



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

# SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

## POLITICAL COMMITTEE

Saturday 17 November  
and Sunday 18 November 2018

*Ballroom 2,  
Halifax Convention Centre, Canada*

**ATTENDANCE LIST**

<b>Acting Chairperson</b>	Michael Gapes (United Kingdom)
<b>General Rapporteur</b>	Julio MIRANDA CALHA (Portugal)
<b>Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations</b>	Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States)
<b>Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships</b>	Raynell ANDREYCHUK (Canada)
<b>President of the NATO PA</b>	Rasa JUKNEVICIENE (Lithuania)
<b>Secretary General of the NATO PA</b>	David HOBBS
<b>Member delegations</b>	
Albania	Gent STRAZIMIRI
	Xhemal QEFALIA
Belgium	Karolien GROSEMANS
	Christophe LACROIX
	Damien THIERY
	Alain TOP
	Luk VAN BIESEN
	Karl VANLOUWE
	Veli YÜKSEL
	Olga ZRIHEN
Bulgaria	Hristo GADZHEV
Canada	Ziad ABOULATAIF
	Joseph A. DAY
	Cheryl GALLANT
Czech Republic	Josef HAJEK
Denmark	Jeppe JAKOBSEN
Estonia	Marko MIHKELSON
France	Francoise DUMAS
	Philippe FOLLIOU
	Sonia KRIMI
	Gilbert ROGER
Germany	Marcus FABER
	Karl A. LAMERS
	Anita SCHAFER
	Christian SCHMIDT
Greece	Spyridon DANELLIS
	Christos KARAGIANNIDIS
Iceland	Njall Trausti FRIDBERTSSON
Italy	Matteo Luigi BIANCHI
	Edmondo CIRIELLI
	Luca FRUSONE
	Paolo FORMENTINI
Luxembourg	Nancy ARENDT KEMP
Montenegro	Obrad Miso STANISIC
Netherlands	Maria MARTENS
Norway	Liv Signe NAVARSETE

Poland	Waldemar ANDZEL Miroslaw SUCHON Witold WASZCZYKOWSKI
Portugal	Luis VILHENA
Romania	Nicu FALCOI Costel LUPASCU
Spain	Miguel Angel GUTIERREZ Gabino PUCHE Ricardo TARNO
Turkey	Kamil AYDIN Cengiz AYDOGDU Osman Askin BAK Muhammet CINISLI Ahmet Berat CONKAR Fikri ISIK Mevlut KARAKAYA Ilhan KESICI
United Kingdom	Lord CAMPBELL of PITTENWEEM Michael GAPES Lord HAMILTON of EPSOM Baroness RAMSAY of CARTVALE
United States	James COSTA Thomas MARINO
<b>Associate delegations</b>	
Armenia	Koryun NAHAPETYAN
Austria	Nikolaus BERLAKOVICH Harald TROCH
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nikola LOVRINOVIC Asim SARAJLIC
Finland	Eero HEINALUOMA Mikko SAVOLA
Republic of Moldova	Dumitru DIACOV Mihai GHIMPU Artur RESETNICOV
Serbia	Natasa JOVANOVIC Dragan SORMAZ
Switzerland	Isidor BAUMANN Josef DITTLI Werner SALZMANN
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>1</sup>	Ilija DIMOVSKI Katerina KUZMANOVSKA
Ukraine	Yurii BEREZA Olga BIELKOVA Iryna FRIZ Iryna GERASHCHENKO Andrii LEVUS Oksana YURYNETS

<sup>1</sup> Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

**Regional Partner and Mediterranean  
Associate Member Delegations**

Algeria

Abderrahmen DRISS  
Abdelkader KEMOUNE  
Mohammed AZRI

Morocco

**European Parliament**

Norica NICOLAI  
Bogdan ZDROJEWSKI

**Parliamentary Observers**

Assembly of Kosovo

Japan

Palestinian National Council

National Assembly, Republic of Korea

Xhavit HALITI  
Takayuki YAMAMOTO  
Mohammed S.M. HEGAZI  
LEE Soo-Hyuck

**Parliamentary Guest**

Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Mediterranean  
Qatar

Pedro ROQUE  
Khalifa AL-HETMI

**Speakers**

**Vera ALEXANDER**, Deputy Ambassador, Joint  
Delegation of Canada to NATO  
**Andrea BERGER**, Senior Research Associate,  
Middlebury Institute of International Studies and  
Senior Fellow, Canadian International Council,  
**Carole DUMAINE**, Adjunct Faculty, Johns Hopkins  
University  
**Marius GRINIUS**, Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs  
Institute  
**Stanley SLOAN**, Non-resident Senior Fellow,  
Atlantic Council  
**Ariane TABATABAI**, Associate Political Scientist,  
RAND Corporation

