

Release
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Final communiqué

Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at NATO headquarters, Brussels

1. As NATO approaches its 60th anniversary in 2009, the Alliance is resolved to meet the security challenges of the 21st century, while maintaining a strong collective defence as its core purpose. We are fully committed to the collective defence of our populations, territory and forces. NATO is protecting freedom and our shared values through its missions and operations; modernising its military capabilities to meet new operational requirements; and spreading peace and stability through its widening network of security partnerships with nations and organisations.
2. Today we reaffirmed the enduring value of the transatlantic link and the indivisibility of Allied security. We took stock of the Alliance's ongoing transformation. We reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken by our Heads of State and Government at their Summit meeting in Riga in November 2006. And we gave further direction on work to be completed in the run-up to the upcoming NATO Summit, in Bucharest, next April.
3. We also paid tribute to the professionalism and dedication of the more than fifty thousand men and women from Allied and other nations who are involved in NATO's missions and operations, and extended our deepest sympathy to the families and loved ones of the injured and the fallen.
4. Contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan is NATO's top priority and a long-term commitment. We are determined to make sure that the UN-mandated NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has the forces, resources and flexibility needed to ensure the mission's continued success, and we value the contributions of our partners to this mission. We support the work of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to demonstrate decisive leadership, including extension of government authority to the provinces, strengthening the rule of law, respect for human rights, and tackling corruption. Our objective is to support the Afghan National Security Forces as they increasingly assume responsibility for security in their country; ISAF's role will evolve accordingly as this process proceeds. We will step up our efforts to support training and equipping the Afghan National Army and increase its operational effectiveness. We also reaffirm our commitment in the NATO-Afghanistan Cooperation Programme to assist the Afghan Government in improving the interoperability of its forces and to support defence reform, defence institution building and the military aspects of security sector reform. In addition to our individual efforts, we will also continue to support collectively, within ISAF's mandate, the counter-narcotics efforts led by the Afghan Government.
5. Building on progress already achieved, work is underway in the Alliance to develop, for endorsement by our Heads of State and Government at their meeting in Bucharest, a forward-looking, comprehensive strategic political-military plan to achieve NATO's

aims in Afghanistan. It will take into account the progress NATO has achieved through our Operations Plan; optimise the Alliance's contribution to the Afghanistan Compact; and set out measures of progress to enhance security, and cooperation with other international organisations, wherever appropriate, and the Afghan Government, in order to meet our strategic objectives. Our goal remains security and stability in Afghanistan, and unity of purpose with the Afghan Government and the International Community as we approach important milestones. We urge all parties to act towards fulfilment of the benchmarks in the Afghanistan Compact, allowing us to determine our further efforts for the period beyond.

6. We remain committed to working together with the Afghan authorities, our partners in ISAF and, wherever appropriate, other international actors to strengthen our common effort and make it more effective. There can be no security in Afghanistan without development, and no development without security. Provincial Reconstruction Teams remain at the leading edge of Allies' approach and underline the comprehensive nature of our efforts. Civilian and military activities must complement each other in a concerted effort that takes into account the different mandates of the international actors present in Afghanistan. NATO will play its full role, but the burden should be shared accordingly. We stress the importance of strengthening the United Nations' leading and coordinating role among international actors, in support of the Afghan Government. We call on all neighbours of Afghanistan to intensify their support for the efforts of the Afghan Government to build a stable and democratic country within secure borders. We particularly encourage close cooperation between Afghanistan, Pakistan and NATO, including through the Tri-Partite Commission.
7. Today's information environment underlines the need for appropriate, timely and responsive communication in relation to NATO's engagement in international operations. We agreed to continue to improve at all levels NATO's strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts with local and international audiences, especially in support of our operations and missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo and elsewhere.
8. In Kosovo, the robust UN-mandated NATO-led KFOR presence has been crucial in maintaining security and supporting the political process. We look forward to the report by the Contact Group on the EU-Russia-US Troika-led negotiations on the future status of Kosovo. KFOR shall remain in Kosovo on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, unless the Security Council decides otherwise. We urge both parties to refrain from making acts or statements that could undermine the security situation in Kosovo or in any other part of the region. We renew our commitment to maintain KFOR's national force contributions, including reserves, at current levels and with no new caveats. NATO will respond resolutely to any attempts to disrupt the safety and security of any of the people of Kosovo.
9. NATO stands ready to play its part in the implementation of future security arrangements. We attach great importance to standards implementation in Kosovo especially regarding the protection of ethnic minorities and communities, as well as the protection of historical and religious sites, and to combating crime and corruption. We will continue to cooperate closely with the population of Kosovo, the UN, the European Union and other international actors wherever appropriate to help in the further development of a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic and peaceful Kosovo.

