

NATO leaders conclude their Riga Summit

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NATO-SUMMIT

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By Bashar Al-Khuraibet (with photos) RIGA, Nov 29 (KUNA) -- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders concluded on Wednesday their Riga Summit which was the first summit that embraced the 26 NATO leaders.

The Riga Summit Declaration stressed on its firm support for its mission in Afghanistan vowing to provide it with the "forces, resources and flexibility needed." "We reaffirm the strong solidarity of our alliance and pledge to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources and flexibility needed to ensure the mission's continued success," the declaration said.

"Contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan is NATO's key priority, " the declaration confirmed.

The NATO leaders expressed their support for the Government of President Karzai and the people of Afghanistan who seek to build a stable, democratic and prosperous society, free from terrorism, narcotics and fear, providing for its own security and at peace with its neighbors.

In cooperation with Afghan National Security Forces and in coordination with other international actors, we will continue to support the Afghan authorities in meeting their responsibilities to provide security, stability and reconstruction across Afghanistan through the UN-mandated NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), respect for international law and making every effort to avoid harm to the civilian population, the statement said.

"We reaffirm the strong solidarity of our Alliance, and pledge to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources, and flexibility needed to ensure the missions continued success," the statement said.

It said that the Afghan Government and NATO are working together to develop democratically-controlled defense institutions. "There can be no security in Afghanistan without development, and no development without security," the declaration stressed.

The NATO leaders also endorsed today the Comprehensive Political Guidance which provides a framework and political direction for NATO's continuing transformation, setting out, for the next 10-15 years, the priorities for all Alliance capability issues, planning disciplines and intelligence.

On NATO's policy of partnership, the declaration said that partnerships, dialogue, and cooperation are essential to the Alliance's purpose and its tasks. "It has fostered strong relationships with countries of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), as well as with Contact Countries," it said.

The declaration said that NATO seeks to enable the Alliance to call ad-hoc meetings as events arise with those countries who contribute to or support our operations and missions politically, militarily and in other ways and those who are potential contributors, considering their interest in specific regions where NATO is engaged. This will be done using flexible formats for consultation meetings of Allies with one or more interested partners (members the EAPC, MD or the ICI) and/or interested Contact Countries, based on the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and self-differentiation, the declaration noted.

It also said that the NATO seeks to strengthen NATO's ability to work effectively with individual countries by opening up for consideration those partnership tools currently available to EAPC countries to our partners in the MD and the ICI, as well as interested Contact Countries, on a case-by-case basis.

"We welcome the progress achieved in implementing the more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) agreed at our Istanbul Summit, and we remain committed to it, including through the decisions we have taken today," the declaration said.

We also look forward to using the new pragmatic approach we have adopted today to enhance our

relationship with MD and ICI countries as well as interested Contact Countries, it said.

It said that since the Istanbul Summit, NATO's expertise in training has developed further while our partnership with the nations in the broader Middle East region has matured and grown in importance to NATO operations and missions. "In this light, we have today launched the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative in the modernization of defense structures and the training of security forces. The Alliance stands ready, in the spirit of joint ownership, and taking into account available resources, to share its training expertise with our MD and ICI partners from the broader region of the Middle East." Through an evolutionary and phased approach building on existing structures and programs, we will set up to the benefit of our partners and NATO nations an expanding network of NATO training activities. An initial phase will include expanding the participation of these partners in relevant existing NATO training and education programs, partnership activities, and Allied training facilities to meet Allies and partners needs, as well as the establishment of a Middle East faculty at the NATO Defense College. As a second phase, NATO could consider supporting the establishment of a Security Cooperation Centre in the region, to be owned by the MD and ICI countries, with regional funding and NATO assistance. A decision on contributing to the establishment of such a NATO supported centre would be based on overall political considerations, appropriate preparatory work by the Alliance and with partners, and experience gained in all aspects of the initial phase, the declaration said.

On Iraq, the Riga Summit Declaration said that All Allies continue to contribute to the NATO mission in Iraq, consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546, to support the Iraqi security forces through training, in or out of the country, equipping, or contributing to trust funds. "Our training mission is a demonstration of our support for the Iraqi people and their government, and for the stability, democratic development, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Iraq, in accordance with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions," it said.

In response to a request from the Prime Minister of Iraq, we have asked the NATO Military Authorities to develop additional niche training options to support Iraqi security forces where military expertise is required, within the mandate of the NATO Training Mission-Iraq. This demonstrates our continued commitment to help Iraq build effective and sustainable multi-ethnic security forces, the declaration noted.

On terrorism, the NATO said that it strongly condemn terrorism, whatever its motivations or manifestations, and will fight it together as long as necessary, in accordance with international law and UN principles. The Alliance continues to provide an essential transatlantic dimension to the response against terrorism, it said.

We remain committed to our dialogue and cooperation with our partners and other international organizations to fight terrorism, and reiterate our determination to protect our populations, territories, infrastructure and forces against the consequences of terrorist attacks. We commend NATO's Defense Against Terrorism initiatives, including development of cutting-edge technologies to counter terrorist threats, such as defending Allied forces in Afghanistan from Improvised Explosive Devices. We call upon Allies to continue to develop and fully implement their national capabilities in this important area, and to strengthen the Alliance's ability to share information and intelligence on terrorism, especially in support of NATO operations, it said. (end) bk.