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Europe's New South

Speech by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at the "Croatia Summit 2007"

Mr. Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by saying that I am most honoured, and very pleased, with the opportunity to deliver the keynote address at the "Croatia Summit 2007" meeting. "Europe's New South" is a very fitting title indeed. It reflects the self-confidence of a region that has gone through a lot of agony and suffering, and yet never gave up the hope that, eventually, there would be a brighter future.

"Europe's New South" is also a bold political statement. It signals the intention of the countries in this region to move from the margins of Europe right into the mainstream. And I have no doubt that they have both the determination and the ability to succeed.

The positive change we are now witnessing throughout the entire Southeast European region is truly remarkable. Today, all across this region, countries are moving away from radicalism and nationalism, and opting for cooperation and integration. The proverbial "Balkan Ghosts" have been exorcised.

NATO has played its full part in promoting this positive momentum. For almost one and a half decades, the Atlantic Alliance has been strongly engaged to help bring peace and stability to this part of Europe. Over time, as the situation improved, the nature of NATO's engagement changed. But what never changed – and never will change – is our determination to stay involved, and to help all the countries in this region chart a path towards a better future. In NATO, we strongly believe that Euro-Atlantic integration is the

only viable path for the countries in this region to take. Only Euro-Atlantic integration offers the framework to make the enormous achievements of this region truly irreversible. And only Euro-Atlantic integration will enable Southeast Europe, as well as the rest of our continent, to cope with the challenges of globalisation.

This Euro-Atlantic integration is now well underway. Four countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia – have already turned from active partners into valued member countries of the Alliance. They are now an integral part of the vital security link across the Atlantic. And they each make valuable contributions to some very challenging NATO missions and operations to uphold our security, and to defend our common values.

Three other countries in this region – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia – became Partners of the Alliance late last year, when they joined Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. As partners of NATO, they now have a range of powerful and tested tools available to them to further reform their security and defence establishments. And they each have access to a unique forum for political dialogue and consultation on key security issues – not just with the 26 NATO Allies, but with the 22 other Partner countries of the Alliance as well.

Taken together, that offers our three new partners a real opportunity to turn a corner and catch up with the rest of the region – but only, of course, if they look to the future instead of the past.

Finally, of course, three other countries in this region – Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,¹ and the host of this Summit, Croatia –, are taking part in NATO's Membership Action Plan, and are all currently pursuing a range of reforms to prepare themselves for the responsibilities, and obligations, of NATO membership. Last week, in Ohrid, at the EAPC Security Forum, I said that NATO's door is open to those countries that meet NATO's performance based standards and are able to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability. This has not changed – it will not change. The Adriatic Three know that NATO's door is open for them. But they should also know that there is still work to do before they can actually go through it.

NATO membership brings with it enormous privileges. A seat at the table where key decisions are taken to shape security in the Euro-Atlantic region and even beyond. A key role in the planning and conduct of major stabilising missions, where NATO's military forces play a central role in providing the security for reconstruction and development to move ahead. And, last but not least, the ultimate security guarantee of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

But with these privileges come responsibilities. New members must play a constructive role within the NATO Council, helping the Alliance to arrive at consensus. They must be able to make a real and significant military con-

1

Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

tribution, in partnership with their NATO Allies. And they must fully meet the political standards which make NATO a true symbol of cooperation, democracy and peaceful relations. Needless to say, those very steps are also necessary for achieving membership in the European Union.

All three aspirant countries have made much progress on the road to membership.

They have introduced bold and far-reaching reforms in a wide range of areas that have brought them closer to membership not only in NATO but also the European Union. They have demonstrated their commitment to regional cooperation, notably through the Adriatic Charter. They have gone a long way in streamlining their security and defence establishments, and bringing them under democratic control. And they are demonstrating both their willingness and their ability to be security providers by making valuable contributions to NATO's missions and operations, including in Afghanistan. At the same time, all three aspirant countries know that they each have to do further work in a number of areas to honour fully their commitment to reform – and to make NATO honour its commitment to them. Because this is of course the other side of the equation. Where we ask, we give.

The next step now is for Tirana, Skopje and Zagreb to prepare strong Annual National Programmes. These documents are important policy statements – far more important than speeches or declarations. They lay out the intentions of the aspirants for the months ahead. These documents are due in Brussels in September. I urge the three aspirant countries to ensure that these Annual National Programmes are strong and convincing. I also urge aspirants to engage their national Parliaments in this process, and to continue to inform their publics of the benefits, as well as the responsibilities, of membership. And in this context, Prime Minister Sanader, I should like to commend our host country, Croatia, for its considerable efforts not only to introduce the necessary reforms and contribute to NATO operations, but also to build public support for membership in the Alliance.

At the beginning of the NATO enlargement process in the early 1990s, an American diplomat once coined a memorable phrase: "by joining NATO, you don't leave your neighbourhood". This remark remains as valid today as it was then, particularly with respect to Kosovo.

This region is part of our neighbourhood, and we cannot escape from it. Further development of the region depends on stability, which would be greatly enhanced by a solution for the status of Kosovo. There is, I think, a fair, firm and comprehensive basis for a Security Council decision, based on the Ahtisaari proposals. Rest assured that NATO and its Partners are active and will stay active in KFOR to guarantee security and stability in Kosovo. It is important at this moment for all to exercise restraint and calm. But I think on the other hand that we should prevent unnecessary delay in trying to find a solution. And I prevail on all to prevent this delay as also Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon remarked this morning.

16,000 men and women of KFOR are there to guarantee a climate of security and stability in Kosovo. No-one should have any illusion that he or she could change the situation by means of violence. KFOR is there to prevent that and will prevent it. That is the message that I emphasised to all parties during my visit in Pristina last week. The unresolved future of Kosovo reminds us all that building a new Southeast Europe is still "work in progress".

To realise our common vision of a truly stable, democratic and prosperous region, many more difficult challenges still need to be overcome. NATO and the rest of the international community have to play their part, and I can assure you, they will. But ultimately the countries of the region themselves are responsible for their own future, and that of their region. These countries – your countries – need to press ahead with bold domestic reforms, strengthen the rule of law, and encourage economic growth. But it is equally crucial – for your countries, your region and for Europe as a whole – that you continue to develop good-neighbourly relations, pursue responsible foreign policies, and become true providers of security rather than consumers.

Today, NATO Allies and many Partners are engaged in operations far away from Europe, tackling problems as and where they emerge, before they hit us here on our own continent. More and more, we are looking at security in global terms, and reorienting our Alliance to challenges that are increasingly global in nature. But no matter what further change and adaptation NATO will need to go through, we will never lose sight of our responsibility towards Southeast Europe. In many respects, the origins of NATO's post-Cold War transformation lie right here in Southeast Europe. It was Yugoslavia's collapse that forced NATO to assume a role which it had never before contemplated – that of crisis manager and peacekeeper. NATO's Balkan involvement shaped NATO's own evolution in critical ways, perhaps more than any other outside event (with the exception of Afghanistan). And NATO's involvement, in turn, shaped the political reality here in this region in many different ways. All this has led to a unique relationship between NATO and the countries of Southeast Europe, including our host today, Croatia. It is a solid and trustful relationship – a relationship that will only grow deeper as we continue to move together towards greater stability and security based on the necessary reforms in the different nations of Europe "New South".