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FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. The Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation met in Ministerial session in Brussels on 13th June.

2. We attach great importance to the first meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers session later today with all 16 NATO nations represented. We confirmed our commitment to collective defence planning as an essential element of the Alliance. We shall continue to develop Alliance defence planning which contributes to the adaptation of our military capabilities to undertake the full range of the Alliance's missions.

3. The effectiveness with which Operation Joint Endeavour has been conducted has underlined the benefits of long-standing and close cooperation as a major contributory factor to the cohesion and military effectiveness of the Alliance. We applauded the speed and efficiency with which NATO forces were assembled and deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia following the UN mandate authorising the establishment of the Implementation Force (IFOR). We noted also with satisfaction the important part played by Partnership for Peace in facilitating the integration of the many non-NATO forces from Partner countries into IFOR.

4. The events in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere have underlined the need for the Alliance to be prepared for the full range of its missions. We are therefore determined to ensure that our individual and collective military capabilities are properly prepared to carry out these missions, drawing on lessons learned from IFOR. In this context we pledged ourselves to strengthen the transatlantic link, as an indispensable element of European security, and reiterated our commitment to support a more coherent and effective contribution by all European Allies to the missions and activities of the Alliance.

5. Alliance forces have been significantly reduced and re-oriented since the end of the Cold War along the lines mapped out in the Strategic Concept. The adaptation of NATO's force posture will continue, in response to the changed strategic circumstances. The Alliance's force planning system will have an important role in this process. Against this background we adopted a new set of Force Goals as planning targets for our forces and capabilities. We agreed that nations should endeavour to adjust their force plans and priorities to meet them.

6. This year's Force Goals have put greater emphasis than in the past on capabilities needed for the full range of Alliance tasks, including new missions. Particular attention was given to enhancements to the Alliance's ability to move its forces within and between theatres and to sustain them once they are deployed. Such capabilities are essential both for the Alliance's collective defence and for new missions which require the capability for flexible deployments for defence, peacekeeping and crisis management and the capability to counter the risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Based on the work of the Senior Defence Group on Proliferation, we have directed the preparation of new force goals, for our approval in December, to deal more effectively with those risks.

7. Defence planning plays a central role in the adaptation of Alliance military capabilities. We therefore had an initial discussion on Ministerial Guidance 1997 which will guide preparations of this next major element in our planning process. We will review progress in this work at our next meeting.

8. We reaffirm that the fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear forces is political: to preserve peace and prevent

coercion. In the light of the changing security environment in Europe, NATO's nuclear forces have been substantially reduced, they are no longer targeted against anyone and the readiness of NATO's dual-capable aircraft has been recently adapted. We reiterate our judgement that NATO's current nuclear posture will, for the foreseeable future, continue to meet the requirements of the Alliance. In that regard, we reaffirm that nuclear forces continue to fulfill an indispensable and unique role in Alliance strategy and that the presence of US nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO provides an essential and enduring political and military link between the European and the North American members of the Alliance.

9. We welcomed the United States ratification of START II as an important step towards a further equitable reduction in strategic nuclear systems and urge the Russian Federation to ratify the agreement at the earliest possible moment. Implementation of START II will serve the interests of all countries including Russia, enhance strategic stability by removing vestiges of past nuclear confrontation, and pave the way for possible further reductions. We reiterated our support for the assistance that has been provided by several NATO countries for the removal and dismantlement of weapons of mass destruction in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. In this context, we welcomed the recent announcement that all nuclear weapons have been transferred from the territory of Ukraine for dismantlement, in accordance with the US-Russia-Ukraine Trilateral Statement signed in Moscow in January 1994.

10. We expressed our full support to early agreement on a universal and verifiable zero-yield Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcomed presentations by the United States and the United Kingdom on their plans for assuring the safety and reliability of their nuclear weapons under a CTBT.