



EL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO

Madrid, 19 June, 2025

Excmo. Sr. Mark Rutte
NATO Secretary General
BRUSSELS

Dear Secretary General,

I am writing to share with you my views regarding the 2025 NATO Summit declaration currently under discussion.

As you know, Spain is fully committed to NATO. Putin's cruelty and total disregard for international law and human rights constitute an existential threat that cannot be ignored or underestimated. To neutralize it, we need a stronger NATO—with the United States fully engaged—and a more capable Europe, able to assume its own defence and security, provide decisive support to Ukraine, and alleviate part of the extraordinary burden borne by the Allies on the Eastern flank.

Spain firmly supports these common goals. That is why, in recent years, it has been the fourth NATO country with the highest average annual increase in defence spending—reaching 2% of its GDP in 2025—and it is currently present in the Alliance's missions with thousands of military personnel and top-notch equipment.

I want to assure you that Spain will continue to fulfil its duty in the years and decades ahead and will continue to actively contribute to the European security architecture. However, Spain cannot commit to a specific spending target in terms of GDP at this Summit. For three fundamental reasons. First, because it is not necessary to fulfill our commitments to the Alliance. As you know, NATO's Capability Targets are established through a standardized, transparent, and traceable process. Every four years, the Strategic Commands identify the Minimum Capability Requirements that the Alliance will need to fulfill its mission in the years ahead, and develop a Capability Target package for each Ally with specific goals and timelines.



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Current Capability Target packages have been approved by our Defence ministers in June 2025 and will remain valid at least until the end of the decade. Different countries will need to invest different amounts to achieve them. Some will need to reach a 5% of their GDP. Others, less. And such asymmetry should be by all means respected, among other reasons, because it is embedded in NATO's very operating principles, and because it stems from a series of economic factors (e.g., labor and production costs) that have nothing to do with the level of commitment of each Ally towards our collective defense.

Spain, in particular, will require a 2.1% spending, according to our military's estimates—an investment that will suffice to acquire and maintain all the personnel, equipment, and infrastructures requested by the Alliance.

For Spain, committing to a 5% target would not only be unreasonable, but also counterproductive, as it would move Spain further away from optimal spending and it would hinder the EU's ongoing efforts to strengthen its security and defense ecosystem. This is in fact the second reason I would like to share with you. We agree that the EU needs to help Allies improve their interoperability, procurement process and industrial base to contribute more decisively to deterring Russia and rebalancing the transatlantic defense burden, without forgetting the threats coming from the Southern flank. The EU and its member states are already working on these objectives. But to make real progress, we will require some time and maneuvering space. And I fear that a rushed 5% increase would harm this process in two ways.

On the one hand, by rushing Spain into off-the-self purchases that could further exacerbate equipment interoperability challenges, and send a substantial portion of their resources to non-European suppliers, thus preventing them from developing their own industrial base and exacerbating the current diversion of European savings to foreign markets, adding around €100 billion to the €300 billion they already transfer annually.

On the other, by slowing down our economic growth through debt increase, inflationary pressures, and the diversion of investment from crucial activities with a higher multiplier effect than the defense industry (e.g., education, healthcare, digital technology). Ultimately, it is worth remembering that capabilities are paid for with euros, not GDP percentages. If we truly want to increase real spending in a sustained way, our main goal should be to ensure that our economies grow significantly in the coming years. To achieve this, we should find the right balance between boosting our defense capabilities and boosting our overall economic competitiveness.



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A third and final reason that prevents Spain from committing to the 5% target is that such level of spending would be incompatible with our Welfare State and our world vision. Intentions are powerful—but they rarely override empirical reality. And the empirical reality is that, for Spain, as for other NATO countries, reaching a 5% defense spending will be impossible unless it comes at the cost of increasing taxes to the middle class, cutting public services and social benefits for their citizens, and scaling back their commitment to the green transition and international development cooperation.

It is the legitimate right of every government to decide whether or not they are willing to make those sacrifices. As a sovereign Ally, we choose not to. We choose to strike a balance between the need to increase defence expenditure and the need to address the other social, economic, and environmental challenges that both our world and our citizens face.

In the current context, and in accordance with the Capabilities Targets recently agreed within NATO, for us that balance means allocating 2% of our GDP to defense and security, while we continue to invest in diplomacy, trade, welfare policies, and development aid.

Of course, it is not our intention to limit the spending ambitions of other Allies or to obstruct the outcome of the upcoming Summit. That is why I am simply requesting the inclusion of a more flexible formula in this year's declaration—one that either recognizes each Ally's path to achieve their respective Capability Targets and makes the spending target optional, or one that excludes Spain from the application of the spending target. Similar exceptions have been made in the past for other Allies, and there are many compelling reasons to do so now.

The formula I suggest would allow us to preserve the 5% target in the declaration for those Allies that need it or want to pursue it.

I therefore hope that you will consider my proposal. Spain will meet its Capability Targets as agreed by the Defense ministers, it will remain a loyal member of both NATO and the EU, and it will continue to actively protect the Eastern and Southern flanks with its troops and resources.

I remain at your disposal should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Pedro Sánchez
Presidente del Gobierno de España