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**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT CHAIRMAN OF NATO'S
CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL ARMAMENTS DIRECTORS**

Three important meetings have just been successfully held at NATO Headquarters this week, which testify to the important role being played by the armaments community of NATO and of Partner countries in the new security environment. The first two meetings were attended by delegations from Partner countries.

On November 4, NATO's Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) held a joint meeting with delegations from 15 Partner nations - Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Ukraine. NIAG is developing a defence industrial dialogue with Partners, and a practical example of this was the agreement reached to pursue a first joint NIAG prefeasibility study with Partners on "Fire Resistance for future Naval Ships". The study, which should commence in February 1998, will call upon industrial experts from 6 Partner and 9 NATO nations, and will be carried out by three technical teams under the Chairmanship of France, with a Deputy Chairman from Poland.

The following day, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana gave the opening address to a meeting of NATO's Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD) with Partner Delegations from Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, the Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Following a review of the new NATO, and its role in Euro - Atlantic security, Mr. Solana praised the armaments community of the allies and of their Partners for their important contribution to the new missions of the Alliance, and to the enhancement of Partnership for Peace. The meeting discussed a number of initiatives, including the identification of possible small - scale armaments cooperation projects, to be proposed by the Partners themselves, and developed within the armaments structures of the Alliance.

On November 6, the National Armaments Directors of NATO member countries, under the Chairmanship of the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Support, Mr. Norman W. Ray, met in plenary session in their customary Autumn Conference. Two main subjects dominated their discussion - Alliance Ground Surveillance and the NATO Armaments Review.

Member nations have been working actively together to explore the possibilities for an ambitious cooperative programme to provide a NATO - wide Ground Surveillance Capability. Both for crisis management and for the political and military conduct of operations generally (including peacekeeping), military commanders need an effective picture of the ground situation, complementary to the one that AWACS provides for the air picture.

As a result of the meeting, Armaments Directors have directed their Provisional Project Structure to intensively search for fresh concepts and acquisition options to meet the complete Alliance Ground Surveillance capability, and to report their findings to the April 1998 CNAD meeting. In so doing, CNAD reaffirmed the intention of nations to find a successful way ahead to support the Ministerial decision to pursue a minimum essential NATO -owned and operated core capability supplemented by interoperable national assets.

National Armaments Directors are in the process of conducting a "NATO Armaments Review", aimed at assessing the future role of the Alliance in armaments - related matters. Their objective is to ensure that NATO's armaments community remains fully responsive to the Alliance's new missions and military requirements in the new security environment. The CNAD approved a report concluding the first phase of the study, with agreement to focus their armaments activities in NATO more sharply on the key military requirements of the Alliance. They also intend to place yet more emphasis on ensuring broad based interoperability among Alliance forces, and between Alliance forces and Partners. In the second Phase of the study, to be completed by November 1998, the detailed mechanisms and processes required to bring these agreements into effect will be determined.

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