

Kolsås

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General Howlett,  
Generals,  
Admirals,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to meet so many distinguished representatives of the military profession as well as their partners representing the civil authorities. Your own promotion of our dialogue, by bringing us together in such pleasant surroundings reminds me of a saying by Horats: "Omne tulit punctum qui misquit utile dulci" - He is generally applauded who mixes the useful and the pleasant.

General,

The Alliance represents the cornerstone of Norwegian security policy. Norway's security, as that of other allies, is a matter of interdependence, we all rely on Alliance solidarity on the mutual obligations undertaken through the North Atlantic Treaty. Norway more than others depends on the capability of the Alliance to render assistance in a crisis. At the same time it is clear that the security of Central Europe is linked to the security of Norway in the face of a common threat. In recognizing this interdependence we will strive to make a credible contribution to allied defence, in cooperation with other Member States, towards the common objective of maintaining peace - and, in particular, to improve its quality.

In the absence of the advantages of the Warsaw Pact in terms of personnel and geography, quality should indeed be the Credo of the Alliance. Like our NATO partners my Government is concerned about the input-output-ratio in terms of increased collective security - which results from our defence budgets. We have managed over det years to maintain and increase our defence budgets in consonance with the general targets established by the Alliance.

Over det last three decades Norwegian defence expenditures have, with small modifications, remained at the level of 3 per cent of the GDP. This figure puts us in on the average compared to other allies. In terms of defence expenditures per capita, however, Norway ranks third in the Alliance.

As a consequence of the low level in the price of oil a serious shortfall has developed in Norwegian economy, which requires painful remedial action. In spite of a huge loss in revenues, my Government remains dedicated to the Alliance's goals relating to defence efforts. Although other sectors (in the budget of my Government) will suffer reductions in the coming year, the defence budget will still increase by approximately 3% p.a. in real terms. We sincerely hope that these efforts will be duly evaluated as a contribution to the burden sharing in the Alliance.

Speaking about defence efforts, I am reminded by the British diplomat and writer James Cable who in his book "Britains Naval Future" says that "The want of omnipotence is no reason for abstaining from such options as are available".

General,

There will always be differences of opinion between independent nations on the choice of the means to attain the giver aims. Looking at the group of nations that constitute this Alliance, you will see that there is a great variety in terms of military postures and the structure of forces, as well as in the threat to any given area. I believe that it is an expression of

the strength of the Alliance that room is made for a variety of opinions and approaches. We should continue to respect this plurality. Differences on single issues should not develop into political cleavages in the Alliance.

Norwegian security policy stands firm. This statement has been repeated over and over again on both sides of the political spectre. This reminds me of a story about a NATO Admiral who commanded his ships in deep fog in an exercise. Seeing an approaching object on the radar the Admiral gave orders to inform the object to turn starboard to avoid collision. After three fruitless attempts the Admiral himself went on the air, emphasizing his order with his title. Then finally the object responded: "Admiral, this is the lighthouse".

Toast.