10. Experience in Afghanistan and the Balkans demonstrates that today's challenges require a comprehensive approach by the International Community. As our Heads of State and Government directed at the Riga Summit, work is underway to develop proposals for improving the coherent application of NATO's own crisis management instruments as well as practical cooperation at all levels with other actors in the planning and conduct of ongoing and future operations, wherever appropriate. We intend to make progress on this work by the time of the Bucharest Summit. Effective implementation of a comprehensive approach requires the cooperation and contribution of all major actors.
11. We condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism, whatever its motivations or manifestations, and reaffirm the determination of our nations to fight it individually and collectively as long as necessary, in accordance with international law and UN principles. We also reiterate our determination to protect our populations, territories, infrastructure and forces against the consequences of terrorist attacks. We commend the important contribution of NATO's Defence Against Terrorism initiatives in this regard. The Alliance continues to provide an essential transatlantic dimension to the response against terrorism. We remain committed to further enhancing our dialogue and cooperation with our partners and welcome efforts towards revitalising the implementation of the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism. Operation Active Endeavour, our maritime operation in the Mediterranean, continues to make a valuable contribution to the fight against terrorism, and we welcome the support of partner countries, which has further enhanced its effectiveness.
12. We remain deeply concerned about the continued violence and atrocities in Darfur and call on all parties to commit to a full cessation of hostilities and continue efforts towards peace through dialogue. NATO is ready, following consultation with and the agreement of the United Nations and African Union, to continue its support.
13. The NATO Training Mission-Iraq, including the new Gendarmerie-type training led by the Italian Carabinieri, remains a valuable contribution to international efforts to train Iraq's security forces. Looking ahead, we expect the development of proposals for possible further activities beyond 2008.
14. In the Western Balkans, Euro-Atlantic integration, based on solidarity and democratic values, remains necessary for long-term stability. This involves promoting cooperation in the region, good-neighbourly relations, and mutually acceptable, timely solutions to outstanding issues. We commend the three Membership Action Plan (MAP) countries for the level of mutual cooperation achieved and we encourage the Partner countries in the region to follow this example.
15. We reaffirm that NATO remains open to new European members under Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty. We recognise the strong reform efforts being made by the three countries engaged in the MAP -- Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ -- and urge them to intensify their respective efforts. At the Bucharest Summit, our Heads of State and Government intend to invite those countries who meet NATO's performance-based standards and are able and willing to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability.
16. We welcome progress since the Riga Summit in developing our cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia and stand ready to enhance NATO's assistance to these countries' reform efforts. We expect Serbia and Bosnia and

Herzegovina to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We will closely monitor their respective efforts in this regard. As we look ahead towards the Bucharest Summit, we encourage the Government of each of our three Partners in the Western Balkans to use to the fullest extent possible the opportunities for dialogue, reform and cooperation offered by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, including through the elaboration of an Individual Partnership Action Plan. We express our strong support for the work of the High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We were disturbed by recent challenges to the Dayton Framework, and welcome the solution reached. We call on the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to build on this and show responsibility as they continue to support the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The cooperation between NATO and the EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina in EU Operation Althea, through the Berlin Plus arrangements, is contributing to peace and security.

