



## CTSS Roundtable with James Appathurai

October 21, 2011

*Center for Transatlantic Security Studies*

**Executive Summary:** On 19 October 2011, the [Center for Transatlantic Security Studies](#) (CTSS) welcomed Mr. James Appathurai, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy who also serves as the Secretary General's Special Representative for Central Asia and the Caucasus, to National Defense University (NDU) for a roundtable discussion on preparations for the next NATO Summit to be held in Chicago, IL, on 20-21 May 2012.

Mr. Appathurai focused his remarks on what NATO perceives as key issues for the Summit: Afghanistan, Missile Defense, Partnerships, and Smart Defense. On Afghanistan, Mr. Appathurai painted a realistic picture of the situation on the ground highlighting progress made in the country, and emphasizing that both military and civilian aspects of the transition are on schedule. He underlined that recruitment levels for the Afghan National Army (ANA) are high, and soon Afghanistan will be able to operate its own air force which will improve the ANA's overall ability to provide security for the country. Within months, over 50% of the Afghan population will live in areas controlled by the ANA and by 2014 all Provincial Reconstruction Teams will fall under the civilian control of the Afghan authorities. Mr. Appathurai stressed that NATO will remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014 through an "Enduring Partnership" which will offer reform and cooperation tools with programs tailored to the country. NATO's desire is for Afghanistan to become a stable and secure partner. In this respect, he indicated that it will be important to broaden the

"transition" lens to focus on the political and regional challenges of post-2014 Afghanistan. With some thirty-four regional initiatives being launched or ongoing, the need for coherence and coordination is stronger than ever.

Second, Mr. Appathurai reported steady progress on the Missile Defense initiative with an expected interim capability by the time of the Summit. Mr. Appathurai noted that funding for Missile Defense – despite widespread budgetary constraints – was not being called into question in Europe, suggesting that this had been and remains an essential area for the NATO Allies. Cooperation with Russia on Missile Defense, however, is still not clear in light of Moscow's demand for legal guarantees that any missile defenses will not affect Russia's strategic deterrent. .

Third, as agreed at NATO's 2010 Lisbon Summit, the Alliance wishes to enhance its outreach to partners, including those in the Middle East and North Africa; building on the cooperation developed in the context of the Libyan operation. Mr. Appathurai stressed that NATO already benefits from good relationships and institutional frameworks to engage in these regions. Chicago must be a place to enhance the dialogue and cooperation that already exist. Libya might consider joining NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, if it so wishes..

Fourth, Mr. Appathurai noted that reductions in defense spending and budgetary constraints in general will be a defining theme of the Chicago Summit. He acknowledged that the lack of

essential capabilities and the specter of more defense cuts remained a significant challenge, but he offered Smart Defense as an opportunity to prioritize, specialize, and cooperate on multinational projects, which remained a key priority for the Secretary General. He stressed that NATO did not wish the United States to disengage from the Alliance. While recognizing that in today's political and fiscal environment the U.S. cannot take leadership of every NATO operation, Mr. Appathurai highlighted that "NATO works best when the U.S. is engaged."

From his remarks, it was clear that, notwithstanding the harsh realities of international instability and fiscal constraints, NATO has more than one success story to tell. Several people in attendance stressed the need for NATO to be more engaged in public diplomacy. It was felt that NATO achievements and successes were not well known, and should be publicized and built upon. The development of a public relations strategy around the 2012 Chicago Summit, during an election year, would send a key message to the public about the innate value and utility of the Alliance. In this regard, the need to reach out to the current Administration, members of Congress, and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, as well as to the eventual Republican presidential candidate, was underlined.

Additional comments were conveyed to Mr. Appathurai on the U.S. role and perspective on Smart Defense, and Missile Defense. Others pointed out that NATO does not understand Russia's military doctrine, and that Russia and the United States have very different strategic approaches to missile defense strategies. Some participants expressed concerns that the Summit would be dominated by the financial crisis in the Euro zone, the upcoming elections in the United States in 2012, and a reduced interest in NATO at high levels of U.S. government.

Mr. Appathurai appreciated the candid nature of the discussion and welcomed suggestions for improving NATO's public relations campaign.

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