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NATO seeks to sharpen its technological advantage and adopts a Janus-inspired strategy: one face towards Russia and the other towards China

**An analysis of the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting,
Brussels, 21-22 October 2021**

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Key activities and decisions taken:

- ⇒ Ministers endorsed a confidential new overarching military plan and a new set of capability targets (also secret) designed to counter simultaneous threats ranging from ground forces to cyber-attacks across the Euro-Atlantic area.
- ⇒ Ministers reviewed progress in implementing a package of political and military measures introduced in June 2020 in response to a perceived growing threat from Russia's missile systems (see NATO Watch [Briefing no. 78](#)).
- ⇒ Ministers discussed the lessons learned process in Afghanistan and some of the first reports from that process (none of which have been made public). They also agreed to monitor any attempts by international terrorist groups to regroup in Afghanistan.
- ⇒ A NATO Innovation Fund was launched with 17 member states (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK) in the lead, which is intended to invest 1 billion Euros in cutting-edge “emerging and disruptive” technologies. NATO is also creating a Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), which will provide a network of technology test centres and accelerator sites to harness civilian innovation for security purposes.
- ⇒ Ministers agreed NATO's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) [strategy](#), which it was claimed includes standards of responsible use of AI, in accordance with international law. It also outlines how NATO will accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence, protect this technology and address the threats posed by the use of AI by adversaries.
- ⇒ The Nuclear Planning Group discussed NATO's nuclear posture and the nuclear ban treaty, but no details were disclosed.
- ⇒ Ministers endorsed NATO's 2021-2025 Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- ⇒ Ministers from 11 member states (Albania, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, the UK and USA) launched three multinational projects to provide CBRN protection equipment, develop and procure CBRN detection and identification systems, as well as potentially establish a network of CBRN defence facilities.
- ⇒ Ministers from 15 member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the UK and USA) reaffirmed their commitment to collaboratively procure Ground Based Air Defence capabilities.

Summary of the Ministerial Meeting

The NATO Defence Ministers Meeting took place on the 21-22 October 2021 at the NATO HQ in Brussels. The meeting took forward some of the key decisions taken at the June 2021 summit meeting (see NATO Watch [briefing No.85](#)), with a focus on three main issues:

- NATO's deterrence and defence posture, especially in relation to Russia;
- the situation in Afghanistan; and
- NATO-EU cooperation.

A pre-ministerial [press conference](#) was held by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 20 October 2021. There was also a bilateral meeting between NATO and Canada on the eve of the meeting, but no official read out of what was discussed.

On the first day of the ministerial meeting (21 October) the NATO Secretary General gave a [doorstep statement](#) setting out the agenda to be discussed. This was followed by a bilateral meeting between NATO and the United Kingdom, and again, there was no official read out of the discussion. Also meeting in the margins of the meeting were the NATO Secretary General and US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin (see [here](#) for a short transcript of their opening remarks).

Then there were two closed sessions of the North Atlantic Council (NAC - meeting at the level of defence ministers): the first session discussed NATO's deterrence and defence posture, and the second reviewed events in Afghanistan. The day ended with signing ceremonies for six new collaborative projects (three on ground-based air defence and three to boost CBRN defence) and a [press conference](#) by the Secretary General.

The second day of the ministerial began with a signing ceremony for the NATO Innovation Fund, and this was followed by a closed meeting of the [Nuclear Planning Group](#) (NPG) in Defence Ministers session, and as is the convention for this Group, there was no information publicly available. A third closed NAC meeting in Defence Ministers session with EU partners (the defence ministers of Finland and Sweden, as well as representatives of the EU) discussed NATO-EU cooperation on shared challenges. The day ended with a final [press conference](#) by the NATO Secretary General.

For details of the February 2021 defence ministers meeting read: [NATO Watch Briefing no.81](#), 24 February 2021

The following more detailed analysis of key aspects of the ministerial meeting draws on a combination of the above links, wider press reporting of the ministerial meeting and NATO Watch insights in attempt to fill the information gaps.