**International Secretariat**

Steffen SACHS, Director  
Ginevra SPONZILLI, Coordinator  
Jacob Hart, Research Assistant  
Aysegul Uysal, Research Assistant

**Saturday 17 November 2018**

**I. Opening remarks by the acting Chairperson Michael GAPES (United Kingdom)**

1. In his opening remarks, the acting Chairperson **Michael Gapes** (UK) thanked the Canadian delegation for hosting the 2018 Annual Session. He welcomed everyone to Halifax.
2. Following the opening remarks **both the draft agenda [176 PC 18 E] and the Summary of the Meeting of the Political Committee held in Warsaw, Poland, on Saturday 26 May 2018 [128 PC 18 E] were adopted by the Committee.**
3. Mr Gapes then explained the procedure for amendments to the draft Resolution on *Reinforcing NATO's Contribution to Tackling the Challenges from the South* [221 PC 18 E].

**II. Consideration of the draft General Report Instability in the South [177 PC 18 E] by Julio Miranda CALHA (Portugal), General Rapporteur**

4. **Julio Miranda CALHA** (PT) introduced his report which reviews the main security challenges in NATO's southern neighbourhood and their impact on NATO Allies. After providing a brief update on recent developments in Syria and Iraq, he identified the key drivers promoting instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: To varying degrees, the countries in the region are confronted with challenging demographic developments, stagnant economies, illegal migration and violent forms of political Islam. Mr Calha added that developments further south in the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea also impact regional volatility. Moreover, security in North Africa and the Sahel has become increasingly volatile and interconnected as non-state actors proliferated across the region after the collapse of the Libyan state in 2011.
5. The General Rapporteur concluded by summarising NATO's efforts in the South. NATO Allies and partners have already identified the MENA region as integral to transatlantic security. He argued that more needs to be done to raise situational awareness and to ensure that important initiatives - such as the hub for the South in Naples or the Training Mission Iraq - can succeed.
6. The ensuing Q&A largely focused on the situation in Syria, stabilisation in North Africa and the Sahel region, and the security challenges linked to the migration from the MENA region to Europe. A Turkish delegate argued that the Democratic Union Party (PYD) is the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and requested the wording of paragraph 10 be changed accordingly. The Rapporteur and the Turkish delegation agreed on a compromise wording that was also accepted by the Committee. Other proposals to adapt the text proposed by the Turkish delegation were accepted. On post-conflict reconstruction in Syria and Iraq, Mr Calha commented that NATO training missions, like the one in Iraq, can complement reconstruction efforts in the region. Questions were also asked on how to prevent Daesh or other terror groups from rising as the conflict in Syria begins to wind down.
7. The conversation on North Africa and the Sahel brought up the diverse set of challenges the region faces. Committee members generally agreed on the need for strong cooperation between NATO and partner countries in the region. There was also general agreement among delegates that the efforts to address these challenges cannot be merely military but that they must include political and economic elements as well.
8. With regard to the refugee and migrant crisis several commentators suggested that European governments did not know how to handle the large influx of refugees. This has made immigration a politically divisive topic with negative consequences for the domestic political environment in European member countries.

9. **The draft report [177 PC 18 E] as amended was adopted.**

**III. Presentation by Ariane TABATABAI, Associate Political Scientist, RAND Corporation, on Iran and Regional Security**

10. **Ariane Tabatabai** noted in her introductory remarks that Iran has become more assertive over the past two decades. This is reflected in Tehran's deploying troops in Syria, among others, as well as in developing ties with numerous groups in neighbouring countries. However, in contrast to a widely held belief that the formation of policy decisions in Iran is a "top down" exercise, she said that the formulation of security policies in Iran are the result of a "push and pull" from different power centers within the country. The Speaker also suggested that Iran values national unity and territorial integrity – not only for itself, but also for all other countries in the region.

