

**Speech/ opening remarks to be given by  
the director, RADM Christian Bock,  
at the ceremony of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
NATO Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and  
Shallow Waters,  
Kiel, 15 November 2018**

**Time of release: beginning of speech**

**The spoken word shall prevail.**

Dear Minister,

Excellencies,

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren Abgeordnete aus Schleswig-Holstein und Berlin,

Admirals, Generals,

Distinguished Authorities and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is a great honour and my utmost pleasure to welcome you all in this prestigious and beautiful venue. Today is a truly special day, here, inside the House of the Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein. It is a day, my staff and I have been planning and looking forward to for a long time.

As the Director of the NATO Centre of Excellence for Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters, I am very much obliged to all of you who have decided to share this special day with us. Many of you have travelled very long distances to be present here. The fact that all of you have joined us today serves as a reminder to all members of the COE CSW that our work is relevant indeed.

An old saying quite rightly states:

*“It doesn’t matter where you go in your life, but what matters the most, is whom you have beside you all the way”.*

By looking around in this room, it is overwhelming to see, how many friends our COE has acquired during the last ten years. It is good to have so many supporters at our side.

But let me start by welcoming our guests.

First and foremost I want to express my sincere thanks to the Minister of Interior of Schleswig Holstein, Hans-Joachim Grote, for being with us here today to mark this important milestone. Your presence here and by awarding a Campaign Streamer to the COE today honours us all. I extremely appreciate you recognizing our achievements not only for the Alliance but also for the Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein and Kiel during the past decade. Minister, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the support by the Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein and the hospitality of its people.

Thank you very much also to all the members of the Landtag of Schleswig Holstein – represented today by the vice-president of the Landtag, the honourable Mrs Krämer. We really appreciate the privilege to be hosted by you in this honourable house. Vielen Dank Frau Landtagsvizepräsidentin!

A very warm welcome to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the German Armed Forces, Dr. Hans Peter Bartels as the representative of the Bundestag. I know your time schedule is very tight and that you are only able to stay for half an hour. Knowing all the trouble you took to come here this afternoon, we

are even more delighted that you have taken the time to learn about the performance of our COE CSW.

Moreover, recognition and gratitude also goes to all authorities within NATO:

I am very grateful for the hard work and dedication of our Steering Committee members, and I am delighted to welcome - as their representative - the Chairman, Rear Admiral Ulrich Reineke, who is the Head of the Plans and Policy Directorate at the German Navy Command. Sir, thank you once more for your consistent commitment and - despite the substantial responsibilities of your regular duties - for devoting so much time and energy to our COE CSW.

Representing the Allied Maritime Command, I warmly welcome Rear Admiral Murat Dicman, the Deputy Chief of Staff for support. MARCOM is one of the most important customers of our COE.

And from the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operation Training Centre from Crete, Greece, a heartfelt “Kali Spera” to their Chief of Staff, Captain Charalampos Thymis.

For the diplomatic corps, I welcome the United States Consul General Richard Yoneoka and the Military Attachés from Greece, the US, Poland, Latvia and Italy.

I would furthermore like to extend a warm welcome to my direct predecessor, the former Director of the COE CSW, namely Rear

Admiral Jan Kaack. He is representing all former COE CSW staff members and national supporters from outside the COE CSW who have paved the way until today.

And of course representing all active military personnel and commanding officers from our framework nation Germany, I welcome my dear counterpart in Wilhelmshaven, Captain Ralf Kuchler, Commander of the Flottilla 2.

A very sincere thank you as well to our musicians present here today. The Sextet consists of young members from the “Lübecker Musikschule der Gemeinnützigen”, aged between twelve and 20 years. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for giving a truly festive framework to this ceremony by your highly appreciated contribution.

Finally of course: An event like this does not come together overnight. That is why I also want to express my sincere thanks to the team from the COE CSW and at the same time the organisers from the Staatskanzlei - the state chancellery- and the event managers of the Landtag and the Ministry of Interior for coordinating this extraordinary event over several months and for making it possible.

Thank you all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary is always a good opportunity to look back on past achievements, but it is also a time to look ahead. In the following minutes, I will give you a brief overview of what has been achieved so far – and where we want to go in the future.