Deterrence and defence: a new overarching plan and capability targets; the Russian missile threat; nuclear planning and the ban treaty; and new multinational weapon acquisition projects

To fulfil NATO's three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, the alliance employs a mix of conventional military capabilities, cyber defences, missile defences and a nuclear dimension. At successive summits since 2014, NATO leaders have agreed a range of measures to enhance their deterrence and defence posture, including the establishment of an enhanced Forward Presence in Poland and the three Baltic states. They have further recognised that credible deterrence requires these relatively small multinational forces to be underpinned by a robust reinforcement strategy

The Defence Ministers discussions of deterrence and defence took place in the context of two main challenges: (a) Russia-NATO relations are at their lowest point since the Cold War, with Moscow still under US and multilateral sanctions for its annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine as well as US and Russian withdrawals from landmark arms control treaties; and (b) a looming new US-China Cold War with NATO being encouraged by Washington to take a more critical stance towards China. This has led to NATO to begin to adopt a Janus-inspired strategy: one face towards China and the other towards Russia.

Although the face mostly on show at this latest Defence Ministers meeting was directed towards Russia—and none of the ministerial sessions formally focused on China—media [reports](#)

suggest that US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin sought to steer the focus to China, especially in the discussions on technology investments and policies (see below).

A new military plan and capability targets

The ministers endorsed a new overarching military plan to defend NATO “in crisis and conflict” and “to make sure that we continue to have the right forces at the right place, at the right time”, according to a NATO news release. The plan is confidential, and few details were disclosed, but it is widely acknowledged to address any potential Russian attack on multiple fronts (e.g. simultaneous attacks in the Baltic and Black Sea regions). Approval of the plan allows for more detailed regional plans by the end of 2022, a US official [said](#), allowing NATO to decide what additional weapons it needs and how to position its forces.

Russia's defence minister responded by [accusing](#) NATO of gradually gathering forces near Russia's borders and being unwilling to discuss European security with Moscow on equal terms. Russia also [said](#) that the plan showed Moscow had been right to cut ties with NATO. (Russia shut its diplomatic mission to NATO and the alliance's mission in Moscow recently after NATO [expelled](#) eight Russians accused of spying and cut the staff of the Russian mission in Brussels from 20 to 10 members).

The NATO Secretary General expressed “regret” for the current situation and committed “to continue to work for dialogue with Russia”, but that it was “for Russia to respond in a positive way”. He listed Russian “malign activities” over the last few years, including “the failed coup attempt in Montenegro, the deadly act of sabotage in the Czech Republic, the poisoning attack in Salisbury, and the hacking of the OPCW in The Hague”.

NATO's problems with Russia are clearly intensifying, and some East European member states want the United States to deploy more troops on NATO's eastern flank. Defence

ministers from several Baltic countries [told Newsweek](#) that that the United States and NATO must stay alert to challenges from both Moscow and Beijing or risk encouraging fresh aggression.

The US Defence Secretary visited Romania and two NATO partner countries, Georgia and Ukraine, to reassure them of the United States' continued support before he attended the ministerial. But the United States has no immediate plans to increase its permanent troop presence in Europe, although this might be one outcome from the Pentagon's forthcoming [global posture review](#).

Capability targets

The Defence Ministers also agreed to the NATO capability targets (also secret), which are part of the NATO military planning process and help ensure that the alliance has the right capabilities for credible deterrence and defence.



Journalists photographing Lloyd J. Austin III (US Secretary of State), Ben Wallace (UK Secretary of State for Defence) and Hulusi Akar (Minister of Defence, Turkey), Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 21 October 2021 – photo credit: NATO

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the capability targets are “very important for NATO, because they are actually a part of a very thorough process when allies sit together, address what kind of capabilities we need to face, and to respond, to all the different threats we are faced with, in many different domains”. Given that only the United States has the whole spectrum of capabilities and defence systems, one of the important tasks of NATO, according to Stoltenberg “is our ability to coordinate and agree capability targets, so we can support and help each other as allies without all allies having all the different capabilities, but actually working together”. He also disclosed that there were “thousands of targets” across the alliance, and that NATO has agreed to “have more forces which are heavier, and with more high-end capabilities, and technologically advanced forces, and forces that need to fully exploit emerging and disruptive technologies to make sure that we maintain our technological edge”.