11. To increase its leverage in the region Iran wants neighbouring states that are neither too strong nor too weak. Tehran's conclusion from the rise of Daesh is that fragile and weak states risk collapse – which presents a challenge to Iranian interests. Although Iranian officials have sometimes in the past used strong and partially aggressive language, the Speaker advised against taking the rhetoric of the Iranian regime at face value. A possible reason for misinterpreting and overestimating Tehran's ambitions is that it partners with Russia and China when their interests align. In contrast to Tehran, Moscow and Beijing have a more global agenda and want to revise the global order.

12. Ms Tabatabai noted the Iranian regime does have relations with different terror groups in the region. These relationships give Iran more tools and allows it to project regional power beyond its means. However, these relationships differ, and not all follow the Hezbollah model. For instance, relations of the regime in Tehran and the Taliban are narrower.

13. As Iran is an influential actor both in Iraq and Syria NATO needs to consider finding a way to leverage Iran's influence in the region, Ms Tabatabai explained. Iran and Russia have been deepening ties in Syria – which has diminished the influence of other actors in the country. It seems likely that the cooperation of Iran and Russia in the country will enable both to exercise considerable influence in and over post-conflict Syria. She concluded by suggesting that Tehran also recognised that NATO's presence in Afghanistan and Iraq benefits its own security.

14. The exchanges following the speech focused on Iranian support for proxies throughout the region, the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and possible implications of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA for Iran's domestic landscape.

15. On Iran's support for and relations with proxies in the region, Ms Tabatabai said that Iran believes it can exercise some leverage over Hezbollah. This is not the case in Iran's relationship with the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Tehran views the conflict in Yemen as a relatively inexpensive and risk-reduced way to challenge Saudi Arabia. More generally, she said that Iran's efforts to build and expand its influence in the region reflects a preference for supporting foreign groups rather than using its own (military) forces. For the foreseeable future, Iran is likely to continue this approach, she anticipated.

16. On the decision of the Trump administration to withdraw from the JCPOA Ms. Tabatabai commented that it is too early to tell the effects of the reinstatement of sanctions on Iran. The withdrawal from the JCPOA reflects a policy divergence between the United States and its European Allies. For now, it appears that Tehran is bidding time until the U.S. presidential elections in 2020. If President Trump is reelected, this could result in greater nuclear activity from Iran, she said. Iranian elections in 2020 and 2021 will also have a large effect on Iran's nuclear policies if hardliners are returned to power and do not wish to work with the Europeans. The Speaker also noted the growing anti-western population in Iran as very concerning.

#### **IV. Presentation by Vera ALEXANDER, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada to NATO, on Canada and NATO**

17. **Vera Alexander** began her presentation by reminding the Committee that the multilateral system that emerged after World War II was built on shared values and standards, a commitment to pluralism, human rights and the rule of law. By contrast, today's international community, and the predominant security challenges, are rather different.

18. The Alliance has adapted to this new environment, which is reflected, among others, by the decisions taken at the 2014 NATO Wales Summit and thereafter. In this context the Speaker cited the new NATO Command Structure which includes a new cyber cell as well as a new maritime HQ for times of conflict and the 30-30-30-30 initiative as positive steps from NATO. She said that Canada will spend 32% of its budget on the modernisation of its military capabilities by 2024. Canada is also committed to increase its defence spending by 70% between 2016 and 2026. Moreover, Canadian troops are leading the Enhanced Forward Presence effort in Latvia and working with Allies to help patrol the skies over Romania. At the same time, the Alliance continues the political dialogue through the NATO-Russia Council. Turning to the MENA region, she highlighted the new NATO Training Mission in Iraq, led and supported with personnel and military assets by Canada.

19. Ms. Alexander then discussed the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. She noted that women experience war differently from men – which requires NATO Allies' efforts to understand and consider their perspectives as well. The Alliance is acting upon this recognition, which is reflected by NATO's updated WPS policy and action plan.

20. The ensuing discussion focused largely on the NATO WPS programme, the future of the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and what the creation of a "European Army" could mean for NATO. On the WPS programme, the Speaker noted that progress has been made. For example, in Afghanistan WPS advisers have helped commanders understand women's perspectives on the ground. Moreover, female soldiers are also serving as role models for Afghan women. The Speaker also indicated how Canadian airlift operations in Mali must include a certain percentage of women during these missions.

