



PRESIDENCIA
DEL GOBIERNO

SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE COMUNICACIÓN

TRANSCRIPCIÓN

**INTERVENCIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE DE GOBIERNO, PEDRO
SÁNCHEZ, EN EL FORO PÚBLICO OTAN**

Washington, 10 de julio de 2024

INTERVENCIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO, PEDRO SÁNCHEZ

Thank you very much Stephen, and thank you to the German Marshall Fund for this invitation to talk about the role of NATO in the South, especially when we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the 20th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation initiative.

So the Middle East and North Africa, the Sahel, and the broader African continent have strategic importance for peace and prosperity in the Euro-Atlantic region. Likewise, our Alliance can do a lot to reinforce security and stability in our Southern Neighbourhood.

Spain is one of the Allies that is closest to the South, not only geographically, but also in the intensity of our political, economic and human links to the region. We have always understood that our well-being depends on that of our Southern neighbours.

Today, after two years of preparatory work, we have adopted, and this is good news, an Action Plan to strengthen our approach to the South. This is, as I said, excellent news. For the first time, the Alliance will have a comprehensive, detailed and practical roadmap to work with our Southern partners.

Let me first highlight why instability in the Southern Neighbourhood is a threat to NATO Allies.

To start, our adversaries do not hesitate to use instability in NATO's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods against us. They work with non-state actors to amplify terrorism, maritime insecurity or the consequences of climate change. Their goal is to weaken Euro-Atlantic security by creating a "crescent of instability" around us.

In the process, they harm human and state security in our neighbouring countries, who are the first direct victims of these destabilizing tactics. Dozens of women, men, and children are killed in raids of Russian mercenaries in Sahel villages, and thousands more are forcibly displaced trying to escape.

Furthermore, Russia is developing links between instability in the East and the South, through human-trafficking organizations, terrorist networks, or coordinated disinformation campaigns against NATO in many African and Middle East countries. Thousands of people drown in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean after falling in the hands of human-trafficking networks. Irregular border crossings originating in Africa



into Poland are increasing dramatically. Who is helping these criminal networks and why? The human cost of these hybrid tactics is dramatic.

NATO, I believe, must therefore have a comprehensive strategy to promote stability and good governance in the South. To work with our partners for strong security and defence institutions, on capacity building, with practical cooperation measures. And doing all of this based on mutual respect.

This is where our new Action Plan comes in.

First, through this Action Plan, we will invest in more political dialogue and more hands-on cooperation. NATO's political dialogue with our Southern partners must reflect this spirit of friendship, mutual respect and mutual benefit. NATO has to be more present in the South. We already have a Regional Center in Kuwait and we hope to have a Liaison Office in Amman soon.

Second, we will work more with international organizations. The African Union, where we have a liaison office, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, are all very important interlocutors and partners for NATO. With our support, they can be effective in areas that are essential for regional security. For example, initiatives to curb the spread of light and small weapons are crucial to end the insecurity that plagues the daily lives of millions of people in the South.

NATO should particularly coordinate its actions with the EU, I think this is very important, this is instrumental, especially now that both organisations have adopted comprehensive approaches with their Southern neighbourhood.

And, third, NATO is ready to work with its Southern Partners on critical issues such as terrorism, climate change, maritime security, or resilience.

So let me finish, Stephen, by highlighting that the endorsement of this Action Plan is a big step for NATO. It is a real big step for NATO. And we particularly welcome the appointment of a Special Representative for the South.

But, this is not the end of the roadmap: implementation in years to come will be key.

In this difficult endeavor, you will always find the staunch commitment and support of my country. Spain is already working on many of these fields with our Southern partners, and we are ready to scale up our efforts in the context of NATO cooperation.

11/07/2024

So thank you very much your attention and I am happy to exchange our views about this with you.

P.- Well, thank you, Prime Minister, and congratulations on the action plan.

I know Spain provided the leadership and the have to get that through the alliance and you know, in another year, it might have been seen as one of the centerpieces of the summit.

But for what is happening in the East, what has happened since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the full scale war in 2022, but in the shadow of all that concerns us to the East, there is also a war happening in the South. As we all know, the war between Israel and Hamas, despite efforts to broker a cease fire, continues.

And I was wondering if you could share your thoughts on where this conflict is headed and what are the implications for NATO's South.

