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Canadian Parliamentarians attend the NATO PA's 2023 Spring Session in Luxembourg

Between 19 and 22 May 2023, [Julie Dzerowicz](#), MP, Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, led a delegation to Luxembourg to participate in the 2023 Spring Session of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, or the Alliance) Parliamentary Assembly (PA). The other delegates were Senator [Gwen Boniface](#), Senator [Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu](#), Senator [Rebecca Patterson](#), [Rachel Blaney](#), MP, and [Cheryl Gallant](#), MP.

Approximately 250 parliamentarians from NATO member countries and 16 partner countries [attended](#) the 2023 Spring Session. They heard from high-level speakers and discussed a number of important defence and security issues. These included:

- NATO's adaptation to today's fast-changing security landscape;
- Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine;
- NATO's defence and deterrence posture, and the need for adequate defence spending and equitable burden sharing;
- Energy security in Europe and North America;
- China's economic, military and political cooperation with Russia;
- The defence industrial bases of NATO countries;
- Security in the Black Sea region; and
- The state of democracy in Belarus.

Delegates also discussed and adopted recommendations for NATO governments and parliaments to consider as the Alliance prepares for the July 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Among the notable elements of the Spring Session were interactions with Ukrainian parliamentarians, decision makers and experts. These included an extraordinary joint meeting between the NATO PA's Standing Committee and the [Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council \(UNIC\)](#); and an [address](#) to the session's plenary sitting by Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov.

Concerning the war in Ukraine, the NATO PA President – Senator Joëlle Garriaud Maylam of France – [emphasized](#) that the Assembly has “gathered[...] in Luxembourg at an important time, as Ukraine’s resistance [to Russia’s illegal invasion] grows ever stronger.” The NATO PA President also indicated that the 2023 Spring Session “provides an opportunity to [the Assembly to] send a clear message of support to Ukraine.”

Luxembourg’s Prime Minister, [Xavier Bettel](#), the president of its Chamber of Deputies, [Fernand Etgen](#), and its Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, [François Bausch](#) addressed the session’s plenary sitting.

NATO PA delegates also [heard](#) from and exchanged with NATO’s Deputy Secretary General, [Mircea Geoana](#). Regarding NATO’s Centres of Excellence, NATO Deputy Secretary General Geoana remarked that “we do appreciate very much the offer by Canada to have a [Centre of Excellence](#) of NATO on climate change and security.” The [NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence](#) will be headquartered in Montreal, Quebec.

At the plenary, delegates debated and adopted two declarations: [United and Resolute in Support of Ukraine](#), and [A New NATO in an Age of Strategic Competition: Accelerating NATO’s Adaptation at the Vilnius Summit](#). Among other points, the former reiterates the Assembly’s support for Ukraine and its condemnation of Russia’s illegal invasion, while the latter provides recommendations to NATO governments and parliaments on important defence and security issues in the lead up to the July 2023 NATO Summit.

Canadian delegates participated actively in all aspects of the 2023 Spring Session, including by asking questions at the NATO PA’s five committees and the plenary sitting. For example, NATO countries contribute to the Alliance in various ways, and Ms. Dzerowicz [questioned](#) Luxembourgish Prime Minister Bettel and Luxembourgish Defence Minister Bausch regarding the Alliance’s 2% of Gross Domestic Product defence spending guideline. She also [asked](#) NATO Deputy Secretary General Geoana about how to develop a collective narrative among NATO countries to engage with countries in the Global South, particularly within the context of the war in Ukraine, and [asked](#) a second question to the deputy secretary general about what actions NATO could take to “ensure arms control and non-proliferation [of nuclear weapons].” Ms. Dzerowicz later commented that “[t]he 2023 Spring Session afforded NATO PA members an important opportunity to come together as NATO prepares for the Vilnius Summit,” and added that such a gathering “provides an opportunity for Canadian parliamentarians to ensure that they are contributing to the strengthening of Alliance unity.”

During their meetings, members of the NATO PA’s committees considered 17 preliminary draft [reports](#) on a wide range of topics, including one on food security and conflict presented by Ms. [Julie Dzerowicz](#), MP. These reports will now be revised based on amendments proposed by Canadian and other delegates, before being considered again and adopted at the 69th Annual Session in Copenhagen in October 2023.

While in Luxembourg, the Canadian delegation [met](#) privately with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Opposition Leader of Belarus, who is now living in exile in Lithuania. They discussed the challenges to achieving democracy in Belarus, a country bordering Ukraine that is allied to Moscow and whose regime the NATO PA referred to in Luxemburg as a co-aggressor in the war against Ukraine.

The Canadian delegation also [met](#) with the observer delegation from Kosovo. They discussed the challenges facing that country and its strategic region following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The Kosovo delegation stated that Kosovo eventually wished to join NATO, and that in the shorter term it wished to upgrade its current observer status at the NATO PA to associate member status.

As part of its preparations for the 2023 Spring Session, Canadian delegates met with Canada's Ambassador to NATO, [David Angell](#), who explained key issues on the NATO agenda and Canadian priorities for the July 2023 Vilnius Summit.

Finally, during the 2023 Spring Session, the Canadian delegation was again thanked for [hosting](#) NATO PA parliamentarians in Canada in April 2023, when they visited Ottawa, Halifax and Montreal to learn about Canadian priorities and capabilities. Canada will host the NATO PA's 70th Annual Session in 2024.

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