21. On PESCO, the Speaker acknowledged that greater cooperation among EU Member states in the defence and security realm makes sense as stronger allies make for a stronger alliance. However, European efforts need to be transparent and inclusive of non-EU NATO members. PESCO and other European efforts must not duplicate NATO efforts but should be complementary.

#### **V. Consideration of the draft Report of the Sub-Committee North Korea's Challenge to International Security: Implications for NATO [179 PCTR 18 E] by Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States), Rapporteur**

22. The Rapporteur, **Gerald E. Connolly** (US), explained that the updated report incorporated references to recent developments, including the Summit that were held between US President Donald Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un as well as the inter-Korean Summits. He started the presentation of his report with a review of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK - North Korea) ballistic and nuclear weapons programmes. The US delegate also highlighted the DPRK's illicit arms trade in the Middle East and Africa. Russia and China have enabled these activities because of their reluctance to punish a historically relevant ally and to fulfil other strategic aims, he added.

23. Although Mr Connolly welcomed that negotiations have been taking place, he concluded that nothing the regime in Pyongyang has offered so far would constitute an irreversible movement toward denuclearisation. He added that nothing that the DPRK has offered in concrete terms so far

represents a reduction of the military threat it poses to the Republic of Korea and other neighbours in the region, particularly Japan. Unless it profoundly and verifiably changes its policies, North Korea continues to pose a serious threat to neighbours, NATO Allies, and indeed the whole world. The Rapporteur dismissed a “kinetic option” to tackle the DPRK’s violations of international agreements. Instead, he called upon NATO member states, and the international community, to maintain, and increase if necessary, the pressure on the regime in Pyongyang to change its approach. In this context Mr Connolly suggested that this could be done through maritime interdiction, possibly along the lines of NATO’s *Operation Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean, in cooperation with regional partners.

24. During the ensuing discussion **Lee Soo-Hyuck** (KR) reminded of the dynamic diplomatic developments that have taken place on the Korean peninsula during 2018. The delegate recognised that the implementation of the UN Security Council sanction resolutions helped bring North Korea back to the negotiation table. Although he acknowledged that the DPRK has in the past often not implemented agreements to which it committed he asked the Committee to support diplomatic initiatives that can contribute to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula. The absolute priority is now confidence building, he said.

25. Comments from Committee members largely focused on the sanction regime and on how countries that enable the DPRK to circumvent sanctions can be prevented from doing so. It was mentioned during the debate that NATO could carry out maritime missions around North Korea to halt ship to ship transfers of oil to North Korea. Parliamentarians appreciated the practical steps that could curtail North Korean nefarious actions. Several commentators noted that North Korean workers are also working in Russia and that Moscow is either actively supporting or at least turning a blind eye on the DPRK’s illicit oil and petroleum as well as weapons trade. It was also asserted that the North Korean economy seems to be growing despite sanctions. On the diplomatic initiatives, the Rapporteur said he supported these, but that it was important that the DPRK actually implemented any agreement that it would make. Mr Connolly ended with the quotation “trust but verify” saying that this is how we must proceed with North Korea.

26. **The draft report [179 PC 18 E] was adopted.**

## VI. Panel discussion on Northeast Asian Security and the Role of China

- **Presentation by Marius GRINIUS, Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, on *China, the United States and the ‘New Great Game’***

27. **Marius Grinius** began by saying there is a “Great Game” now being played between China and the United States. He said that Russia is the “junior partner” to China and it is Russia and China’s goal to keep the United States from being as strong as it could be. The Speaker continued saying, “I think you know a lot about the economy of China, but the army in China has really gone from a barefoot military to a modern military, being very similar to the United States’.”

28. He considered the recent developments on the Korean peninsula as a side show to the “Great Game” between China and the United States. Mr Grinius also noted that despite the numerous summits and declarations following the 2018 Winter Olympics, Kim Jong-un never promised anything. He was skeptical that Kim Jong-un will negotiate away North Korea’s nuclear capability. With regard to South Korea the Speaker commented that it desires co-prosperity and peaceful coexistence with the North. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is using the window of opportunity to achieve an agreement with the North. In the meantime, China and Russia are watching as developments unfold between the United States and North Korea. Mr Grinius concluded his presentation by raising the issue of the US security approach to Asia and asked if President Donald Trump is as committed to US Asian defence treaties as previous US administrations.

