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MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THE NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 18 DECEMBER 2001

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1.   The Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization met in Ministerial Session in Brussels on 18 December 2001.

2.   In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States and the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, our defence planning work takes on a new importance. We reaffirmed our commitment to collective defence and the importance of the Alliance having the capabilities necessary to ensure that we can respond effectively to any aggression, or threat of aggression, against our nations, as well as dealing with other crises that may arise.

3.   In reviewing Allies' defence plans, we noted that the force structures and capabilities of Allies are generally sufficient to deal with possible conventional military attacks against Alliance territory. However, as set out in NATO's Strategic Concept, and as borne out by recent events, our forces also need to be able to deal effectively with a wider range of challenges, which may involve the deployment of sizeable forces outside Allied territory. In this respect, as well as in their ability to deal with the risks of a proliferation of NBC weapons and their delivery means, the forces of most Allies still have significant shortfalls. Measures to address these shortfalls have been identified in the Defence Capabilities Initiative and in our NATO defence planning process. However, there is now an urgent need to make more progress in the development of more deployable forces to undertake the tasks we have set ourselves in the Ministerial Guidance last year.

4.   We are determined to ensure that our forces are developed in ways that meet these challenges. To this end we shall vigorously pursue the necessary restructuring and modernisation processes which are currently under way. In part, we intend to achieve this through more effective use of defence resources, including greater use of multinational cooperation. But we also acknowledge that in some cases more resources will be needed to turn this ambition into reality, and we will make the utmost endeavours to ensure that these resources are made available.

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5.   Developing Alliance capabilities is also relevant in the context of the success of possible future EU-led operations. For each of the nations concerned, both NATO and EU requirements will have to be met from a single set of forces. We have also taken account in the defence review of forces and capabilities that Allies could make available for EU-led operations. These commitments appear entirely compatible and consistent with Alliance force plans and should therefore not adversely affect the Alliance's ability to carry out its missions.

6.   At our Nuclear Planning Group meeting, we reviewed the status of NATO's nuclear forces and addressed a number of related issues. Noting the fundamentally political purpose to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war, we reaffirmed the principles underpinning these forces as set out in the Alliance's Strategic Concept. Given new security challenges of an unprecedented nature, we have particular reason to reaffirm our complete trust in, and steadfast commitment to, the strength and validity of the transatlantic link in our Alliance, which guarantees equal security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. We emphasised again that nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO continue to provide an essential political and military link between the European and North American members of the Alliance.

7.   We appreciated information by the United States Secretary of Defense on ongoing exchanges between the United States and the Russian Federation on a new strategic framework. We fully support developments that are designed to foster cooperation based on shared interests and to enhance strategic stability and non-proliferation cooperation. We welcome the results of President Bush's 13-14 November meetings with President Putin and expressed our expectation that the atmosphere of confidence and cooperation in matters of global security and strategic stability fully pervade the Alliance's relationship with Russia, including the exchanges on nuclear weapons issues.

8.   Deterrence and defence along with arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation will continue to play a major role in the achievement of the Alliance's security objectives. We welcomed President Bush's decision to reduce over the next decade the number of U.S. operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons to between 1,700-2,200 and President Putin's statement that Russia intended to reduce its strategic nuclear weapons "in kind". We reaffirmed our determination to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to contribute to the implementation of the conclusions of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. We continue to support the existing moratoria on nuclear testing.

9.   In these times of heightened security awareness, we take pride in the outstanding safety and security record regarding NATO's nuclear weapons. We reaffirmed our standing commitment to the highest standards of safety and security of these weapons and emphasized, again, that NATO's nuclear weapons are safe and secure in every aspect.

10.   We expressed great satisfaction with the encouraging progress in exchanges with the Russian Federation on nuclear weapons issues under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, in particular on nuclear-related confidence and security building measures proposed by NATO. We agreed that a near-term focus of these

discussions on nuclear weapons safety and security issues is in our mutual interest. Agreement by both sides on the value of these exchanges and on the desirability of meetings of nuclear experts is a constructive development towards improved transparency, predictability and growing mutual trust between NATO and Russia in this important field.