

Speech at the Security South Forum - “European Defence Readiness 2030: Security, Resilience and Partnership”

Opening

- Dear Mayor, dear Ambassadors, dear Major General, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,
- Thank you to the Municipality of Evje and Hornnes, the County of Agder, and Ambassador Torbjørn Frøysnes for organising this important and indeed very timely conference.
- It is a pleasure to be here at Evjemoen — a place with deep military and strategic significance for Norway.
- And I must say: when diplomats are invited to a military garrison, we immediately stand a little straighter.
- Our discussions today take place at a defining moment for European security.
- And they also take place at a moment when cooperation between the European Union and Norway has never been more important.
- In today’s security environment, no European country can address these challenges alone.
- This is precisely why the partnership between the EU and Norway has become both strategic and indispensable.
- Norway was one of the first countries signing such a partnership, on 28 May, 2024.

Europe’s changing security environment

- We live in a changing security environment.
- The EU needed to act rapidly to deal with the the profound consequences for our security and defence of Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine.
- Russia’s war is not only an attack on Ukraine.

- It is an attack on the European security order itself.
- At the same time, we also feel the impact of instability in the Middle East.
- Hybrid threats, cyberattacks, sabotage, disinformation, attacks against critical infrastructure and economic coercion have become permanent features of our security environment.
- Security today extends far beyond conventional military threats.
- It concerns energy, technology, supply chains, space, maritime infrastructure and democratic resilience.
- The transatlantic bond remains essential and strong.
- But the evolving of US strategic priorities and increasing U.S. focus on the Indo-Pacific inevitably create uncertainty about the long-term scale and form of American engagement in Europe.
- This means that Europeans must take greater responsibility for European security.
- When I say Europeans then I mean the EU, Member States, together with our close and likeminded European partners, including Norway.
- I would say that particularly with Norway we have a very close partnership, which we are keen to develop further. Already back in March 2022, in the EU Strategic Compass, Norway was seen as “as our most closely associated partner through the Agreement on the European Economic Area”.
- We took our cooperation to the next level in May 2024 when Norway and the EU signed a Security and Defence Partnership.
- Norway was one of the first countries signing such a partnership with the EU.
- This partnership reflects not only shared geography and shared interests, but also shared values and a shared understanding of the threats Europe faces.
- Quite frankly, history has knocked on Europe’s door again — and this time, we cannot press the snooze button.

- Unfortunately, history also tends to arrive without sending the agenda in advance.

The EU's role in the European defence posture

- The European Union is therefore stepping up decisively.
- Our objective is very clear:
 - greater European readiness,
 - and a more resilient European defence industrial base.
- Let me be very clear:
- EU defence efforts are fully complementary to NATO.
- NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its members, but the EU should play a key role in reinforcing the European pillar within the alliance.
- The vast majority of EU Member States are also NATO Allies.
- Through all our initiatives, the EU helps Member States meet NATO capability targets more rapidly and effectively.
- This also creates significant opportunities for close partners like Norway to contribute to and benefit from stronger European defence cooperation.
- Since 2022, the EU has substantially increased its defence efforts:
 - by supporting Ukraine militarily, financially and politically,
 - and by strengthening Europe's own defence capabilities and industrial readiness.

The White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030

- A major turning point came in March 2025 when High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) Kaja Kallas and European Commissioner for Defence and Space, Andrius Kubilius presented the White Paper for European Defence, also known as Readiness 2030, together with the launch of the ReArm Europe Plan.

- The White Paper provides a strategic vision for achieving defence readiness by 2030.
- It identifies critical capability gaps in areas such as:
 - air and missile defence,
 - artillery systems,
 - ammunition and missiles,
 - drones and counter-drone systems,
 - cyber and electronic warfare,
 - artificial intelligence,
 - military mobility,
 - maritime capabilities,
 - and strategic enablers.
- The White Paper is not simply a policy document.
- It is an operational roadmap.
- It links defence planning, industrial capacity, financing and innovation.
- Importantly, the White Paper also emphasises the need to work with close partners like Norway as key to tackling the challenges of European defence and the European defence industry.
- Norway's expertise in maritime security, advanced technologies, and defence production makes it a particularly valuable partner in implementing many of these priorities.
- In October 2025, the EU adopted the Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030.
- This roadmap translates political ambition into concrete milestones, indicators and implementation mechanisms.

Capability Coalitions and flagship projects

- Member States have now launched nine Capability Coalitions covering the agreed priority areas.
- And we are very happy that Norway is contributing to two of them;
 - The Maritime Capability Coalition
 - And the Integrated Air and Missile Defence Coalition
- These coalitions are designed to close Europe's most urgent defence gaps through joint investment and cooperation.
- These projects are intended to evolve into European Defence Projects of Common Interest.
- They are designed to strengthen collective readiness at European scale.
- Here again, cooperation with trusted partners such as Norway will be essential.

