

Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte

Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council

Final Communiqué

NATO Headquarters, Brussels, December 9, 2004

Today, we reviewed progress in implementing the Istanbul Summit decisions, discussed the key security challenges facing the Alliance, and agreed on measures to enhance Alliance operations. We reaffirm the enduring value of the transatlantic link and of NATO as the basis for our collective defence and the essential forum for security consultation between Europe and North America, to defend our shared security and common values. We strongly condemn terrorism, whatever its motivations or manifestations, and will fight it together as long as necessary.

Contributing to peace, stability and democracy in Afghanistan, through the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, remains the Alliance's key priority. We welcome the progress already made towards implementing our decision to expand ISAF's presence into the West of the country and are resolved to accelerate this expansion to support the Afghan Government to meet the challenges of the parliamentary elections scheduled for next Spring. As with the 9 October presidential elections, we also decided to provide additional support for the parliamentary elections. Our engagement, within ISAF's mandate, and in cooperation with other international organisations and Operation Enduring Freedom, is essential to assisting and encouraging the Afghan Government to enhance the security of the Afghan people and confront the challenges posed by narco-trafficking, by insurgents and by the disarming of all local militias, while pursuing reconstruction, institution-building and national reconciliation. We stand ready to continue this engagement after the present Bonn process.

Kosovo has entered a critical period in its evolution. We urge all of Kosovo's communities to participate in its institutions and to take their share of responsibility for building a better, common future. Kosovo, and especially the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, must make concrete progress to meet the standards set out by the international community; this progress will be reviewed next year. As the security environment remains fragile, we have agreed that KFOR will maintain its operational capabilities until we assess that improved security and political circumstances allow for change. A robust KFOR will continue to contribute effectively to a secure, stable and multi-ethnic Kosovo on the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. We will also continue to cooperate closely with other actors from the international community, in particular UNMIK, the OSCE and the European Union. We agree that NATO should remain engaged not only operationally in the region, but politically as well, including through participation in the Contact Group Plus.

As we agreed in Istanbul, we remain united in our support for the Iraqi people and offer full cooperation to the Iraqi Interim Government as it seeks to strengthen

internal security and prepare the way to national elections in 2005. In accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546, and at the request of the Iraqi Interim Government, we are helping the Government by providing training and assisting with the equipping of its security forces, so that Iraq can assume full responsibility for its own security as soon as possible. Our mission is distinct from, yet complementary to, other international efforts. We have already begun training both in and outside of the country, and have today agreed to enhance our assistance. This enhanced support will include assisting the Government with the establishment of their Training, Education and Doctrine Centre near Baghdad, and coordinating the offers of equipment by NATO nations and other countries in response to Iraqi requests. We continue to support Poland in its leadership of the multinational division in south central Iraq.

NATO's long-term commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina remains undiminished. Our SFOR mission in the country, the Alliance's first-ever peacekeeping operation, has now reached a successful conclusion. The European Union's assumption of the main peace stabilisation role with its Operation Althea, based on the Berlin+ arrangements, is a milestone in the developing NATO-EU relations. A substantial NATO HQ Sarajevo is providing advice on defence reform, as well as undertaking its remaining operational supporting tasks in coordination with the EU as previously outlined.

We reaffirm our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all the countries in the Western Balkans and remain committed to the development of a peaceful, stable and democratic region, fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures. These countries must continue to cooperate in their own region and promote good-neighbourly relations, find mutually acceptable solutions and reach agreements on outstanding issues. They have to assume ownership of the reform process and build enduring multi-ethnic democracies, combat organised crime and corruption, and firmly establish the rule of law. They must also cooperate fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), including bringing to justice in The Hague all those who are indicted by the Tribunal, notably Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, as well as Ante Gotovina, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1503 and 1534. In this context, we are deeply concerned by the most recent assessment provided to the United Nations Security Council by the Prosecutor of the ICTY on the level of cooperation she is receiving from the countries concerned.

