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**at the 14<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council, 5 December 2006, Brussels**

Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very much pleased to address the 14<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council today. Let me first express my sincere thanks to Minister de Gucht. Belgium's Chairmanship-in-Office has further advanced the cause of enhancing the cooperation between our organizations.

NATO attaches great importance to its co-operation with the OSCE and is committed to defend our shared values. We have largely complementary responsibilities and common interests, both functionally and geographically.

Today's security challenges – terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failing states – far exceed the ability of any individual nation or institution. They require the broadest possible international coalition, and the most comprehensive set of instruments – including political, economic and military tools. And both NATO and the OSCE have important roles to play.

Like the OSCE, NATO has also embraced change and transformation. A week ago, NATO's Heads of State and Government met at Riga to chart the course for the Atlantic Alliance in the near future. The decisions they took at Riga will not only make NATO a more effective organisation, but should also lead to closer cooperation and coordination between NATO and other major international institutions. Allow me, therefore, to very briefly set out the main decisions of our recent Riga Summit.

First, we reviewed our operations and missions, and in particular the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan is and will remain NATO's key priority. All 26 Allies are

committed to a long-term role, together with other international actors, to support the Afghan people in building a prosperous, democratic country, free from terror and drugs, providing for its own security, and at peace with its neighbours.

At Riga, our Heads of State and Government pledged to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources, and flexibility needed to ensure the mission's continued success. At the same time, they made it clear that there can be no security in Afghanistan without development, and no development without security. That is why Riga stressed the need for a comprehensive approach by the international community. Our Heads of State and Government have tasked the International Staff of NATO to develop proposals for the establishment of a Contact Group for Afghanistan, to ensure such a coordinated approach. We welcome the fact that the OSCE has made Afghanistan a Partner for Cooperation.

In Kosovo, a robust UN-mandated KFOR presence has been crucial in helping to maintain security and promoting the political process. NATO will remain ready to respond quickly to any threats to the safe and secure environment and we will continue to be coordinating our activities with the OSCE, but also with the UN and the EU. I deeply believe that, as in Afghanistan, success in Kosovo will depend on a concerted effort.

Second, we made significant progress in Riga in several important political areas. We sent a strong signal of encouragement to those countries who wish to become members of NATO. The door to NATO remains open and we will continue to assist those who seek membership to walk through that door as soon as possible. In this context, we welcomed the efforts of Albania, Croatia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\* to prepare themselves for the responsibilities and obligations of membership. At our next Summit in 2008, the Alliance intends to extend further invitations to those countries that meet NATO's performance based standards, and are able to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability. We welcome the Intensified Dialogue processes with Ukraine and Georgia on membership issue and the full range of their reform efforts. In other words, NATO's enlargement process will continue to play its part in consolidating Europe as a common security space from which wars will no longer start – a fundamental objective that we share with the OSCE.

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\* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

We also opened a new chapter in our policy of partnership. We invited Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia to join the Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. This will be another major step towards finishing Europe's unfinished business, by bringing Southeast Europe into the European mainstream. However, in taking this step we notably expect Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate fully with the ICTY.

At Riga, we also launched a Training Cooperation Initiative for our partners across the Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. And we will be opening new opportunities for closer cooperation with countries from the Asia-Pacific region, with whom we share a common interest in upholding security and stability.

Riga was an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership. The Allies also underlined their determination to further deepen the NATO-Russia partnership and exploit the full potential of the NATO-Russia Council.

And among the Heads of State and Government there was broad consensus on the urgency of giving greater substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership.

Third, we took a number of decisions in Riga to advance our defence transformation, and increase the capacity and effectiveness of our forces. The NATO Response Force has now reached its full operation capability, and will enable us to meet new challenges even more rapidly. Our strategic airlift capabilities will be significantly enhanced with a groundbreaking agreement to pool C-17 airlift assets.

Fourth, our Heads of State and Government in Riga have reaffirmed their commitment to the CFE Treaty as a cornerstone of European security and reiterated their position on moving forward on the ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty, when the remaining Istanbul Commitments are fulfilled.

In sum, the Riga Summit underlined NATO's ability and determination to provide security in new ways and in new places. We are stepping up our engagement in Afghanistan; we are deepening our political engagement across and beyond Europe; and we are modernizing our military capabilities to project stability in a new security environment. An Alliance thus transformed will be a unique source of stability and security for the benefit of the entire international community. It will also be a stronger partner for the OSCE in tackling a range of concrete security challenges and in pursuing of our common interests and shared values.