

Final statement

Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Foreign Ministers held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, on 7 December 2011

Issued on 07 Dec. 2011

1. At the Lisbon Summit last year, NATO Heads of State and Government adopted a new Strategic Concept that guides us in ensuring the Alliance's security in a changing world, against the full range of threats, with appropriate capabilities and a broadened network of partners. Our continuing efforts in Afghanistan, Kosovo and elsewhere, as well as our successfully concluded operation in Libya, demonstrate NATO's unique capabilities and our political will to take on difficult, but necessary missions. We pay tribute to the military and civilian personnel who have made and continue to make great sacrifices for our collective security. We acknowledge with appreciation the growing number of partners that contribute to NATO-led operations based on our shared interest in peace and stability.
2. This year, NATO answered the United Nations Security Council's call to protect the people of Libya, who at that time were under attack by their own government. Operation Unified Protector was a clear expression of our commitment to freedom and security. The operation was conducted effectively and with precision, involving many partners from the region and beyond, in a successful effort that saved countless lives. The future of Libya is now in the hands of the Libyan people.
3. In a challenging economic climate, we remain determined to ensure NATO's ability to meet the complex security challenges of the 21st century and to take forward the Alliance's reform process. Recalling our commitments in the Strategic Concept and the Lisbon Summit Declaration, and looking ahead to the next Summit in Chicago in May 2012, we have on this occasion focused on some of NATO's priorities.
4. We condemn in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and express our sympathy to the victims and their families.
5. We welcome the outcome of the recent Afghan-led Bonn Conference in support of a sovereign Afghanistan that engages with the International Community to secure its own future. We share the vision of a prosperous and democratic Afghanistan that lives in peace, while enjoying friendly relations with all of its neighbours. The commitment to an enduring engagement between Afghanistan and the International Community is vital to support the country through transition and beyond.
6. We also welcome the results of the Istanbul Conference on "Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia" which added impetus to efforts towards strengthening regional security and cooperation. We highly value this regional process, which contributes to building greater confidence and cooperation with the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan. A secure and stable Afghanistan can only be envisioned in a secure and stable region. We expect regional partners to support these efforts through strict adherence to principles of good neighbourly conduct.
7. The process of transition to full Afghan security responsibility by the end of 2014 is on track. Following President Karzai's recent announcement of the second tranche of areas to be transitioned, Afghan forces will soon have the lead role, with appropriate International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) support, for providing the security for around 50% of the Afghan population. We discussed the need to define the milestones to chart progress on transition and ISAF's move to a support role. Successful transition must be accompanied by further improvements in governance, including respect for human rights, strengthening the rule of law and intensifying the fight against corruption, as well as in development and civilian capacity building. The Afghan Government's determined leadership and active engagement, together with the International Community's continued commitment, are necessary to ensure lasting stability in Afghanistan.
8. The Alliance remains committed, as part of a broad effort by the International Community, to support Afghanistan beyond the completion of country-wide transition by the end of 2014. We reaffirm the Alliance's support for, and contributions to establishing the conditions for, an inclusive Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. We have initiated discussion on NATO's future role in Afghanistan post-2014 and we expect the Summit in Chicago to adopt the strategic plan which will provide key guidance in this regard. We have also discussed the further development, in consultation with the Afghan authorities, of NATO's Enduring Partnership with Afghanistan, signed at the Lisbon Summit in 2010. The Council will continue to take this work forward in preparation for the Chicago Summit.
9. We look forward to consulting with our partners tomorrow, whose support is critical to our joint endeavour in Afghanistan as transition proceeds.
10. NATO remains strongly committed to working with regional actors, including with Pakistan. We express our deep condolences to the people of Pakistan for the regrettable incident and the loss of lives of Pakistani military personnel on 26 November 2011. We encourage Pakistan to join Afghanistan in participating in the investigation now underway. We remain committed to strengthening our partnership and cooperation with

Pakistan, which will also serve to support the goal of a secure and stable Afghanistan in a secure and stable region.

