



Russia-NATO relations

In December 2000, NATO defence and foreign ministers met their Russian counterparts, Marshal Igor Sergeev and Minister Igor Ivanov, in ministerial sessions of the Permanent Joint Council at NATO headquarters. They welcomed the progress achieved in the dialogue between Russia and NATO since their ministerial meetings in May and June, which were the first formal meetings of the Permanent Joint Council at the ministerial level since the Allied air campaign and marked the resumption of Russia's wider working relationship with NATO after a year-long interruption due to differences over the Kosovo crisis.

Both defence and foreign ministers reaffirmed their commitment to building a strong and stable partnership through the Permanent Joint Council with a view to strengthening security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, as enshrined in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act (see below). NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, speaking at the meeting of foreign ministers, emphasised that "the central message of this document is as relevant as ever" and that the Permanent Joint Council "is one of the most important new institutional arrangements that have emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War."

The defence ministers, who met on 5 December, focused on priorities in the defence and military fields. They agreed a work programme on search and rescue at sea and exchanged views on defence reform and the restructuring of their armed forces, agreeing to pursue discussions and to consider ways of expanding their cooperation in this area. Ministers welcomed the continuing progress in cooperation between NATO and Russian military officers at SHAPE and agreed to consult on the opening of a NATO Military Liaison Mission in Moscow.

At their meeting on 15 December, foreign ministers noted with satisfaction the broad range of issues of interest to both NATO and Russia that had been addressed in the Permanent Joint Council over the past six months. These subjects included strategy and doctrine, arms control, proliferation, military infrastructure, nuclear weapons issues, the retraining of discharged military personnel and search and rescue at sea. To build on this momentum, ministers approved a constructive work programme to guide consultation and cooperation between Russia and NATO through the Permanent Joint Council during 2001. They also agreed to open a NATO Information Office in Moscow and an exchange of letters to that effect between the NATO Secretary General and the Russian foreign minister paved the way for the opening of the NATO Information Office on February 20.

A joint commitment to peacekeeping in the Balkans

The situation in the former Yugoslavia was a key item of discussion at the meetings of both foreign and defence ministers, who welcomed the positive implications of the peaceful, democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia last October. Ministers commended the excellent cooperation between NATO and Russian troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo in the Balkans, and confirmed their determination to fully implement the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement and UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

Russia currently contributes about 1,200 troops to SFOR, which numbers approximately 20,000 forces in all, and some 3,150 troops to the 42,500-strong KFOR force. Despite differences over the Allied air campaign, military cooperation between Russian and NATO troops continued without interruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) is working to establish a lasting

basis for peace and stability. When the 78-day air campaign ended, Russia agreed to contribute significant forces to the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), which was mandated by the United Nations to prevent a resumption of the conflict and to create the conditions for peace.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act

The basis for cooperation between NATO and Russia was established in the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, signed in Paris on 27 May 1997. This was a reflection of the progress that had been achieved in developing the NATO-Russia relationship, since Russia joined the newly created North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 (succeeded by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997) and the Partnership for Peace in 1994. The Founding Act is the expression of an enduring commitment, undertaken at the highest political level, to work together to build a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Permanent Joint Council was set up under the Founding Act as a forum for consultation and cooperation, enabling NATO and the Russian Federation to embark on a substantial programme of security and defence-related cooperation activities. It represents a reciprocal commitment to help build a stable, secure and undivided continent on the basis of partnership and mutual interest.

The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council

The Permanent Joint Council is an integral part of the framework for cooperation established by the Founding Act. It met for the first time on 18 July 1997 and has been the hub for efforts to build confidence, overcome misperceptions and develop a pattern of regular consultations and cooperation. The main role of the PJC is to strengthen cooperation between NATO and Russia and to identify opportunities for joint actions. Regular, usually monthly, meetings of this body quickly led to a new pattern of dialogue and to an unprecedented level of contacts at many different levels.

Meetings are conducted on the understanding that both sides retain the right to take decisions independently of the other. They take place at various levels, involving heads of state and government, foreign and defence ministers or ambassadors. Chiefs of defence staffs and military representatives of NATO and Russia also meet under the auspices of the Permanent Joint Council.

Apart from the situation in the Balkans and peacekeeping issues, discussions cover the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control, defence reforms, search and rescue at sea, civil emergency planning, scientific cooperation and environmental issues, to name but a few.

This text is not a formally agreed NATO document and, therefore, does not necessarily represent the official views of individual member governments on all policy issues discussed.

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