meetings, **Julie Dzerowicz** – in her capacity as NATO PA Vice President – attended the meeting of the NATO PA's Bureau on 17 February 2025. Following the meeting, the Bureau issued a statement marking the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

## **MEETING WITH CANADA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL**

While in Brussels, the Canadian delegates met with Heidi Hulan, Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council. Ambassador Hulan provided an overview of Canada's priorities as they relate to NATO.

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

This year's Joint Meetings occurred at a difficult moment for Canada, in the context of the tariffs threatened, and later imposed, by the United States – a NATO ally – against Canada, as well as uncertainty about the approach of the new U.S. administration towards transatlantic security. Canadian delegates took every opportunity to highlight recent increases in Canada's defence spending, as well as its commitment to NATO and ongoing support for Ukraine.

## **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.

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<sup>7</sup> NATO PA, [Bureau statement on the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine](#), 24 February 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Dzerowicz, M.P.  
Chair, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association