Thank you for inviting me again to this year’s MD Conference. I missed last year’s event but am thrilled to be back. We are only a few months away from the Warsaw Summit so this is good timing.

Much has already been said by Frank Rose and Robert Bell, there is little for me to add. But I chair the pol-mil committee discussions on NATO ballistic missile defence, so I could perhaps add a few observations from my perspective as someone who serves the community of 28 nations.

The goal for Warsaw was already mentioned: it is indeed, and my US colleagues in the panel already said it, to announce that we achieved BMD Initial Operational Capability (IOC). You will ask: are we going to reach this goal by the time of Warsaw, or will it take longer? The short answer is we don’t know yet: some work still needs to be completed before we’ll know for sure.

My distinguished colleagues in the panel pointed out how significant the US contributions to NATO BMD have been since the 2012 Chicago Summit, when NATO announced the achievement of an operational BMD Interim Capability. There are now four US BMD capable Aegis ships home ported in Spain, and the construction of the Aegis Ashore site in Romania was completed last year and is currently undergoing some final certification tests before it can be handed over to NATO later this spring.
• But a decision by NATO HoSG to declare BMD IOC does not only depend on progress achieved by the United States, it also depends on progress in a number of other areas. At the 2014 Wales Summit HoSG tasked the North Atlantic Council to ‘prepare a comprehensive report on progress and issues to be addressed for its future development’ prior to the Warsaw Summit. This comprehensive report will address progress achieved and mention where further work is required, and it will also address the question of when and on what grounds BMD IOC should be declared.

• Let me give you a short overview of what the comprehensive report will likely address in one form or another. What I will mention is not listed in terms of priority:

  o The report will consider the state of play with regard to the evolution of the threat. The Wales Communique repeated that the “threat to NATO populations, territory and forces posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles continues to increase and that missile defence forms part of a broader response to counter it”. Wales also repeated that “should international efforts reduce the threats posed by ballistic missile proliferation, NATO missile defence can and will adapt accordingly”. These quotes from the Summit Communique show that NATO is not developing a BMD capability in the abstract, but on the basis of threat assessments and forecasts.
Some of you might ask whether the recent Vienna Agreement with Iran had any impact on our BMD plans. The short answer is no. Three reasons in short:

- First, NATO welcomed the JCPOA which addresses Iran’s nuclear programme and which will take 8 years to implement. Allies certainly hope that the agreement will pull through and that the relationship with Iran will improve further over the next decade. But Allies are also aware that the Vienna agreement did not address Iran’s ballistic missile programme, which remains a concern.

- Second, NATO BMD is not aimed at any single country, it looks at possible threats from more than one country and from the broader region outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

- Third, NATO BMD is a long-term programme. We cannot afford, nor would it make sense, to stand up or halt a capability development programme depending on the mood of the day in just one single country.

Another area that the Comprehensive Report will assess is progress achieved with regard to command and control. C2 arrangements were developed for the Interim Capability prior to Chicago and reviewed and updated prior to Wales in 2014; these arrangements are being adapted further now, to reflect the arrival of added capabilities. As those among you with military background know, command and control arrangements are important because they include considerations about the chain of command, rules of engagement, readiness levels of available assets, and defence designs. These arrangements are not only important for the military
authorities so they know what to do and when. They are also important for political authorities, since they provide a guarantee that there is ‘political control by Allies over military action’ - which needs to be ensured at all times. Current work on command and control is not yet completed, but it is now quite advanced.

- We will also take stock of other voluntary national contributions, in addition to those provided by the United States. Until now we have not said too much on this in public, however it is a fact that since Chicago other Allies are contributing to NATO BMD. For example through hosting arrangements, lower-layer air and missile defence systems, air and missile defence protection assets, naval or land-based radar upgrades or acquisitions that could be made available to the Alliance.

  - Let me give you an example and mention the Maritime TMD Forum At Sea Demonstration in Scotland last autumn: although it was not a NATO exercise, the event showed that nations can contribute to BMD by protecting BMD capable Aegis ships or cueing their sensors.

- My opinion is, and I shared it with Allies: the more we say in public about non-US voluntary national contributions the better we will be able to demonstrate that this is a truly multinational effort. Perhaps once we reach BMD IOC, however we shall see.
The Comprehensive Report will also assess progress achieved in the programmatic area. As most in the room know, BMC3I represents the backbone of NATO BMD: it includes both the functionalities required for the planning and execution of the NATO BMD mission, as well as the interfaces with the sensors and weapons system which are offered voluntarily by Allies. This is actually the only portion of NATO BMD which is commonly funded by all 28 Allies. It is fair to say that the programme is progressing although not without some challenges, which are mostly due to the complexity of the programme and the need to accommodate BMD in the broader IAMD architecture. In any case, it is fair to say that Allies acknowledge that NATO’s commonly funded BMD Programme will not be completed by the time of Warsaw and more will need to be achieved in the years ahead.

Another important point: we need to be reassured by our military authorities that they have everything that is needed to perform the mission with the assets available to them. Plans, doctrines, technical performance, personnel training and exercises, and interoperability are part of this consideration. The operational certification of systems and procedures is being carried out as I speak, and I am confident we will receive the reassurance by the military that they can operate the capability.

Last but not least, let me also mention the wider strategic environment and in particular Russia. I don’t know to what extent this will be addressed in the comprehensive report, but Allies acknowledge that the hopes for missile defence cooperation that we had in 2010 have not materialised. Allies also acknowledge that BMD has again become a main irritant for Russia and for our relations with Russia.
That said, the aim of NATO BMD and NATO’s planned BMD course of action have not changed: NATO BMD was not, is not and will not be against Russia. The NATO Summit in Wales took place after the Russian illegal annexation of Crimea, but in Wales the Alliance did not change this basic principle. I do not believe that the Warsaw summit will change the basic approach.

The reasons for sticking to the plan, i.e. for not aiming BMD at Russia, are simple:

- capabilities are too limited, planned interceptor numbers too few, and Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland either too far south or too close to Russia to undermine its strategic deterrent;
- Russia has too many and technologically too sophisticated BMs for NATO to rely on BMD as an efficient and cost-effective response;

Should the new Cold War scenario mentioned in February by Prime Minister Medvedev in Munich really materialise in years to come, then NATO would have to rely on other capabilities, and on the full range of such capabilities, for deterrence and defence purposes. But not on missile defence.

From a NATO perspective we consider Russian statements threatening to target Allies because of their support for NATO BMD unacceptable, unjustified and counter-productive. If we ever got back to discussing these issues with Russia Allies would make this point.

To be honest, many of Russia’s concerns are wider than just the NATO BMD project, and they are not for NATO to
address. Europeans are not ignoring the importance of strategic stability, but there is very little margin for manoeuvre for NATO if Washington and Moscow cannot settle on the broader picture. Russia needs to discuss strategic stability issues first and foremost with the US bilaterally.

- Let me conclude. I gave you an overview of some of the issues that Allies will consider in one form or another as we prepare the comprehensive report for the Warsaw summit. The summit might be the moment when we will reach the next level of ambition and declare BMD IOC, however this goal is condition based and there is still work to do.