



## **AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATO**

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*In February last year, I visited Moscow at the invitation of President Putin. After positive and encouraging discussions, I returned to Brussels convinced that an important turning point had been reached in NATO-Russia relations.*

*Concrete progress in NATO-Russia relations has already been achieved. We are engaged in broad consultations in the framework of the Permanent Joint Council and we have agreed on a realistic work plan for 2001. After the tragic loss of the the Kursk last August, first steps have been taken to co-operate in the field of maritime search and rescue operations. One of the tangible results of our joint efforts is today's opening of the NATO Information Office in Moscow, as envisaged in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.*

*The existence of a NATO office in Moscow would have been inconceivable not long ago. The fact that it is now here is a reflection of how our relations have changed for the better. It is also a sign of the importance which NATO countries attach to Russia. Moreover, providing public access to information, explaining who we are and what we do is an integral part of the development of a strong, well-informed civil society.*

*The door of our Moscow office will always be open to individual members of the Russian public, to state institutions as well as non-governmental organisations which may wish to use its facilities. We want to explain the role of NATO and the significance of the many forms of co-operation which take place all the time, both within NATO and among all 46 countries, including Russia, which are members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.*

*Our aim is to provide information which will enable visitors to this office to learn more about us. We want people in Russia to make up their own minds about what NATO is and in which direction NATO-Russia co-operation should continue. We are convinced that most people will reach the same conclusion as us: regular consultation between NATO and Russia, open discussion of security problems, and co-operation in resolving them are in all our interests. So we want to make this office the focal point for providing the information and stimulating the discussion and exchange of ideas which are essential parts of this process.*

*The opening of this office, in new premises, opens a new chapter in NATO-Russia relations. Today, our focus is on making more information available. We hope that tomorrow NATO's co-operation with Russia will be a major factor in making a safer, better Europe.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "George Robertson", is located at the bottom right of the page.

George Robertson

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