17. We are closely following developments in Georgia and encourage the Georgian authorities to continue to uphold a free and fair electoral process and freedom of the media. We welcome the progress achieved in the framework of our ongoing Intensified Dialogue, and encourage Georgia to continue to make progress on its reform path in accordance with NATO's standards and values. We appreciate Georgia's increasing contribution to KFOR and ISAF, and its intention to participate in Operation Active Endeavour. Our nations support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts on its territory, and reaffirm the importance of all parties in the region engaging constructively to promote regional peace and stability. We will continue to support Georgia as it pursues its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision.
18. We reaffirm the importance of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership and our determination to make full use of our Intensified Dialogue and the NATO-Ukraine Commission to enhance our practical assistance to Ukraine. We will continue to support Ukraine as and when it pursues its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, without prejudice to any eventual Alliance decision. We appreciate Ukraine's substantial contributions to our common security, including through active support for Operation Active Endeavour and all other NATO-led operations, and encourage its continued efforts to promote regional cooperation. We underline the importance of a public information campaign to increase understanding and support for NATO-Ukraine cooperation. We are determined to continue to assist Ukraine in the implementation of far-reaching reform efforts, in particular in the area of defence and security sector reform.
19. The NATO-Russia partnership should continue to be a strategic element in fostering security in the Euro-Atlantic area. Ten years after the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, this partnership has entered a challenging phase. We are concerned by certain recent Russian actions, including on key security issues such as the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). We recall that the NATO-Russia partnership is based on a set of shared principles, values and commitments, including democracy, civil liberties and political pluralism, which we consider binding. Allies are committed to the NATO-Russia partnership and view the NATO-Russia Council as an essential forum for establishing common ground. We value and want to continue our constructive and frank dialogue with Russia, including on issues on which we disagree. We all stand to benefit from enhancing our cooperation on common security

interests and issues of mutual concern, such as the fight against terrorism, as well as theatre missile defence and conventional arms control. The level of cooperation already achieved in our partnership has benefited us all. We welcome Russia's contribution to Operation Active Endeavour and our ongoing practical cooperation in countering narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan and Central Asia. We hope Russia's ratification of the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement will facilitate further practical cooperation, in particular military-to-military projects and support to ISAF.

20. We reaffirm that NATO's policy of outreach through partnerships, dialogue, and cooperation is an essential part of the Alliance's purpose and tasks. The Alliance's partnerships across the globe have an enduring value, contributing to stability and security across the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond; eighteen nations outside the Alliance contribute forces and provide support to our operations and missions today. With this in mind, we welcome the progress since Riga and reaffirm our commitment to undertake further efforts by Bucharest, as set out below, to strengthen NATO's policy of partnerships and cooperation.
21. We value highly the contributions that our partners are bringing to NATO's missions and operations. In order to promote greater interoperability between our forces and those of partner nations, we will release, to the extent possible, the appropriate standards. We will also continue to offer to partner countries NATO's advice on, and assistance with, the defence and security related aspects of reform.
22. We reiterate the enduring value of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and remain committed to enhance their efficiency and substance. In this regard, we will accelerate the Alliance's work to make consultations with Partners more focused and reflective of priorities, including through the use of flexible formats, and we task the Council in Permanent Session to develop practical proposals in this direction. We look forward to welcoming our EAPC Partners at the Bucharest Summit.
23. We are meeting with our seven Mediterranean partners today to review the significant progress in the Mediterranean Dialogue process since our first meeting in 2004, and discuss a further deepening of our relationship and how to achieve a fuller balance between the political and practical dimensions of our cooperation. The Mediterranean Dialogue has been elevated into a genuine partnership, including through improved liaison arrangements and a greater focus on specific objectives such as interoperability. We welcome the conclusion of Individual Cooperation Programmes with Egypt and Israel and the establishment of a Mediterranean Dialogue Trust Fund to assist Jordan with the disposal of old and unserviceable munitions. We appreciate the contributions made by those Mediterranean Dialogue nations supporting KFOR and Operation Active Endeavour.
24. Following the Riga Summit we opened up new opportunities to all our Mediterranean Dialogue partners, as well as to the four Gulf countries participating in our Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, to deepen their political dialogue and enhance their practical cooperation with the Alliance. We welcome their response, including to the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative, and are determined to further intensify our work together in this and other areas.

