

The instrument of bringing closer to the European family

Huseyin DIRIOZ: The Annual National Program is ambitious and comprehensive, but the important thing is its implementation

By Mykola SIRUK, *The Day*



NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defense Policy and Planning Huseyin Dirioz recently visited Ukraine. He is the first Turkish representative to hold this office in NATO's over 60-year-long history. In an exclusive interview to *The Day* Huseyin Dirioz spoke about the goal of his trip to Ukraine, the Alliance's expectations from cooperation with Kyiv, and evaluated the cooperation of NATO and Ukraine in the defense sphere.

Mr. Dirioz, what are your general impressions about the atmosphere during the sitting of the Ukraine-NATO Commission in Berlin?

“The Foreign Ministers' meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission was a very good meeting, and took place in a positive and constructive atmosphere. Ukraine's approval of the Annual National Program for 2011 contributed to the meeting. So the meeting had a positive setting and the results were expressed in a

substantial and forward-looking Joint Statement.”

The Secretary General said he expected that Ukraine would continue contributing to the security? Were these expectations justified?

“In the Joint Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, NATO ministers expressed their high appreciation for Ukraine's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security. They noted that Ukraine was the first partner to participate in the NATO Response Force and is currently contributing to almost all NATO-led operations. They also called on Ukraine to consider its contribution to Operation Ocean Shield and additional training assistance to Afghanistan.”

You said it was good news when you learnt from Minister Hryshchenko that president signed the Annual National Program. Hryshchenko told the journalists that this is a rather ambitious program. What is your opinion on this program? Is this program as ambitious as it is depicted by the Ukrainian side?

“The Annual National Program (ANP) is both ambitious and comprehensive, but the most important thing is its implementation. It is Ukraine's task to implement the reforms, but NATO

stands ready to support Ukraine, as the ANP is the central framework for implementing our practical cooperation on the basis of shared values.

“As was mentioned in the Joint Communiqué in Berlin last week,

NATO stands ready to support Ukraine in reaching the goals outlined in the Annual National Program for 2011.

“Of course the implementation of all reforms is a very complex process undertaken by the Ukrainian government, particularly with the budget cuts affecting all of us these days. However, the establishment of the Commission on Ukraine’s cooperation with NATO is a welcome development contributing to enhanced coordination of all efforts in implementing the ANP.”

What can you say about Ukraine’s defense reforms which started long ago? Do you see any progress?

“Ukraine indeed has made good progress in recent years in its defense and security reforms, including enhancing democratic control of defense and security forces, and developing force capabilities to a level that enables Ukraine to contribute to international peacekeeping operations. However, much remains to be done and there are significant budgetary obstacles to be overcome. And Ukraine will have to consider making difficult decisions in order to bring its armed forces structure and manning in line with realistic expectations of resource allocation.

“Progress has been greater in areas that do not require expenditure of funds, such as restructuring of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff in accordance with NATO standards, and professionalization of non-commissioned officers corps and initial activities to establish a regulatory basis for modern officer career management system.

“Thus I believe the coming years will be critical for Ukraine’s armed forces and foreseen reforms, supporting the transformation of Ukraine’s defense establishment.”

During the sitting of the Commission the Secretary General said that NATO would help Ukraine in implementing reforms. Can you specify what it means?

“The Secretary General said that NATO is ready to support Ukraine’s implementation of the reform goals that Ukraine has set for itself and shared with the Alliance. These reform goals are outlined in the Annual National Program. This is a comprehensive reform plan, the implementation of which will bring Ukraine closer to the Euro-Atlantic family and will also facilitate the achievement of one of Ukraine’s main priorities: its European integration ambitions.

“The framework of NATO-Ukraine Commission and NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defense Reform, the Planning and Review Process as well as military to military cooperation are all instruments that we use supporting the reforms in Ukraine’s defense and security sectors, focusing on priority areas. Most important is linking the plans and ambitions to available resources, making them realistic and enabling their implementation.

“Another issue is improving interoperability of Ukraine’s forces with NATO forces so that we can face challenges together, like in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Managing civilian control of security and defense structures, managing the consequences of reforms, establishing strategic partnership between Ukraine’s security institutions and the civil society are other important areas, which we focus on. These are the areas of reform, which can be supported by the structures I mentioned, NATO-Ukraine Commission first and foremost, but also the joint working groups, the Planning and Review Process. This will also support Ukraine’s broader European integration efforts.”

Did Ukraine ask for a specific assistance in Berlin to carry out reforms in defense sector?

“I have already mentioned that Ukraine’s priority areas of reform are outlined in the Annual National Program. We have the mechanisms to support the program in line with Ukraine’s requests. So we will continue our collaboration to support Ukraine’s Annual National Program implementation. We’re also working together on emerging security challenges that we all face. These range from terrorism to cyber defense to energy security and we are also working on these.”

Maybe I’ll be repeating myself, but Ukraine would like to know what possible contribution does NATO expect from Ukraine?

“Again, I would reiterate that the Alliance highly appreciates Ukraine’s contribution to Euro-Atlantic security. It is contributing to the NATO Response Force, to most NATO-led operations. We have a common goal, which was reaffirmed in Berlin, to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security. There is an important role for the Annual National Program as a framework enabling NATO to support Ukraine’s reforms and transformation, and enhancing our ability to work together. NATO stands ready to support Ukraine in implementing this program within the existing mechanisms.”

Perhaps NATO expects that we will bring some troops to Afghanistan or other regions?

“Ukraine is already participating in the majority of NATO-led operations, from Kosovo to Afghanistan. Ukraine’s contribution to the security in the Euro-Atlantic area is highly appreciated. Ukraine is a very important partner for the Alliance.”

What is the goal of your visit to Ukraine?

“First of all, to have contacts with high-level Ukrainian officials, and to discuss with them our cooperation on Ukraine’s defense reforms, the progress made, and the priorities for the near term. I was interested in hearing from Ukrainian counterparts, what could be the areas where NATO could provide support, either in the form of experience sharing, education, training or exercises. In this context I have had discussions with Deputy Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs, as well as the First Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, who also acts as the co-chairman of the NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defense Reform, for which I’m the co-chair on NATO side.

We agreed with all our interlocutors that the Annual National Program remains the key framing document for NATO-Ukraine cooperation and should be used by Ukraine as the comprehensive reform plan, being consistent with all other strategic-level documents. I am satisfied with my meetings in Kyiv.

“The next day I will attend in Kharkiv an International Conference on the promotion of democratic values and human rights in the activities of security services, co-organised by the SBU and NATO Liaison Office in Ukraine, as well as DCAF, National Institute for Security Studies, and the OSCE.”

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