You ticked off some of the challenges that that the southern flank of NATO face, the refugee flows and so on, terrorism, you know. Where do you see this going and what are the implications for NATO?

Well, I believe that the implications are, you know, very difficult, for all of us, for NATO and of course, for all the countries in the region, in the Mediterranean and, of course, the Middle East. But I think this is a global challenge for all countries.

As you know, Spain and other countries in the Europe, we took that step to recognize the state of Palestine because we believe that we need to give a political horizon to the people in the region, especially in Palestine. A political horizon to create the conditions for a new state that could coexist in peaceful and with security with their neighbors, especially with Israel.

So, I would like to acknowledge the efforts that president Biden has been taking since the beginning of the war regarding different aspects.

The first one is the release of the hostages. The second is in the beginning to support Israel in its fight against Hamas. We already, I mean, we, of course, condemned the terrorist attacks to Israel perpetrated by Hamas. But, on the other hand, we understand that we need to create the conditions for an immediate and urgent ceasefire.



Why? Because, first of all, we need to avoid any risk of escalation, and there is a real risk of escalation to Lebanon.

Second, because we need to stop this terrible humanitarian crisis that the Palestinians are suffering not only in Gaza, but also in the West Bank.

And last, but not least, because it will be important to convene a peace conference, an international peace conference, to create the conditions for, what I said in the beginning of my speech, the two state solution and to create that political horizon for the people in Palestine. So I think that we need, of course, that political effort.

We need also to understand that UN resolutions from the Security Council are binding and that last UN resolution led by the US administration stated crystal clear that we need a permanent ceasefire in order to stop this terrible war and focus on the humanitarian catastrophe that we are witnessing through the international media.

So, of course, I think that this is going to be one of the challenges of the south and flank that we need to face and address from our NATO organization. And we will do our utmost to create those conditions and not to be again prisoners, I would say, of a new cycle of violence in the Middle East in the years to come.

I think that this is enough. There is a lot of suffering in on the ground, and we need to create those political conditions to avoid any risk of escalation and, of course, a new cycle of violence in the future.

P.- Well, I hate to jump from one gloomy environment to another, but there is another part of Europe as well that is suffering terrible violence and bloodshed right now. The brutal war that Russia is waging against Ukraine is Ukraine fights for its own independence.

One of the things that we have talked about here during the course of the day with other leaders is the bridge to NATO membership that the summit is agreeing to today.

I was wondering if you could kind of give us your take, the view from Spain, which is a long way away from Ukraine. What is your take on the bridge to NATO membership for Ukraine and what do you see as the opportunities and challenges along the way?

So we actually have living in Spain more than 200,000 refugees coming from Ukraine. Even though, of course, we have this long distance. And I can tell you by that large

number, the majority of the Spaniards, they support our efforts regarding Ukraine and because we understand what is at stake. It is not only the defense of the territorial integrity, the freedom, the right to exist of a nation, but also the respect of a world ruled by clear let's say principles. And, this is also what we are defending: democracy, freedom and the right to exist to country such as Ukraine.

So, you know, I think that it would be very important for our citizens to understand that what we are defending in Gaza and in Ukraine are not only the international law, but we have a consistent position, a consistent political position, that we don't have double standards. So if we are telling our people that we are supporting Ukraine because we are defending the international law. This is the same to what we have to do towards Gaza and the thing, I mean, the war that we are now witnessing in the Middle East. Saying that we are backing the international law, especially the international humanitarian law. So this is at least from our perspective, what we defend as a country.

And I would add that, coming back to Ukraine, perhaps we don't have the conditions yet on the process for the integration of Ukraine in NATO. But in the statement, the declaration that we have already endorsed, we say that that path is irreversible and this is something that is going to happen.

In the meantime, what we need to do is to support and back Ukraine, as all member states from the NATO, from NATO, we are doing. And, last but not least, I would say that it is important this double path, not only NATO enlargement, but also the European Union enlargement.

And the second semester of last year, we had the privilege to chair the European Council and we were leading along with the Commission the process for the enlargement of the European Union towards Ukraine.

So, I think this is also very important because at the end of the day, NATO and the European Union, we have a strategic partnership that could create those synergies not only on the defense and security dimension, but also the political one. And, this is something that I think is recognized, and the people in Ukraine are grateful for that.

*(Transcripción editada por la Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación)
(Intervención original en inglés)*