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COMMUNIQUE  
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**MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL  
IN DEFENCE MINISTERS SESSION  
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON MONDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2003**

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE**

1. The North Atlantic Council met in Defence Ministers session on 1 December 2003. Defence Ministers and Representatives of the Allies were joined by their colleagues from the countries invited to join the Alliance.
2. We are at an important juncture in the evolution of the Alliance. We are embarked on new operations, are developing greater capabilities and are preparing to admit seven new members. Against this background of continuing transformation, we discussed a wide range of matters of common interest, and concentrated on ongoing Alliance operations and crisis management issues, and progress in transforming NATO's military capabilities. We also discussed what must be accomplished in the defence field before the Istanbul Summit and gave direction for the necessary work.
3. Our military capabilities must be able to respond rapidly and effectively, wherever the Alliance decides, to the challenges to our security, from wherever they may come, including the dangers posed by terrorism. We reviewed the valuable work that has been accomplished since the Prague Summit to this end, in particular progress in establishing the NATO Response Force, implementing the new command structure, and meeting the Prague Capabilities Commitment. The Alliance took special note of the establishment today of the NATO multinational Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defence Battalion. Increasing the deployability and usability of our forces is essential if we are to continue to fulfil our operational commitments. We have issued a separate statement regarding our discussions of these and other aspects of the ongoing transformation of our military capabilities.
4. We are deeply grateful to all those who have taken part in NATO-led operations and offer our sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have died in the line of duty. We also express our sympathy to all the victims of terrorism and resolutely condemn it in all its forms and wherever it occurs.

News and information is routinely placed on the NATO website. This includes audio files, transcripts and high resolution photographs, which are posted as soon as possible after events of media interest. Check the 'What's New' file.  
Nouvelles et informations sont régulièrement affichées sur le site Web de l'OTAN, sous la forme de fichiers audio, de transcriptions et de photographies destinées à la publication. Elles sont disponibles le plus rapidement possible après les événements présentant un intérêt pour les médias. Cliquer sur "Quoi de neuf?"

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5. In Afghanistan, the Alliance now leads the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under its UN mandate. This operation demonstrates our readiness to deploy forces wherever the Alliance decides, to ensure our common security. Our aim is to assist in the emergence of a united, sovereign country, integrated into the international community, including by assisting the Afghan Transitional Authority in the maintenance of security and stability and in the electoral process according to the Bonn Process. We decided on the progressive expansion of ISAF beyond Kabul in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, including through temporary deployments for specific tasks and limited in size and duration, provided all military conditions, and requirements for the Kabul mission, are met. We will continue to address the scope of such specific tasks. We welcome the German deployment of a pilot Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), under ISAF, in Kunduz. Expecting that the establishment of additional PRTs will follow, we consider that ISAF could move to assume military command of such PRTs where consistent with military requirements and capabilities. Achievement of these objectives will be subject to consultations with and contributions from PRT framework nations and the provision of the required assets, including for Kabul International Airport. We will review NATO's contribution to stabilization efforts in Afghanistan on a regular basis. It is necessary to ensure close co-ordination and co-operation between ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom, and also with the Afghan National Army. Our forces will also have to work closely with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan and other international organisations on the ground, including the EU.

6. The Alliance has made indispensable contributions to peace and stability in the Balkans, and we remain fully committed to these goals. In light of significant progress in Bosnia-Herzegovina, SFOR will reduce to a deterrent force of around 7,000 troops by next June. Over the coming months, we will consider how to adjust the operation further, including its possible termination by the end of 2004 and a transition possibly to a new NATO military liaison and advisory mission (NATO Headquarters Sarajevo) and to a new EU mission within the framework of the Berlin Plus arrangements; in this context, the NATO Military Authorities, keeping the Military Committee informed, should consult with their EU counterparts on Bosnia-Herzegovina, in accordance with agreed texts and procedures.

7. In Kosovo, however, a large NATO force remains essential. KFOR continues to play an essential role in contributing to the maintenance of security and stability. It will be restructured but will not be reduced below 17,500 troops for the time being. NATO and the EU have agreed a concerted approach for the Western Balkans. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, NATO's support to the EU's Operation Concordia, on which NATO has conducted its preliminary lessons learned process, successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of the Berlin Plus arrangements. This confirms the value of close NATO-EU cooperation more generally. In the agreed framework of the NATO-EU strategic

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<sup>1</sup> Turkey recognises the former Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

partnership, we will work to develop further our cooperation where necessary. NATO's Partners play a crucial role in NATO-led operations, which is but one instance of the importance of our Partnerships for Euro-Atlantic security.

8. Operation Active Endeavour continues to make a significant and effective contribution to the fight against terrorism in the Mediterranean. To date the mission has hailed over 36,000 vessels, and has escorted almost 350 Allied civilian ships safely through the Straits of Gibraltar.

9. The Alliance continues to support Poland in its leadership of a multinational division in Iraq. The North Atlantic Council will review NATO's contribution to the stabilization efforts in Iraq on a regular basis.

10. Looking ahead to the Istanbul Summit, we have directed that:

- the NATO Response Force should continue to be developed with a view to achieving initial operational capability as soon as possible but not later than October, 2004, and full operational capability not later than October, 2006; and to enable the effective use of this capability, measures should be pursued to increase the Alliance's ability, on the basis of thorough preparations, to prepare and launch operations quickly when the Alliance decides to act;
- work should continue on the NATO multinational Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear defence battalion in order to achieve full operational capability from July 2004 onwards, together with the development of the NATO Response Force;
- the implementation of the new command structure should continue according to the agreed implementation plan, resulting in a more effective and efficient structure. We look forward to achieving significant reductions in the peacetime establishments of the new command structure;
- work to implement both the national and multinational aspects of the Prague Capabilities Commitment should continue as a matter of urgency with a particular focus on deployability and sustainability, and on addressing shortages in combat support and combat service support;
- work on increasing the usability and deployability of the Allies' forces, including the development of output targets for both, and on the force generation process should continue as a matter of particular priority;

- reports on these and other relevant aspects of efforts to transform NATO's military capabilities should be provided to the Heads of State and Government in Istanbul;
- work should continue on the protection of deployed NATO forces against theatre ballistic missiles and on examining options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and populations centres against the full range of missile threats in an effective and efficient way through an appropriate mix of political and defence efforts, along with deterrence;
- work on strengthening Partnership for Peace should continue to promote defence reform and transformation and the development of the capabilities necessary to improve the interoperability of Partner forces with NATO across the full range of missions which Partners and Allies might carry out together;
- the review of NATO agencies agreed at the Prague Summit is to be completed in time for a final report to Ministers in December 2004.

11. We wish to thank Lord Robertson of Port Ellen warmly for his leadership role in guiding NATO's transformation. We are confident that the new Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, will continue to carry forward NATO's transformation, and build on the Alliance's record of success, and pledge our full support to him.