- **Presentation by Andrea BERGER, Senior Research Associate, Middlebury Institute of International Studies and Senior Fellow, Canadian International Council, on *From Pyongyang with Love? The North Korean Nuclear Issue and Implications for NATO***

29. **Andrea Berger** stated that publicly available reports indicate that North Korea is still moving ahead with its nuclear and missile programmes. She argued that DPRK Chairman Kim Jong-un has applied “selective transparency” with his visits to North Korean nuclear weapons sites in 2017 when he showed off the DPRK arsenal. No similar visits have taken place in 2018. Rather, Kim Jong-un has applied “selective transparency” differently, namely by showing nuclear sites being destroyed. The Speaker suggested that these dismantled DPRK nuclear sites are no longer necessary for the regime. The reason that the DPRK regime applies “selective transparency” is to keep concessions coming from the United States, she explained.

30. On the other hand, the North Korea policy of the Trump administration is evolving, Ms Berger argued. While President Trump may originally have believed in the possibility of a “grand bargain”, his administration sees any progress will only come very slowly. Ms Berger added this is likely to strengthen hardliners in the United States against North Korea.

31. Turning to the implications of the developments on the Korean peninsula for the Alliance, the Speaker said that the cancellation of the joint US-ROK military exercises after the Singapore summit did not go unnoticed, particularly among the Asian allies of the United States.

32. Ms Berger also reminded the Committee that North Korea remains one of the most active arms proliferators worldwide. While the DPRK weapons sold to African countries are outdated, the weapons that Pyongyang has been selling to the Middle East include ballistic and chemical weapons - which is a significant concern for NATO. Moreover, NATO Allies should be more concerned about the DPRK’s cyber capabilities and activities, the Speaker suggested.

33. The debate focused on the bilateral DPRK-Chinese relationship and on the potential leverage – beyond economic incentives - European Allies have to support stability in Asia. The exchanges revealed a general consensus that the main rationale for Pyongyang to acquire nuclear weapons is regime survival. A nuclear arsenal makes the DPRK independent from Chinese political (and potentially military) protection, it was argued. Moreover, a nuclear arsenal also provides a kind of “security asymmetry” as the DPRK’s conventional arsenal is vastly inferior to that of the ROK, let alone that of the United States. The view is that both Japan and South Korea overall contribute more to burden sharing with the United States than was generally perceived in Washington. Upon invitation to speak to the Committee by the Chairperson, the South Korean Ambassador to Canada said he agreed North Korean intention on gaining nuclear weapons has not changed. It is important, however, to keep trying to engage the DPRK. If no progress is made, North Korea will retreat to its aggressive stance, probably resulting in a military confrontation. In such a scenario South Korea would be the first victim. This is why dialogue with North Korea must continue, he concluded.

**Sunday 18 November 2018**

**VII. Presentation by Carol DUMAINE, Adjunct Faculty, Johns Hopkins University, on Rethinking National Security in a Climate-Disrupted World**

34. **Carol Dumaine** reminded the Committee of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which indicated the need to reduce carbon pollution by 45% by 2030 to avoid worst-case climate change scenarios. The Speaker emphasised that the report was in line with alarming reports relating to the likely implications of climate change, including one on biodiversity loss.

35. Though climate change is not generally discussed in a security context it should be higher on the agenda of international security. However, she stressed that climate change needs to be seen as a looming global threat, among others because climate change amplifies other security threats. In this context she mentioned that phenomena linked to climate change like rising sea levels and extended droughts lead to, for example, spikes in food prices and forced migration – which create greater instability in the world.

36. Dealing with climate change needs to be carried out at a global level through global cooperation, the Speaker posited. With regard to the NATO PA, it should strengthen partnerships with NATO and the UN to combat climate change. Ms Dumaine concluded by stressing the challenges are the most formidable humanity has ever faced and that the time to successfully tackle them is limited.

37. The discussion that followed focused on three main areas: development and climate change; the need to muster political will to devise policies that reduce emissions; monitoring emissions from producers to consumers.