11. We condemn the recent violence against the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). We reiterate our full support for KFOR, which continues to act carefully, firmly, and impartially to contribute to the maintenance of freedom of movement and a safe and secure environment for all people in Kosovo, in accordance with its United Nations mandate. We commend KFOR's coordination with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We urge all parties to exercise restraint and cooperate fully with all international actors on the ground to ensure freedom of movement without delay, including by removing roadblocks. We categorically reject the use of violence, including against KFOR, EULEX and other international actors. The Alliance and its KFOR Partners remain united, resolved, and resolute to support the development of a peaceful, stable, and multi-ethnic Kosovo. The present crisis requires moderation and dialogue to find a sustainable political solution. We welcome the agreement in principle reached between Belgrade and Pristina on 2 December 2011 on the EU-developed concept of integrated management for crossing points (IBM) as a constructive step forward. We call on both sides to implement the agreement expeditiously and in good faith. We stress that this agreement should promote the immediate restoration of freedom of movement in the northern part of Kosovo. We urge both sides to continue their constructive participation in the EU-facilitated talks in order to achieve sustainable solutions.
12. We will continue to work with our partners, building on our Berlin partnership decisions of April 2011, to further enhance these partnerships with a view to the Chicago Summit and beyond. We reflected on our longstanding and mutually beneficial partnerships with many countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, including the strategically important Western Balkans region, and in the Mediterranean region, in the Gulf region, and around the globe that have supported NATO politically and operationally. We applaud the significant operational support provided to NATO by our aspirant partners the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia.
13. We reaffirm our Open Door policy and our strong commitment to the Euro-Atlantic integration of our aspirant partners, in accordance with previous decisions taken at the Bucharest, Strasbourg-Kehl and Lisbon Summits. Democratic values, regional cooperation, and good neighbourly relations are important for lasting peace and stability. We welcome progress aspirant countries have made and we encourage them to continue to implement the necessary decisions and reforms to advance their Euro-Atlantic aspirations.
14. Significant political developments have taken place this year in North Africa and the Middle East. Against this background and in accordance with our partnership policy, we have agreed to further deepen our political dialogue and practical cooperation with members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. We have also agreed to promote, on a case-by-case basis, our dialogue and cooperation with other interested countries in these regions. In the spirit of the Berlin partnership decisions, we have tasked the Council to develop proposals for consideration at the Chicago Summit. We stand ready to consider, on a case-by-case basis, new requests from countries in these regions, including Libya, for partnership and cooperation with NATO, taking into account that the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative are natural frameworks for such requests. NATO's activities would focus primarily on security and defence sector reform, while taking into account other international efforts.
15. We recall the statement made by our Heads of State and Government at their Lisbon Summit, which reaffirmed that NATO-Russia cooperation remains of strategic importance. Despite differences on specific issues, including on Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and Russia's commitments of 2008, we share common security interests and face common challenges. Our cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) over the past year has developed in a number of areas. Afghanistan remains a priority and together we are supporting the Afghan Air Force and Ministry of the Interior through the NRC Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund. Our joint work on counter-narcotics, as well as on fighting terrorism and piracy, is producing positive results. The NRC Cooperative Airspace Initiative, which focuses on information exchange and coordination against acts of air terrorism, will shortly become operational. We will continue to build on these achievements and look for opportunities to enhance and deepen such cooperation. We are also engaged in improving trust and transparency in defence transformation, strategy, doctrines, military posture and military exercises. We want to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, and we will act accordingly, with the expectation of reciprocity from Russia. We look forward to discussing all these matters in the NRC, as well as missile defence.
16. We remain convinced that transparency gained through missile defence cooperation would further strengthen NATO-Russia relations. We have made clear that NATO's ballistic missile defence capability is defensive in nature and will not undermine Russia's strategic deterrent. While we therefore regret recent Russian statements on possible measures directed against NATO's missile defence system, we remain committed to exploring opportunities for missile defence cooperation with Russia, and welcome Russia's readiness for continued dialogue with NATO. We reaffirm that, as we develop and deploy the NATO missile defence capability, we remain committed to exploring jointly with Russia the potential for linking current and planned missile defence systems in mutually beneficial ways.

17. We remain committed to conventional arms control. We note the decisions in November 2011 of NATO CFE Allies to cease implementing certain CFE obligations with regard to the Russian Federation. These decisions were a considered response, in line with our previous statements, to the 2007 unilateral Russian "suspension" of its CFE obligations, which is not provided for by the Treaty. These decisions are reversible should the Russian Federation return to full implementation. We underscore that NATO CFE Allies will continue to implement fully their CFE obligations with respect to all other CFE States Parties. We remain prepared to work toward finding a solution to preserve, strengthen and modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe, based on key principles and commitments.
 18. We reviewed progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Summit decision to develop a NATO ballistic missile defence (BMD) capability to provide full coverage and protection for all NATO European populations, territory and forces against the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. It will operate under a NATO Command and Control system. Since the Lisbon Summit, several Allies have announced important contributions in support of NATO's missile defence system. These contributions, both direct and through the United States European Phased Adaptive Approach, reaffirm the bond between our nations to defend one another. We noted with satisfaction that work is on track to develop political-military arrangements in order to declare an Interim Capability by the time of the Chicago Summit.
 19. In the Strategic Concept, we underscored our commitment to ensuring that NATO has the full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against any threat to the safety of our population and the security of our territory. Today, we reviewed the initial findings of, and provided guidance on, the work underway in the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review. We look forward to the completion of the review in time for approval at the Chicago Summit.
 20. At our meeting today we have reviewed progress in implementing the Lisbon Summit decisions, discussed key security challenges facing the Alliance, and agreed on further measures to enhance the Alliance's operations and overall effectiveness. We look forward to the NATO Summit in Chicago, at which our Heads of State and Government will take further decisions to ensure that our Alliance remains an unparalleled community of freedom, peace, security and shared values.
1. Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.