Defence investment and ReArm Europe

- Defence readiness also requires resources.
- Member States are now investing in defence more than ever before.
- Through the ReArm Europe Plan, the EU is creating fiscal space for approximately 800 billion euros in defence investment.
- This will support:
 - capability development,
 - industrial production,
 - innovation,
 - and military preparedness.
- The Security Action for Europe, also known as the SAFE instrument — provides up to 150 billion euros in loans for common procurement.
- This creates incentives for European countries to procure together, produce together and strengthen interoperability.

- Importantly, these mechanisms are also open to close partners such as Norway and Ukraine.
- ☐ This openness matters.
- ☐ Because strengthening European security means strengthening cooperation with those partners who already contribute substantially to Europe's defence and resilience.

Strengthening the European defence industry

- A key priority is strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.
- Europe must be able to produce more, faster and together.
- And, ideally, a little faster than some of our traditional procurement procedures have allowed in the past.
- In some cases, innovation in Europe has moved at the speed of technology, while procurement moved at the speed of medieval cathedral construction.
- New instruments play an important role:
 - ASAP — the Act in Support of Ammunition Production,
 - EDIRPA for joint procurement,
 - and the European Defence Industry Programme, EDIP.
- ASAP alone is helping Europe significantly ramp up ammunition production.
- Here we have a strategically important cooperation with Norway.
- Norwegian companies such as NAMMO, Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace and Chemring Nobel are making important contributions to strengthening Europe's defence industrial capacity.
- The EU Ambassadors recently visited Chemring Nobel together with Norwegian State Secretary Andreas Flåm to highlight the importance of this cooperation.

- Chemring Nobel received €66.7 million in EU support through the ASAP programme in 2024 to help more than double its explosives production capacity.
- This demonstrates how the EU and Norway are working together to strengthen Europe's defence industrial base, address critical bottlenecks in ammunition supply chains and enhance Europe's overall defence readiness.
- EDIP will further modernise Europe's defence industry, strengthen innovation and support cooperation with Ukraine and trusted partners, including Norway.

Military mobility and resilience

- Another key priority is military mobility.
- Forces and equipment must be able to move rapidly across Europe in times of crisis.
- Because if military convoys move slower than summer tourists on the E18, we clearly have a problem.
- Because deterrence loses some of its credibility if military reinforcements arrive after the holiday traffic.
- Military mobility is essential for deterrence, reinforcement and NATO operations.
- The EU's Military Mobility Package aims to:
 - reduce administrative barriers,
 - harmonise procedures,
 - improve infrastructure,
 - and strengthen transport resilience.
- This is one of the clearest examples of practical EU-NATO cooperation.
- Norway also participates in the PESCO project on Military Mobility, reflecting our shared commitment to ensuring that forces and

equipment can move rapidly and efficiently across Europe when needed.

- The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO has also transformed the strategic map of Northern Europe.

It is also an area where Norway plays a strategically important role, particularly in the High North and in ensuring secure mobility corridors across Northern Europe.

Ukraine

- Ukraine remains at the centre of Europe's security efforts.
- Supporting Ukraine is not charity.
- It is a strategic investment in European security.
- The EU continues to provide military assistance, industrial support and long-term integration with the European defence ecosystem.
- Norway has also been among Europe's strongest supporters of Ukraine with the Nansen Support Programme totalling 25 billion euros from 2023-2030, and through its participation in the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine, contributing to the training and strengthening of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.
- Our cooperation in support of Ukraine demonstrates how closely aligned the EU and Norway are on the fundamental security challenges facing Europe.
- This partnership is also visible in concrete humanitarian action, including the successful EU-Norway cooperation on the medical evacuation of Ukrainian patients, where around 2,850 patients have been transported on a specially converted SAS aircraft to hospitals across Europe, including approximately 500 patients treated in Norway.
- This effort reflects a shared commitment not only to Ukraine's defence, but also to its human resilience and recovery. Ukraine is increasingly not only a recipient of support, but also a contributor to innovation, resilience and defence solutions.

Closing

- Ladies and gentlemen,
- Europe is entering a new era — perhaps a more dangerous era, but also one that demands clarity, courage and unity.
- Defence readiness is no longer a theoretical debate.
- It is about ensuring that future generations of Europeans can continue to live in freedom, democracy and peace.
- The European Union is acting:
 - by investing,
 - by coordinating,
 - by innovating,
 - and by strengthening partnerships.
- Our goal is clear:
 - a stronger Europe,
 - within a stronger NATO,
 - capable of defending our democracies, our citizens and our fundamental freedoms.
- In that effort, Norway remains an essential partner.
- Tusen takk for meg – and thank you for proving, once again, that Europe is strongest when friends and allies stand together.