We urge Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro to make further progress in meeting the established conditions for membership in the Partnership for Peace (PfP). We continue to believe that improvements in security and law enforcement structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as called for in Istanbul, are required. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro have made some progress since Istanbul on defence reform, neither country is fulfilling its international obligations to cooperate fully with the ICTY. We share the concerns recently expressed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the continued failure by those in the Republika Srpska to fulfil its obligations, including under the Dayton/Paris Accords. While we remain ready to

pursue a political dialogue with both countries on all aspects of our relationship and to include them in selected PfP activities, we will consider their applications for membership in PfP after they have met the established conditions.

We welcome the progress made by Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ in implementing their Annual National Programmes under the Membership Action Plan, and encourage them to continue pursuing the reforms necessary to progress towards NATO membership.

We are grateful to our Partner countries for their continued contribution to our operations. We welcome the response by many of our Partners to the new opportunities for cooperation with NATO agreed at the Istanbul Summit, including the Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building, as well as the progress made on concluding Individual Partnership Action Plans. We welcome the appointment by the Secretary General of a Special Representative for Central Asia and the Caucasus and progress towards appointing NATO Liaison Officers in those regions. We want to further strengthen the Euro-Atlantic Partnership and look forward to the first EAPC Security Forum in Sweden in May 2005 as an important newstep in our cooperation.

We are determined to build upon the increasing political dialogue and greater practical focus of NATO-Russia cooperation in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council. We encourage Russia's early accession to the PfP Status of Forces Agreement. We welcome agreement on the NRC Action Plan on Terrorism and Russia's support to Operation Active Endeavour, NATO's maritime operation in the Mediterranean aimed at helping to deter, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorism.

We reiterate our commitment to the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of European security and to the early entry into force of the Adapted Treaty, which would permit accession by new States Parties. We recall that fulfilment of the remaining Istanbul commitments on the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova will create the conditions for Allies and other States Parties to move forward on ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty. Given the lack of progress in 2004 on withdrawal of Russian military forces from the Republic of Moldova it is essential that efforts be intensified to complete the withdrawal as soon as possible. We urge the resumption of substantive negotiations between Georgia and the Russian Federation to resolve the outstanding issues related to their 17 November 1999 Istanbul Joint Statement.

We attach particular importance to relations between NATO and Ukraine as reaffirmed in Istanbul and are closely following developments in the country. We call on all parties to move quickly to implement the reform of the electoral law passed by the Verkhovna Rada and signed by President Kuchma on 8 December and to ensure that the re-running of the second round of the presidential elections on 26 December will be free and fair, and that its outcome accurately reflects the will of the people of Ukraine without interference into its internal affairs. We support

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

the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and call on all sides to avoid violence and to promote democracy. The Ukrainian authorities have a special responsibility in this respect.

Yesterday we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Mediterranean Dialogue and held the first-ever ministerial level meeting with our Mediterranean partners. We welcome, and share, their interest in establishing a more ambitious and expanded partnership, by deepening our political consultations and practical cooperation in a spirit of joint ownership and inclusiveness. We appreciate the interest of several Mediterranean partners in supporting Operation Active Endeavour.

We welcome the growing interest that a number of countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council have shown in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. We look forward to building relations with interested countries in a spirit of joint ownership, and to developing and implementing with them work plans focusing on those areas where NATO can add value, on the basis of our agreement at Istanbul.

The support of our parliaments remains essential for the implementation of the Alliance's agenda. We applaud the joint meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in plenary session and the North Atlantic Council in Permanent Session in Venice in November.

At the Istanbul Summit, the Alliance's leaders laid out a broad programme of transformation. We welcome the ongoing work to carry it forward, including through improvement of NATO management and funding arrangements. We are also grateful to the Government of Belgium for taking the lead in the construction of the new NATO Headquarters, which will provide a fitting venue to carry forward the work of the Alliance into the future.