Highlights of the Seminar in Helsinki 4 March
Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Management

The purpose of the Seminar on Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Management was to discuss future needs and capabilities of crisis management at a strategic level. Challenges of comprehensive approach were a crosscutting theme.

The Seminar was organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and it aimed at supporting the process of preparing the new Strategic Concept for NATO. The seminar was opened by President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen. Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, as well as Vice-chair of the NATO Group of Experts Jeroen van der Veer and several other members of the Group of Experts participated in the seminar.

Many interventions praised the openness of the Strategic Concept process. Presentations and discussions touched upon both long-term changes in the global system and NATO's role in it, as well as more practical issues of interaction and operations in demanding environments. Participants of the Seminar formed a broad mixture of NATO and partner country officials, representatives of international organisations (UN OCHA, EU, World Bank), NGOs and think tanks.

Evolving global system and NATO's future role/ Evolving World Order – Setting the Scene for Crisis Management

The importance of NATO as the cornerstone of Europe's security and stability was emphasized. NATO's interaction with other international actors was discussed and it was pointed out that NATO and the EU belong to the same security community. For partner countries, such as Finland and Sweden, NATO's Partnerships are an essential aspect of the new strategic concept and they appreciate the opportunity to be heard in the process.

In Secretary General's vision NATO should be used as a forum for discussing global security issues. He underlined the fact that hard power can only form a part of the solution to resolve conflicts.

The world and challenges NATO faces today are clearly different from the situation at the time of the previous strategy in 1999. The range of threats has widened and our notion of "security" has evolved. Factors such as terrorism, climate change, economic crisis, emerging nations and questions related to High North have surfaced. It was underlined that no single organisation can cope with the new challenges alone.

Referring to the security environment, conflict prevention was underlined. Also NATO's active engagement with Russia and China was emphasised. Looking a bit further, how does NATO react to diffusion of power through economic and technological globalization? The question of maintaining security of flows and security in cyberspace as well as the credibility of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty was raised by the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt.

Finally, public diplomacy was discussed. Successful operations and NATO's outlook hinge largely on strategic communication. NATO needs to do marketing better, in order to be able to "sell" its successes both to the public at home and in theatres of operations.

NATO and the growing role of the EU in Security Policy and Crisis Management

A better analytical capacity to address new threats in the EU and NATO is required. Moreover, given the linkages between internal and external security, a strong EU is good for a strong Alliance. Both face similar challenges in threats, operations and shortfall of capabilities.

The EU has rapidly developed its policy, institutions and tools. Meanwhile also expectations for more effective and coherent EU security policy are rising. Indeed, the EU is now an integrated territorial entity. It therefore should enhance coherence between internal and external security through a more comprehensive and well planned approach to its security policy.

The EU-NATO rivalry should finally be overcome and a balance of complementarity and cooperation established. In transatlantic sphere the political goals in developing the relationship should be set much higher than just burden-sharing. NATO and the EU have to work together in different theatres with the best set of tools. Requirements for rapid response to crises are one area of possible EU-NATO synergies/ cooperation. In one suggestion, the non-allied EU members could establish a new special form of partnership with NATO.

It is evident that development in this relationship also shapes the organisations themselves. Cooperation transforms.

Notions of Comprehensive Approach

Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Stubb pointed out the three challenges of the Comprehensive Approach: 1) the organisational challenges - how to strengthen coordination and cooperation between various international organisations and NGOs, 2) the functional challenge - how to make best use of various efforts by civilian and military crisis management, development cooperation, humanitarian aid and political efforst, and 3) the challenge of local ownership - how to build a better link between international efforts and local actors, and reinforce the local ownership which is the key to a successful transition.

All observers point out the changes in complex operational environments that call for a wide variety of instruments. A key finding is the close interdependence of security and development. When asking what sustains peace, we must move gradually from immediate alleviation of humanitarian and security situation to meet the longer term expectations of development, good governance and economic growth.

However, there appears to be misunderstanding and confusion over the term "Comprehensive Approach", which lacks a common and agreed definition. NATO's role in it needs also to be defined. Assumedly most of us wish to see a comprehensive approach in effect, but how far

should we go in search of a common definition, or should we just concentrate on concrete solutions at the field level?

Facing the enormous plurality of actors, the notion of "NATO doing Comprehensive Approach planning" would most likely prove to be counterproductive. In particular, there are actors in the humanitarian and development communities that would not associate themselves with this approach, seeing it inconsistent with their impartial role. NATO can and should, however, play a part in tailoring a comprehensive approach that best suits each area of operation. The unique role of the UN in coordinating international efforts was underlined.

Operationalising comprehensive approach

As it is difficult to define common goals, and therefore a common "diagnosis" is needed. NATO needs to recognise that the civilian elements are not homogeneous in goals and practices. Engaging international organisations and also NGOs already before facing crises is important. Otherwise good intentions of various donors might be hampered by inadequate planning.

Given the diversity of situations, a "plug and play" concept or "Lego" concept were strongly recommended: configure the right partners and capabilities for the right mission at the right time. NATO needs to be able to plug seamlessly to other actors, with an emphasis on planning and a clear allocation of responsibility. Ad hoc arrangements supported by institutionalised dialogue was seen to be a realistic approach.

Secretary General made a plea for civilian expertise to be included in NATO planning, closer cooperation with international organisations and NGOs and NATO's increased connectivity with the wider world. He also invited the NGO community to a dialogue. Civilian actors should be able to benefit from cooperating with NATO. We should not see each other as competitors but being mutually bonded and complementary. As one way to achieve better unity of effort, co-location of civilian and military actors was suggested.

At all events, there is a need for greater interaction and cooperation. The critical job of the military is to provide security for other actors to contribute and also to be able to provide military support for civilian efforts, when needed. A unity of effort – not of command – is needed.

There is a need for flexibility to adapt to the context and for better communication and mutual understanding. The role of strategic communication was stressed. Critical success depends on dialogue and understanding. A change of mindset should come first, then the technical arrangements to support the approach. Accordingly, there is a need to invest in cultural awareness not only between military and civilians of different professions. Indeed, local ownership is essential, but tensions between rigid international standards and local feasibility may emerge. A careful identification of realistic goals and timeframes is required.