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PRESS COMMUNIQUE PR/CP(2001)171

For Immediate Release
18 December 2001

**MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL
IN DEFENCE MINISTERS SESSION HELD IN BRUSSELS
ON DECEMBER 18 2001**

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. The North Atlantic Council met in Defence Ministers Session in Brussels on 18 December 2001.
2. We concentrated on the adaptation of the Alliance's defence capabilities to changes in the security environment, particularly in the light of the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September, and the situation in the Balkans, and have issued separate statements on these matters. We also discussed the status of work on the European Security and Defence Identity and NATO-EU relations. Our joint efforts in the Balkans have shown that close cooperation brings considerable benefits. Important work remains to be done on the arrangements for NATO support to EU-led operations in accordance with the decisions taken at the 1999 NATO Washington Summit and subsequent Ministerial meetings. We remain determined to make progress on all the various aspects of the NATO-EU relationship, noting the need to find solutions satisfactory to all Allies on the issue of participation by non-EU European Allies. We note the commitment of the EU to finalise the modalities for consultation with Canada and for its participation in EU-led operations.
3. We also assessed the efforts to improve Alliance capabilities through the Defence Capabilities Initiative. While there has been some progress as a result of DCI, the full potential of the initiative has not yet been realised and we are accordingly determined to continue to give it our close personal attention along with the continuing adaptation of Alliance structures and procedures.
4. We exchanged views on missile defence and the global strategic environment. We took note of US and Russian statements that the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty presents no threat to the Russian Federation. The need to maintain strategic stability remains critically important. We welcomed that both sides have worked intensely and are continuing to do so to create a new strategic relationship based on

mutual interests and cooperation across a broad range of political, economic, and security issues in order to contribute to global security and strategic stability. In this context, we welcomed the movement toward new, lower levels of offensive nuclear weapons made clear in both US and Russian statements. We look forward to continued consultations with the United States on these issues and welcome continued work within the Alliance on theater missile defence.

5. We also discussed NATO's co-operation activities including preparations for enlargement, the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and our relationships with Ukraine and Russia. We reaffirm that a confident and cooperative partnership between the Allies and Russia, based on shared democratic values and the shared commitment to a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, as enshrined in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, is essential for stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We therefore welcome the decision of Foreign Ministers on 7 December to give new impetus and substance to the partnership between NATO Allies and Russia, with the goal of creating a new NATO-Russia Council to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action at 20. To that end, the North Atlantic Council in Permanent Session has been tasked to explore and develop, in the coming months, building on the Founding Act, new effective mechanisms for consultation, cooperation, joint decision, and coordinated/joint action. NATO's fundamental objectives remain as set out in the Washington Treaty, under which provisions NATO will maintain its prerogative of independent decision and action at 19 on all issues consistent with its obligations and responsibilities. As Defence Ministers, we are determined to enhance the NATO-Russia partnership in the defence and military field.

6. At their Prague Summit in November next year, our Heads of State and Government will launch the next round of NATO enlargement. We encourage the nine aspirant countries to press forward their preparations under the Membership Action Plan process, which include defence reform and improvements to military capability. Meanwhile NATO will undertake its own internal preparations for the admission of new members, on which the Council in Permanent Session is invited to report at our next meeting. We will continue the MAP process beyond the current cycle.

7. We fully agree with the statements made on these and other matters by our Foreign Minister colleagues earlier this month.