The Russian missile threat

The Ministers reviewed progress in implementing a package of political and military measures introduced in June 2020 in response to a perceived growing threat from Russia's missile systems (see NATO Watch [Briefing no. 78](#)). The Secretary General's press briefings gave no further details on how these measures had progressed and simply reiterated many of the elements of the package that were announced previously. These measures include significant improvements to NATO air and missile defences, a call for strengthened conventional capabilities with fifth generation combat aircraft, adapting exercises and intelligence, and improving the readiness and effectiveness of the nuclear 'deterrent'. The exact nature of the nuclear-related steps was not disclosed. NATO acknowledged that it would "not mirror Russia's destabilising behaviour" and reiterated that it had no intention to deploy new land based nuclear missiles in Europe.

The Nuclear Planning Group and the nuclear ban treaty

There was no public disclosure of the scope and nature of the discussions in the NPG, other than the claim by the NATO Secretary General that they consulted "on how to keep our nuclear deterrent safe, secure and effective, while remaining committed to arms control". He also repeated that "NATO's goal is a world without nuclear weapons", but that NATO does not believe in "unilateral disarmament". In a world "where Russia, China, and other countries like North Korea, have nuclear weapons, but NATO does not, is simply not a safer world" he said. It remains unclear what, if any actual adjustments have been made to NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements.

Further reading: Ian Davis and Paul Ingram, [Dear NATO Secretary General: A post-pandemic world requires the elimination of nuclear weapons](#), NATO Watch Essay, June 2020

During the Q&A session of the Secretary General's closing press conference, rather unusually there were three nuclear-related questions. First, the Secretary General was asked if Norway's likely new approach to the nuclear ban treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), was discussed. Norway's Labour Party, Arbeiderpartiet (Ap), which is in negotiations to form a new coalition government after winning the country's elections in September 2021, had [adopted](#) a party programme for the next four years that says that "[i]t should be a goal for Norway and other NATO countries to sign the TPNW". If this becomes the policy of the new Norwegian Government, it would be the first NATO member state to support the treaty. Up until now, NATO, under US leadership, has been extremely [hostile](#) to the treaty.

Stoltenberg [responded](#) by saying that he would not go into details about NATO's internal discussions which covered a wide range of nuclear issues, including "our nuclear posture, and also including the ban treaty".

Second, the Secretary General sidestepped a question about the likely impact of the current ongoing US nuclear posture review, especially if it leads the US to adopt a 'no-first-use' policy, by simply reiterating that the NPG format is important "because it demonstrates that NATO is the platform where allies can consult on these issues" and "to develop common positions".

Third, the Secretary General was also asked about the likely impact if the new German government were to call for the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Germany (given that two of the three parties that are currently negotiating to form a government have in the past called for such a withdrawal). Stoltenberg sidestepped this question as well, by stating that "It's not for me to go into those negotiations, but what I can say is that the nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO, they are important for the whole alliance and especially for the European allies", because it gives them "a say" in developing NATO's nuclear deterrence with a "tried and tested structure".

However, there is real scepticism among both voters and political elites in Germany to the continued stationing of US nuclear weapons on their soil as well as [sizeable support](#) for their removal. Hence, the recent [remarks](#) by German caretaker defence minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer that Moscow should be aware NATO is ready to make use of its nuclear deterrent in case of a Russian attack against a member of the alliance, triggered strong reactions in Germany.

NATO partners deepen cooperation on mutual air defence and CBRN defence

In the margins of the ministerial meeting some ministers reaffirmed their commitment to multinationally develop, acquire and deliver [Ground Based Air Defence capabilities](#), while others also launched three multinational projects to provide CBRN protection equipment. These are all part of a growing portfolio of what NATO describes as “multinational High Visibility Projects” in response to key capability challenges.

