

Commander Multinational Corps Northeast's speech given during the New Year's reception on Jan. 23, 2023 at Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast

(Check against delivery)

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you at Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast at our New Year's reception.

In these trying times, it is especially important for me to have the opportunity to wish all of you, your families and loved ones a Happy New Year and all the best for 2023!

I am delighted to welcome a great number of representatives from outside MNC NE:

Let me extend a special welcome to His Excellency Mr. Ole TOFT, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark to Poland, His Excellency Mr. Miko HALJAS, Ambassador of Estonia to Poland. I would also like to welcome Ms. Cornelia Pieper, General Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Gdańsk, Mr. Przemysław Włosek, Secretary of the West Pomeranian Voivodship, BGEN Szymon Koziątek, Commander of the 12th Mechanised Division in Szczecin, Reverent Stephan Lorek, Dean of the Catholic Military Parish in Torgelow and Chaplain Stanisław Pawłowski from the Catholic Military Parish in Szczecin.

Finally, I would like to welcome representatives from the vibrant business community and educational institutions based in Szczecin.

This great city has been home to MNC NE since 1999.

We will celebrate our 25th Anniversary next year.

Szczecin has always been a great place to serve and live in for our multinational community of service members and civilian personnel as well as their families and children, who all represent 23 NATO member states and partners.

We feel welcome and at home here and look forward to further developing the already close relations with our host community in the years ahead.

In a New Year's address one usually highlights the most remarkable efforts and achievements of the past year.

This is often just a starting point to push ourselves to do even better, to work even harder, in the coming year.

Rather than dates, events, particularly the unlawful, renewed Russian invasion of Ukraine is what dominates the lives of all of us.

However, tonight, I would like to, apply a slightly different approach.

Yes, a new year has begun. However, by just turning the pages of the calendar, we would not, in my view, sufficiently account for the momentous events that are currently unfolding.

Russia continues its unlawful, unprovoked, renewed invasion of Ukraine.

It is the most fundamental attack on the very principles of our rules-based international order in a lifetime.

The state of Ukraine, its government, armed forces and its people have literally been fighting for their lives every day for almost a year now.

They continue to show great determination, bravery and resilience in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, which is truly admirable.

However, neither Russia's aims nor the fallout of its ruthless attack are limited to Ukraine.

Our societies, in particular those in the countries bordering Ukraine, have been severely affected by the influx of millions of people fleeing the fighting, the relentless shelling and the rocket and drone attacks.

What is more, Poland even had to mourn the deaths of two of its citizens, who lost their lives on Polish soil just a couple of weeks ago due to this brutal war waged right across its border.

The European nations, and Poland in particular, have shown a remarkable willingness and ability to help the millions of people seeking safety and shelter. They welcomed the Ukrainians in their countries and helped them integrate into their societies and economies.

Szczecin is a shining example in this respect: the city and its people welcomed the refugees, whose numbers at times exceeded ten percent of the city's population.

This is a truly remarkable achievement.

NATO, too, has once again proven that the Alliance is capable of living up to the task at hand. The ongoing adaptation is the greatest overhaul of the Alliance at least since the end of the Cold War, more than 30 years ago.

NATO has significantly sped up its adaptation process, reassuring its members by substantially increasing its defensive posture, ready to defend every inch of NATO territory.

The Alliance has shown a remarkable degree of cohesion and the capacity to swiftly react to the fundamentally altered security environment, acting as one in developing and adapting its response in light of developments on the ground.

At MNC NE, we own much of the ground these reinforcements were deployed to.

We have a responsibility towards nations in our region – Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – to effectively contribute to their security and, if need be, to their defence.

MNC NE has been instrumental in lending credibility to NATO's mission.

Our credibility with nations in our area of operations depends on our readiness to fight from day one.

This readiness, in turn, creates the necessary preconditions for successful deterrence.

Therefore, we have wasted no time planning and training for the defence of our host nations.

As Ukraine continues to remain defiant in the face of Russia's relentless onslaught, we must, and will, continue to be vigilant.

Our societies will have to continue to show the resilience and the willingness to lend a helping hand to those affected by this terrible war.

In normal times, our lives are dominated by dates, by the pages on the calendar and what they represent to each and every one of us.

Now, however, the Russian invasion of Ukraine consumes the lives of people, way beyond Ukraine.

The dates fall into the shadows. The continuity of this war has come to be the defining factor.

We will only know after the fact, when it has come to an end.

For us at MNC NE, this continuity becomes apparent when we look at what lies ahead of us: we have to continue our planning, deliver timely inputs to feed the ongoing Alliance adaptation and remain, as I said before, vigilant.

This is what we have been doing since the war started and what we will continue to do even it after it ends.

And yes, like in any normal New Year's address: I want us here at MNC NE to work even harder than last year!

With this, I would like to give the floor to our distinguished guest speaker, the Secretary of the Voivodship, Mr. Przemysław Włosek.

Sir, it is a pleasure to have you here and we are looking forward to your speech!