

CIDS/NATO «MECHANISMS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE DEFENCE AND RELATED SECURITY
SECTOR – ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND RESILIENCE», 20. MAI 2021

Statement by ambassador Øystein Bø,
Permanent Representative of Norway on the North Atlantic Council

Thank you, and many thanks to CIDS and NATO Defence Institution and Capacity Building for the invitation to speak at this webinar, which deals with a number of issues that may, at first glance, seem a little low profile, but nonetheless, are highly important building blocks of our societies.

Fighting corruption is a long-term commitment. To succeed we must build solid institutions and improve governance over time. This is the case for all countries, also those that are perceived as low risk.

NATO promotes fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy and Rule of law, none of which are compatible with corruption. Our work on Building Integrity underlines the link between corruption and instability, economic development, resilience, peace and security.

Norway, as one of the founding nations of NATO, strongly believes in our shared values, the values that underpin our Alliance. These values need to be nurtured to safeguard our cohesion, unity and common security.

Already back in 1949, our founding fathers seemed to share this understanding, as Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty underlines our will to strengthen «our free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being».

NATO's Building Integrity Program can also be seen as an important initiative supporting the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. The 16th goal - entitled «Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions» refers to the need to build «effective [and] accountable institutions at all levels». It states that «Conflict, insecurity, weak institutions and limited access to justice, remain a great threat to sustainable development».

Against this background, Norway attaches great importance to NATO's Building Integrity Initiative, which has really evolved into a comprehensive and significant Allied discipline, and has been a milestone in bringing all NATO-communities to this important arena.

Norway is proud to have been an active contributor to this work, not least through our Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector in Oslo. NATO Building Integrity has now completed four phases, and the European Union has joined as a lead nation. These are major achievements.

The Building Integrity program is based on voluntary participation. So far, we have focused mainly on Partners with this initiative, and less on ourselves as Allies.

Yet I believe all Allies could benefit from participating more actively in the NATO Building Integrity program and make use of the tools at hand.

This is also in line with the recommendations of The Expert Report «NATO 2030 -United for a new Era», which underlined the need to strengthen the Alliance's resilience.

Resilience is, in our view, both a national responsibility and a collective commitment, firmly anchored in article III of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Institutional resilience is an integral part of this. By increasing the institutional effectiveness of all our national institutions, we will also increase the resilience of our nations and our Alliance.

Strong and resilient institutions, having in place the necessary mechanisms to fight corruption, and to ensure the integrity of our civil servants, armed forces and politicians, are also key in our defence against various forms of hybrid threats that our nations and our Alliance are increasingly facing.

So, what can we as Allies do? How can we ensure societal security and make our democracies less vulnerable? Good governance, including transparency and accountability, is key. The legitimacy of our institutions and authorities is dependent on them being seen as representing society as a whole.

In this respect, let us not forget that all of society includes both women and men. In order for our societies to be resilient, we must make sure that we adopt an inclusive approach. Gender equality promotes integrity and is an important part of good governance.

This is firmly rooted in our democracy, integrity and diversification, as well as in international human rights law and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, one crucial element of integrity is related to us, to the human factor. This includes attitudes, ethics and leadership.

We must have a collective awareness in any organisation as to what kind of language and behaviour we accept, and what we should not accept. We are all responsible for the culture we are a part of. To efficiently promote integrity and fight corruption, we must

challenge established perceptions. Fighting toxic culture, practices and corruption is everyone's responsibility.

Dear friends,

We are just a short month away from an important NATO Summit. On 14 June our Heads of State and Government will reaffirm our commitment to the core values of our Alliance, the values that our cohesion, unity and solidarity are founded on. Good governance and integrity remain an integral part of this foundation.

Thank you again the invitation, and for your attention. I look forward to hearing your views and questions.