Air defences

In October 2020 ten member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK) [signed a letter of intent](#) to implement a [Ground-Based Air Defence](#) (GBAD) system to defend against a range of air and missile threats. The system will include very short-range missiles, including Stinger, Mistral and anti-aircraft artillery, and short-range and medium-range missiles, including the HAWK and Network Centric Short-to-Medium Range GBAD System. The agreement allows each participating country to create their own tailored GBAD force package. At this latest ministerial meeting, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the USA joined the project.

Another project [initiated](#) by four members (Germany, Greece, Hungary and the UK) in October 2020 is designed to address growing challenges in the sphere of Rapidly Deployable Mobile Counter Rockets, Artillery and Mortar. At the ministerial meeting three new partners (Norway, Poland and the USA) joined this project, known as, [C-RAM](#).

Finally, a new undertaking was launched, the ‘Command and Control capability for surface-based air and missile defence for the battalion and brigade level’ (GBAD C2 Layer), by six member states (Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the UK and the USA). Over the coming months, experts from the participating nations will identify potential solutions for a fire distribution centre.

CBRN defence

In the area of CBRN (the abbreviation commonly used to describe the malicious use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear materials or weapons with the intention to cause significant harm or disruption) defence, [three new projects](#)

were initiated. Again, the letters of intent launching these initiatives were signed in the margins of the ministerial meeting.

The CBRN Protection Equipment project involves ten member states (Albania, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK and the USA) and aims to establish a framework for the provision of individual protective equipment and collective protection systems. The CBRN Detection and Identification project involves nine member states (Albania, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, the UK and the USA) and will launch individual multinational activities for the development and procurement of advanced CBRN detection and identification systems. The third project is called Network of CBRN Defence Facilities, and the nine participants (Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, the UK and the USA) will work to establish a framework allowing them to share and make use of national CBRN defence facilities, like training sites and biological laboratories, to complement each other’s capabilities.

Afghanistan: can lessons be learnt behind closed doors?

The Ministers discussed the situation in Afghanistan with the aim, according to the NATO Secretary General’s [remarks](#), of ensuring that terrorists cannot use it as a safe haven. Stoltenberg emphasised that “allies have the capabilities to strike from far away against terrorist threats” and that the Taliban would be held “accountable for their commitments on terrorism, human rights and safe passage”, stressing that the “international community has economic and diplomatic leverage” to make this happen.

The threat to strike the Taliban from distance came as the US intelligence community [indicated](#) that the Islamic State in Afghanistan could have the capability of attacking the United States in as little as six months. During his press conference, the NATO Secretary General had called for unity in the fight against international terrorism (and to this end, in the margins of the ministerial meeting, a meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh was held, but there was no information provided on the outcomes of those discussions).

When asked to comment on the Taliban's record so far, the Secretary General [expressed](#) deep disappointment on the issue of human rights and the rights of women, but that NATO allies were continuing to apply economic, diplomatic and political leverage where they could. (For an authentic assessment of the treatment of women in Afghanistan, before, during and after the NATO presence in Afghanistan, see [here](#)).

Press Conference NATO
Secretary General Jens
Stoltenberg, 22 October 2021

The Ministers also addressed the ongoing efforts to resettle the more than 120,000 people who were evacuated from Kabul in August, including around 2,000 Afghans who worked with NATO, and their families. Stoltenberg [welcomed](#) the commitments made by member states to resettle these Afghans, and confirmed that "hundreds have already started their new lives in their new host countries".

Stoltenberg also reiterated that NATO has launched "a thorough and clear-eyed assessment" of the mission in Afghanistan and that the Ministers engaged in this "lessons learned" process for the first time. Senior NATO officials have made several public commitments to investigate what went wrong in Afghanistan, and NATO experts have apparently already prepared some initial findings (but none have been made public other than via a handful of media reports). For example, the Commander of NATO's Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC), Brigadier General Bogdan Cernat, recently [told](#) the NATO Parliamentary Assembly that three reports on lessons from Afghanistan were being drawn up, one from the military perspective requested by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, one on the Resolute Support Mission to train and advise the Afghan security forces, and a third on the impact of anticorruption measures.