25. At the Riga Summit, we agreed to develop closer political and military relations and to strengthen NATO's ability to work effectively with interested Contact Countries who share our interests and values to address common security challenges. Since then, we have effectively met with non-NATO countries in various formats and for different political consultations. We very much welcome the important and concrete contribution by several of these partners alongside NATO Allies in Afghanistan. We look forward to further developing our practical cooperation with Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea and, as approved by the North Atlantic Council, other such interested partners.
26. NATO Allies place the highest value on the CFE regime and underscore the strategic importance of the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic Security. The CFE Treaty benefits all States Parties and Europe as a whole through its system of limitations, information sharing, and verification, by providing stability, unprecedented transparency, predictability and confidence concerning the military forces of its 30 States Parties.
27. We remain firmly committed to the CFE Treaty and wish to achieve the earliest possible entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation -- which is our common goal, and which would permit accession by new States Parties -- in a manner consistent with the Alliance's position of [principle](#) contained in paragraph 42 of the 2006 NATO Riga Summit Declaration, the final statement by Allies at the CFE Extraordinary Conference in Vienna and other Alliance statements reflecting subsequent developments. The Allies have taken careful note of concerns expressed by the Russian Federation about the conditions under which the Treaty is operating. Accordingly, we have pursued a multifaceted dialogue with the Russian Federation, including through US-Russia bilateral discussions, leading to constructive proposals for a way forward, which respects the integrity of the Treaty regime with all its elements. The way forward should address the legitimate interests and concerns of all Treaty partners. In this context, it would be a regrettable loss for all parties if the Russian Federation were to proceed with unilateral action which could undermine the viability of the CFE regime. We regret that the Russian President has signed legislation to "suspend" the Russian Federation's implementation of the CFE Treaty as of 12 December 2007.
28. We continue to pursue an intensified engagement on the basis of the parallel action package supported by all Allies to: resolve outstanding concerns of all States Parties; fulfil remaining commitments reflected in the 1999 CFE Final Act with its Annexes, including those related to the Republic of Moldova and Georgia; lay the basis for ratification of the Agreement on Adaptation by all 30 States Parties; and ensure full implementation of the Treaty by all States Parties. We urge the Russian Federation to continue to implement the Treaty while working cooperatively to resolve these complex issues, and to avoid steps that would undermine the long-term viability of the CFE regime and prospects for entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation.
29. We took note of progress in NATO's ongoing work on missile defence of populations and territory, including the implications for the Alliance of the planned United States missile defence system elements in Europe and the recent update on the developing missile threat. We look forward to completion of this work by the Bucharest Summit. We remain committed to consultations on missile defence in the NATO-Russia

Council, and urge the Russian Federation to engage actively with the United States and NATO to explore possibilities for a cooperative approach.

30. We reiterate that arms control and non-proliferation will continue to play a major role in NATO's concerted efforts to prevent the spread and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery. We noted today a framework report on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, which recommends areas for NATO to explore further where it might add value to efforts of other leading international fora; and broadening compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540. We look forward to completion of this review by the Bucharest Summit.
31. We also take the opportunity of our meeting today to again urge Iran to comply with UNSCRs 1737 and 1747 and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate in the Six-Party process and comply with UNSCR 1718.
32. At Riga our Heads of State and Government noted that Alliance security interests can be affected by the disruption of the flow of vital resources. They supported a coordinated, international effort to assess risks to energy infrastructures and to promote energy infrastructure security. With this in mind, they directed the Council in Permanent Session to consult on the most immediate risks in the field of energy security. We invite the Council in Permanent Session to complete its work on defining areas where NATO may add value to safeguard the security interests of the Allies and, upon request, assist national and international efforts, and on that basis to develop policies that will complement these existing efforts by the time of the Bucharest Summit.
33. Our Heads of State and Government at Riga endorsed work to improve protection of NATO's key information systems against cyber attacks. We expect that policies deriving from this work will be agreed by the time of the Bucharest Summit.
34. We are pleased by the progress that has been achieved in NATO's internal reform since our last meeting, and remain committed to this undertaking as an essential part of NATO's overall transformation. We encourage the Secretary General to continue his efforts to improve NATO's ability to manage a wide range of complex operational, capability development, partnership and strategic communications requirements. We look forward to further proposals in this important area by Bucharest.
35. The North Atlantic Alliance remains the basis for our collective defence as well as the essential transatlantic forum for security. We remain committed to playing our full role in the International Community's efforts to promote security and stability. At our meeting today we have taken decisions that will further enhance our capability to address mutual security concerns now and into the future. We have set a clear course to the NATO Summit in Bucharest next April and the continuing transformation of the Alliance.

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1. Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.