As you might know, the establishment of the COE CSW began with the formal inauguration in 2007. Ten years ago, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2008, Greece, the Netherlands, Turkey and Germany finally signed the Memorandum of Understanding, which defined the function, organisation, staffing and funding of the Kiel based COE. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2009 NATO's Military Committee in Brussels signed the accreditation document and on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, right here in the parliament of Schleswig-Holstein - a ceremony was held to celebrate the founding of the COE CSW together with NATO's formal accreditation.

As you can see, we actually could have picked three dates to have the ceremony for our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It could have either been the year 2017, with the formal German national inauguration, or the year 2018, with the signing of the MOU, or even 2019 with the accreditation by NATO. However, as we are soldiers who like to think in simple military terms, we chose to aim at the middle of the target, which is why we have selected the year 2018. Looking at all our guests today, that was obviously a very good choice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

looking back, why was the COE for operations in Confined and Shallow Waters incorporated in Germany in the first place and why specifically in Kiel with the Flottilla 1? Well for decades the German Navy has accumulated a well reputed specific maritime warfare competence by operating in coastal waters, especially in the Baltic and the North Sea. With the aim to make these outstanding tactical and operational skills available to our NATO allies, and to ensure state-of-the-art operational concepts, the establishment of the COE CSW was ordered by the former Chief of Staff of the German Navy, Admiral Lutz Feldt in 2005.

Since then the focus of the COE CSW is concentrated on the relevant areas of maritime warfare, for example submarine and anti-submarine or mine warfare, speedboat operations, force protection and amphibious operations, employment of unmanned systems in all dimensions, as well as ensuring a comprehensive maritime situation picture, the so-called Maritime Situational Awareness.

Furthermore, our COE team contributes actively to numerous national and international meetings, conferences and workshops. The demand for these experts and their workload is immense. As an example, within the past twelve months, our thirty subject matter experts attended approximately 200 national

and international events. In addition, we ourselves organised several international flagship events, one of them being a conference on Operational Maritime Law in Copenhagen. Moreover, various training courses and participation in multinational exercises have also been conducted.

All these efforts serve not only to strengthen NATO's overall littoral warfare capabilities, it also enhances cooperation and increase training proficiency within the Alliance.

Such an ambitious programme of work requires an extensive network of competence, which takes a lot of effort to establish and maintain. The past decade saw the development of strong relations to other national and NATO agencies, and links were also established to the international defence industry. The result is an active exchange of information between developers and customers, which helps every day to improve the necessary capabilities and generate new ideas.

In addition, the COE CSW is in close contact with a number of scientific institutions working in related fields. Most notably are the COE CSW's cooperation agreements with the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, USA; the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia, Poland (thanks Commander Mietkiewicz for coming); the Viadrina European University in Frankfurt/Oder; the Federal German Armed Forces University in Munich; the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden (Professor Dr. Schröder-Hinrichs and Dr. Dalakis, also thank you for your presence) and

the NATO Centre for Maritime Research in La Spezia, Italy. All of these institutions are consistent sources of knowledge and insight for us and are involved in the development of concepts and procedures.

One lighthouse project serves as a good example in this context: two years ago the COE CSW started collaborating with the Munich Security Conference by providing ideas and advice on pivotal maritime issues. The conference's aim is to respond to the increasing importance of maritime security and to address today's challenges, especially in confined and shallow waters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

as you have heard, our COE CSW takes great pride in its history. It has made a lasting contribution to the NATO's ability to keep up with changing threats and challenges. We support NATO in staying ahead of the curve and in adapting to changing circumstances in the future. The Centre has been – and will continue to be – a key player helping to keep the peace and protecting our collective freedom - today and for decades to come.

In summary,

for the past ten years ten remarkable nations have contributed to the our COE's work. Many countries, both within and outside of NATO, have expressed a strong interest in cooperating with us,

and some are even considering an active membership, Estonia for example. All of these countries are motivated by the prospective benefits to be gained from the know how concentrated in the COE CSW, and to contribute their own expertise in return. A growing interest to join the COE has been increased by the newly emerging threat presented by Russia in the "confined" waters of the Baltic and an increased demand for expertise regarding operations in littoral waters.

I thank my entire COE CSW "crew"- for their hard work, their commitment and their tenacity in making our mission a success. I am confident that all future COE staff members will continue to serve with honour and pride to preserve the same spirit that inspired us and our predecessors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by thanking you again for being a part of this special day. We are grateful to you for taking the time out of your busy schedules, helping us to make our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary a memorable day.

Thank you for your attention.