NATO Assistant Secretary-General for Operations John Manza is [reportedly](#) leading one of the investigations, and he told EU MPs that one of the main findings is that NATO's mission in Afghanistan became a victim of "mission creep". Manza also apparently shared these initial findings of his committee's work with the NATO Defence Ministers during their ministerial meeting and he is due to submit his final report to the alliance's foreign ministers when they meet at the end of November 2021. However, unless these lessons learnt reports are made public, it is difficult to have any faith in a

process in which the exact terms of reference, timeline and structure remain secret. (On the arguments for an open and transparent public inquiry into NATO's role in Afghanistan see [here](#)).

Reviews and enquiries are also under way in NATO member states. In the UK, for example, the UK Defence Committee has been hearing evidence as part of its own inquiry. In his evidence, the UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace denied that NATO suffered a military defeat in Afghanistan, but he [acknowledged](#) there was a failure of political "resolve" by the alliance and again blamed the "rotten deal" agreed by former President Trump with the Taliban in February 2020. Despite that, Wallace insisted, the initial aim of the invasion, to dismantle al-Qaida in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, had been a success. "We bought counter-terrorism success for 20 years," he said. "Al-Qaida did not mount ... a terrorist attack on the United Kingdom or her allies from Afghanistan. For many soldiers that is very important".

After hearing evidence from the UK Defence Secretary, the chair of the committee, Tobias Ellwood, [said](#) that NATO "gave up" on Afghanistan and did not have the "resolve and the commitment" to see its mission there

through. He said there were a number of "schoolboy errors" from Western nations during the 20-year presence in Afghanistan and lessons needed to be learnt.

Sharpening NATO'S technological edge

Technological innovations constantly change the nature of peace, crisis and conflict. The United States and several key European NATO member states have traditionally placed great emphasis on retaining their technological edge (and often articulate this aim almost as an entitlement), but as this has become increasingly challenged by China and others, the debate around how NATO can stay ahead of the curve has sharpened. In recent years, NATO has identified seven key emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs): artificial intelligence, data and computing, autonomy, quantum-enabled technologies, biotechnology, hypersonic technology and space. NATO is working towards a strategy for both fostering these technologies—through stronger relationships with innovation hubs and specific funding mechanisms—and protecting EDT investments from outside influence. NATO is expected to eventually develop individual strategies for each of the seven science and technology areas, but in the short to medium term the priority is AI and data.

The launch of the Defence Innovation Fund

At the NATO Summit in June 2021, the NATO leaders agreed to "launch a civil-military Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic" (DIANA) and "to establish a NATO Innovation Fund" to support start-ups working on dual-use emerging and disruptive technologies. At a signing ceremony during the defence ministerial meeting, 17 member states (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK) [agreed](#) to take the lead on the development of the Innovation Fund. The Secretary General also [announced](#) that good progress was being made in establishing the DIANA, which is expected to have headquarters in both Europe and North America, "with a network of test centres and accelerator sites to harness civilian innovation" for the benefit of NATO security. Many member states have

offered to host these facilities and some of them will be in place next year, the Secretary General said.

NATO's first Artificial Intelligence strategy

The Defence Ministers agreed NATO's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy. According to the Secretary General, it [will](#) "set standards for responsible use of artificial intelligence, in accordance with international law; Outline how we will accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence in what we do; Set out how we will protect this technology; and address the threats posed by the use of artificial intelligence by adversaries". The strategy is expected to allow AI to be integrated in areas such as data analysis, imagery and cyber defence.

An official summary of the strategy is available [here](#). NATO Watch will be publishing an analysis of the document shortly.

Oversight of increased autonomy in warfare is critically important because this deadly technology is likely to proliferate rapidly. Leading this arms race are the United States, China, Russia, South Korea, Israel and a few EU/NATO member states. NATO policy in this area is largely being driven by the United States (which announced [two key AI strategy documents](#) in 2019). In January 2021, the US Congress [backed](#) the creation of a national AI strategy as part of the country's annual defence authorization bill.