38. Ms Dumaine stressed that governments need to understand that they cannot pursue economic policies as in the past as many natural resources are being rapidly depleted. If countries continued like this, humankind would need 32 planets to survive. The developed world in particular should take the lead, as First World countries produced a lot of emissions in the past. The Speaker also spoke of looking at short term interests versus long term responsibility and called upon policy makers to take climate issues seriously – or risk that people would not take politicians seriously. The debate also touched upon the connection between climate change and societal implications. Another topic that was debated was the increasing likelihood that the effects of climate change can lead to forced migration and armed conflict. Ms Dumaine concluded on the note that the challenges posed by climate change can only be tackled through multilateral cooperation.

**VIII. Presentation by Stanley SLOAN, Nonresident Senior Fellow, *Atlantic Council*, on Turbulence and Transitions in Transatlantic Relations**

39. **Stanley Sloan** started his presentation by stating that the values upon which the Alliance has been founded are being challenged by external enemies of democracy and by internal proponents of radical right illiberalism. The combination of these negative forces is undermining NATO, the European Union, and the coherence of the transatlantic community. How NATO Allies respond to those threats will determine the future not only of this alliance but of Western values more generally. NATO is both a political and military alliance; it is also not a “bad deal” for either the United States or its transatlantic Allies, the Speaker stressed. The North Atlantic Treaty's Article 5 collective defense commitment is the heart of the alliance. The credibility of Article 5 depends not just on military strength, but just as importantly on national political will to use it. Governments must effectively communicate that will to adversaries and allied citizens alike. Until President Trump, all US presidents, for almost seven decades, have defended this commitment.

40. In recent years, the assumptions about the success of Western values have come under attack from two external sources, both aimed at undermining faith in and political support for our democracies. The more familiar threat has come from Russia and comes from covert and overt political weapons. Russian influence campaigns on social media and cyber-attacks have supported politicians on both sides of the Atlantic whose approach to transatlantic relations undermines the Western values on which the transatlantic alliance is based. At the same time, Islamist terrorists have sought to achieve virtually the same objectives pursued by Moscow. Their goal has been to weaken Western societies and the faith of our citizens in Western values, systems, and leadership. The disruptive Russian and terrorist-produced challenges have provided fertile ground on which radical right populist politicians and parties have thrived. These radical right “populist” politicians are using our democratic systems and practices to try to turn them in illiberal directions. They have used the natural fear stirred by the external intrusions as a political tool to convince populations that they should be willing to accept “strong” leadership and limits on their individual and collective freedoms – the very freedoms that all NATO member states are committed to defend, according to the Speaker.

41. “In my judgment, the West needs a political strategy to respond to this challenge”, Mr Sloan stressed. The United States and its Allies need to work together to tackle these challenges. This requires that European nations strengthen their contributions to defence and that the United States remains committed to security cooperation with its Allies. However, most of the steps necessary to respond to the threats to Western values are not to be found in the realm of security policy. Rather, the answers must emerge from political, economic, and financial system reforms. If such reforms succeed, people will see that “the West” and its values are worth defending.

42. The ensuing dialogue focused on the relevance of Article 5 and whether its significance has been diluted as the Alliance has continued to enlarge. There was a general consensus that Article 5 remained the cornerstone of the Alliance and that the commitments of NATO member states are unwavering. Another part of the discussion focused on the state of the transatlantic relationship in the Trump presidency. Although he acknowledged that some public statements of President Trump have raised questions about the commitment of the administration to the Alliance, the Speaker emphasised the overwhelming congressional support for NATO. Mr Sloan concluded by underlining the importance of continued efforts to educate people on the importance of the transatlantic relationship.

#### **IX. Consideration of the draft Report of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships Security in the Western Balkans [178 PCNP 18 E] by Senator Raynell ANDREYCHUK (Canada), Rapporteur**

43. At the outset of her presentation Senator **Raynell Andreychuk** (CA) provided a brief overview of the security environment in the Western Balkans. She covered the political, economic, and social challenges that the countries of the region are facing and measured the progress that has been achieved as well as the work that still needs to be done. The Rapporteur noted that the European Union and the Alliance cannot take the positive evolution of Western Balkan democracy for granted and warned that a vacuum would be quickly filled by forces with a decidedly anti-democratic and anti-Western agenda. Ms Andreychuk noted that a new crisis in the Western Balkans would have grave repercussions for European security and stability. The Rapporteur stated that NATO’s continued military presence and its political engagement with partner countries of the Western Balkans are crucially important for regional stability. She added that the EU should show political support – which could be done by affirming that Europe’s door will remain open for the accession of the Western Balkan countries when they are ready. At the same time the EU needs urge applicant countries to continue, and where necessary increase reform processes. She ended her introduction by emphasising that NATO and the European Union need to remain engaged to encourage the countries of the region to continue their reform process, providing assistance when necessary.

