

Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte

NATO – Russia Council

Informal meeting of the NATO-Russia Council at the level of Foreign

Ministers: Chairman's statement

NATO Headquarters, Brussels, April 2, 2004

On 2 April 2004, Foreign Ministers of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) met in Brussels for the first time in an enlarged format "at 27". Ministers welcomed the participation of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. They reiterated the adherence of all NRC member states to the goals, principles and commitments contained in the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security, and in the Rome Declaration, as well as in past decisions taken in the NRC framework.

The NRC has evolved into a productive mechanism for consultation, consensus building, co-operation, joint decision and joint action. Ministers welcomed this progress, noting with particular satisfaction concrete steps that have been taken across the full spectrum of tasks defined in the Rome Declaration. They reaffirmed their determination to continue to work together against common threats and risks to their security. They looked forward to the contributions the new NRC member states would make to this work, and expressed their confidence that the enlarged Council would continue, in the spirit of the Rome Declaration, to elevate NATO-Russia relations to a new quality.

Ministers strongly condemned the 11 March 2004 attacks in Madrid and other recent terrorist attacks. They expressed their deepest sympathies to the people of Spain, in particular to the families of those killed and to those who were wounded, as well as to others who have been victimised by the scourge of terrorism. They underscored their common cause in the struggle against terrorism and their determination to intensify NRC co-operation in this area.

In the framework of the continuous political dialogue envisioned in the Rome Declaration, Foreign Ministers exchanged views on the situation in Kosovo. They condemned the recent upsurge in violence, and expressed concern over the role played by extremists, in particular through destructive actions directed against ethnic minorities and cultural sites, and called upon relevant authorities to take measures against those responsible. They welcomed the recent decision by NATO to send reinforcements, and the steps taken by the Russian Federation to defuse tensions and alleviate the humanitarian conditions of refugees. NRC members called upon leaders in the region to continue to take concrete action to maintain peace and security and create the conditions necessary for a multi-ethnic Kosovo, and expressed their determination to continue to encourage political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on the basis of UNSCR 1244. Ministers also exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan and other pressing topics of mutual concern.

Ministers reaffirmed the 4 June 2003 Statement agreed by NRC Foreign Ministers in Madrid, and they recalled NATO's position on providing political assurances of restraint. They also reaffirmed adherence to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) as a cornerstone of European security, and those NRC members who are States Parties to the Treaty reaffirmed their determination to fulfil the commitments reflected in the Final Act of the 1999 Conference of the States Parties to the CFE Treaty. Calling upon all CFE States Parties to promote achievement of this shared goal, the NRC agreed to continue to work co-operatively toward ratification by all the States Parties and entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation of the CFE Treaty, which would permit accession by non-CFE states. Ministers welcomed the approach of the four non-CFE member states of the NRC, who have stated their intention to request accession to the adapted CFE Treaty upon its entry into force, and agreed that their accession would provide an important additional contribution to European stability and security.