For nearly a decade, a coalition of non-governmental organisations has pushed for a treaty banning lethal autonomous weapons systems, or 'killer robots', saying human control is necessary to judge the proportionality of attacks and to assign blame for war crimes. At least 30 countries including Brazil and Pakistan (but no NATO member states) want a ban, according to the [coalition's website](#), and a UN body has held meetings on the systems since at least 2014. Exactly where the alliance falls on the spectrum between permitting AI-powered military technology in some applications and regulating or banning it in others is expected to be part of the Strategic Concept debate. It is imperative that this debate is open and transparent. The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called on states to prohibit weapons systems that could, by themselves, target and attack human beings,

[calling them](#) “morally repugnant and politically unacceptable”. With NATO leadership such weapons could be banned by a treaty similar to the initiatives that successfully prohibited antipersonnel landmines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008. Preserving meaningful human control over the use of force is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity.

NATO-EU cooperation

There was relatively little public information available on the NAC session with representatives from Finland, Sweden and the EU. The NATO Secretary General [stated](#) that having already taken cooperation between NATO and the EU to “unprecedented levels”, the meeting would “take stock of our progress”.

This cooperation includes, in cyber space, the exchange of information “on threats and vulnerabilities in real time”, and in Kosovo, NATO troops standing “shoulder to shoulder with EU diplomats to bring peace and stability to the region”. Stoltenberg [said](#) that he hoped to strengthen cooperation in other areas, such as “military mobility, resilience, emerging and disruptive technologies, and the security impact of climate change”. NATO is now working on a third Joint NATO-EU Declaration, which is expected to be agreed by the end of the year. (NATO and the EU signed a Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation in 2016, which was then updated in 2018: see [here](#)).

A core current debate centres on whether the EU should develop ‘strategic autonomy’, and if so, whether this should be carried out independently of NATO or as a European pillar within the alliance. Stoltenberg welcomed the EU’s increased efforts on defence, but [warned](#) that these efforts “should not duplicate NATO”. “What is needed is more capabilities, not new structures”, he added.

The now frequent inclusion of Finland and Sweden in NAC meetings is part of growing cooperation between NATO and the two EU member states, as well as more security cooperation among the Nordic countries. For example, this year the Nordic Council [asked](#) the NATO Secretary General to address the annual parliamentary assembly (2-4 November 2021) in Copenhagen. After the defence ministerial NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and

ambassadors of the NAC undertook a three-day visit to [Finland](#) and [Sweden](#).

Finally, it is unclear whether the recent bilateral French-Greek security deal was discussed. The agreement worth around 3 billion euros includes the Greek purchase of three French warships. President Emmanuel Macron hailed the accord as a major boost for the EU's defence ambitions. The memorandum of understanding for the purchase of the Belharra frigates was agreed less than two weeks after the AUKUS agreement led to the cancellation by Australia of a contract to buy French submarines. Macron said the arms sale was part of a deeper "strategic partnership" between the two countries to defend their shared interests in the Mediterranean. On 1 October, the Turkish government [said](#) that the agreement would harm the NATO alliance, and after the ministerial meeting Turkey's defence minister [reiterated](#) those concerns.

New Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

The NATO Defence Ministers also endorsed NATO’s 2021-2025 Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). It replaces the first NATO WPS Action Plan, which was launched in 2010. The new Action Plan (available [here](#)) supports NATO’s commitment, reaffirmed at the 2021 Brussels summit, to further advance gender equality and integrate gender perspectives in all that NATO does, across political, civilian and military structures, from policies and planning, training and education, to missions and operations. According to a NATO [news release](#), under the new Action Plan, “cooperation with partners, international organisations and civil society will be further broadened and enhanced. Gender perspectives will be integrated in domains such as innovation and new technologies, climate change and resilience. Training and education of NATO’s civilian and military personnel, Allies and partners will be further increased, notably in the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence, in line with NATO’s newly approved policy on this issue”.