44. In the ensuing exchange Committee members raised the prospects for Serbian accession to the EU and the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. Much attention was also paid to NATO and the EU's efforts to address external factors such as Russia and China in the Balkans. It was noted that these external factors, such as disinformation, also face all European nations, not just the Balkans.

45. Delegates shared the view that Western Balkan countries and the EU and NATO have a role to play in promoting and implementing reforms in the region. Because of the geographical location, the security of the Western Balkans is crucially important for European security. The Western Balkans lie at the core of Europe, as one delegate stressed. Several suggestions to make minor adaptations to the draft report were made by the Serbian and Turkish delegations. These suggestions were accepted by the Rapporteur and the Committee.

46. **The draft report [178 PCNP 18 E] was adopted as amended by the Committee.**

**X. Consideration of amendments and vote on the draft Resolution *Reinforcing NATO's Contribution to Tackling the Challenges from the South* [221 PC 18 E] by Julio MIRANDA CALHA (Portugal), General Rapporteur**

47. Following the introduction by **Julio Miranda Calha** (PT) the Committee discussed and voted on the resolution *Reinforcing NATO's contribution to tackling the Challenges From the South* [221 PC 18 E].

48. Fifteen amendments were presented. The following amendments were accepted: 12, 13 (Frusone), 14, 15 (Folliot), 9, 10, 11 (Bak and Conkar), 3, 5, 6 (Tarno), 4 (Tarno and Gutierrez), 1, 2 (Connolly). One amendment was withdrawn: 7 (Tarno and Gutierrez). One amendment was rejected: 8 (Tarno and Gutierrez).

49. **The draft Resolution [221 PC 18 E] as amended was adopted.**

**XI. Future Political Committee visits and activities presented by Karl A. LAMERS (Germany), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations**

50. **Karl A. Lamers** (DE), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations, briefly summarised the Sub-Committee visits in 2018 and provided an overview of the Committee and Sub-Committee activities and visits for 2019.

**XII. Election of Committee and Sub-Committee Officers**

51. The Chairperson then moved on to the election of the Committee officers. Following the introductory remarks of the Chairperson, one delegate said that he would not support the candidacy of any candidate who was not present during the election. He was supported by five other members of the Committee. The Committee then went on to vote on each position of the Committee. Each Committee officer who was eligible for reelection was re-elected. Several candidates presented themselves for the three open positions as Vice Chairpersons of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations. Following the Assembly's Rules of Procedure (Art. 45, 3) the Committee voted by secret ballot to decide on these positions. Five candidates presented themselves: Virgil Chitac (RO), Michael Gapes (UK), Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (US), Gilbert Roger (FR), and Ahmet Yildiz (TR). Mr Roger withdrew his candidacy. Of the four remaining candidates, Mr Chitac and Mr Gapes were re-elected and Ms Gonzalez-Colon was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations.

52. The newly elected officers of the Political Committee were as follows:

***Political Committee***

Chairperson **The Rt. Hon. Lord Campbell of Pittenweem** (United Kingdom)  
 Vice-Chairpersons **Hon. Thomas Marino** (United States)  
**Liv Signe Navarsete** (Norway)

***Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships***

Chairperson **Miro Kovac** (Croatia)  
 Vice-Chairperson **Ahmet Berat Conkar** (Turkey)

***Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations***

Vice-president **Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon** (United States)

***Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council***

Member **Liv Signe Navarsete** (Norway)

**XIII. Any other business**

53. No other business was raised.

**XIV. Date and place of next meeting**

54. Mr Gapes announced that the next meeting of the Committee will take place during the traditional February meetings in Brussels. He also announced the next spring session will take place in Bratislava from 31 May – 3 June 2019. Mr Gapes also thanked the outgoing Chairperson of the Political Committee, Ojars Eriks Kalnins (LT), for his outstanding service for the Committee and the Assembly.

**XV. Final Remarks**

55. The Acting Chairperson thanked all parliamentarians for their constructive and thoughtful participation and thanked all the Speakers, observers, and particularly the Canadian Parliament for hosting the Halifax Annual Session.