

Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA)
MEMORANDUM

Brussels

September 15 –16, 2003

To : NATO Secretary General, George Robertson

From : YATA Conference Participants

Presented By : YATA President, Troels Egeskov Sorensen
YATA VP Communications, Katarina Culiberg
YATA Secretary General, Goran S. Pesic

Subject : Youth Public Diplomacy Strategy –“Memorandum on the
Future of NATO”

In line with NATO's Public Diplomacy Strategy, the YATA Executive Board has taken the initiative in engaging youth members in a discussion on their views of the Alliance, its initiatives, and how they see the future role of youth in the organization.

Troels Egeskov Sorensen, President,

Luis Carolino Executive, Vice-President

Katarina Culiberg, VP Communications

Alessandro Mazzorini, VP International Partnerships

Goran S. Pesic, Secretary General

YATA PUBLIC DIPLOMACY DISCUSSION PAPER

1. BACKGROUND

In our effort to engage the youth of Atlantic Treaty Association members in a discussion on their view of the Alliance and its work, the YATA Executive Board and NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) in partnership with the Atlantic Council of Slovenia (ACS), created a competition in which youth members were asked to present their view on one of four topic areas:

1. NATO -After Candidate Countries Join the Alliance
2. NATO-EU Relations: Iraq Crisis as Turning Point
3. The Civil Dimension of NATO
4. NATO and the Youth – Working Together

The purpose of this memorandum is to present to the Secretary General the views and opinions of youth members of the Alliance, PfP Partner Countries and on the future of NATO and the role of youth within the Alliance from their perspectives.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 NATO –After Candidate Countries Join the Alliance

Accepting new members brings countries closer to Euro-Atlantic structures, encourages democratic reforms and fosters habits of cooperation and consultation, promoting conflict resolution through dialogue. The strategic security environment has changed with security becoming a global concern; therefore, countries that share similar values and security concerns should be welcome without geographic constraints. Limits to NATO enlargement will be determined by the Alliance's goals for the future – from a political perspective there is no limit to expansion. However, due to Article 5 of the Alliance's Charter, there are practical military constraints to membership. Herein lies the future pivot point in transforming the Alliance. By subordinating the spirit of Article 5 to an arm of political decision making rather than a defining clause of the Alliance itself, it is possible to reconcile the political and military aspects enabling the Alliance to broaden its membership beyond the Euro-Atlantic scope without undermining the NATO's ability to act effectively.

2.2 NATO-EU Relations: Iraq Crisis as Turning Point

The Iraq crisis has revealed not so much an irreversible transatlantic break as it has heightened the ongoing inter-European division on a common security and defence policy. The discord between the US and EU is mainly due to the long-standing capabilities gap between NATO members. Both sides have to agree on the degree to which NATO plays a decisive role in strategic and military planning. This means that the US must be willing to grant NATO structures greater flexibility so as to allow (some) European member-states to intervene without direct US involvement, while the EU must develop capabilities that will enable it to conduct operations without duplicating NATO's overall efforts. Part of this approach also involves creating "opt-in" and "opt-out" strategies for certain members giving the Alliance overall operational flexibility while retaining military effectiveness.

2.3 The Civil Dimension of NATO

The civil dimension of security, which was incorporated into the NATO's system from the beginning, has gained growing importance in today's world. In the contemporary international system the real threat is not calculated aggression by states, but a civil one, in the form of adverse consequences of instability that may arise from serious economic, social and political crisis'. The main goal of NATO's civil initiatives is to foster cooperation between members, as well as Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries on a practical, daily level. This is achieved through scientific exchange, economic, humanitarian and social cooperation, as well as civil defence and civil emergency planning. This is critical to in fostering trust and dialogue, and prepares new members for the tasks on the larger military and political levels. Success within NATO's civil dimension is directly related to the concept of conflict prevention and crisis management. This part of the Alliance needs to be further publicized due to the public perception that NATO is too focused on military issues.

2.4 NATO and the Youth – Working Together

The role of the Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA) in disseminating Euro-Atlantic values is a very important one. By bringing together and increasing contact with youth branches in other Atlantic Committees, YATA develops a dialogue that is strengthened and supported by NATO members and

partners. While institutional support is an important factor, more needs to be done with implementing special programs and initiatives that educate and engage the youth on the relevance of NATO. Discussions of security and defence matters should be encouraged at the academic level while highlighting NATO's achievements and goals in civil areas. This can be done on all youth levels such as with public information sessions and workshops at high school's and universities, as well as conferences and seminars sponsored by NATO or national governments. Other initiatives could include creating a Model NATO for young people similar to the Model United Nations (MUN), where youth come together and create a model of the NATO ministerial meetings, debating and discussing issues affecting the Alliance from their perspective. This would be an excellent opportunity for the youth to feel engaged and learn more about NATO's role and work as was illustrated at the Prague Atlantic Student Summit (PASS) in November 2002.

3. CONCLUSION

YATA members see NATO as an organization that has successfully kept the peace in the world for the past 50 years and consider it an extremely relevant organization that is evolving to adapt to the new security threats and challenges of the 21st Century. The security it has provided Western Europe has enabled the creation of the EU, and the development of prosperous economies and peaceful democratic states. YATA members feel that there should be no limit to expansion and that geography should not be viewed as a factor for membership. Youth members believe that the NATO security umbrella should be expanded to all states that share the same values and goals allowing them to partake in and prosper from the same security experience.

Youth members believe that recent allegations in the media that the Iraq crisis sparked an unprecedented transatlantic divide within NATO are unfounded. The period leading up to the Iraq war hardly constitutes the first time a discord has been created between some EU NATO members and the United States. What critics neglect are the long-term outcomes of NATO interventions. Although internal debate delayed NATO's response to the Balkan Wars in the 1990's, the outcome of its intervention is overwhelmingly positive. Its efforts at nation building have stabilized the region by fostering trust and cooperation and have been an integral factor in providing a framework for successful democratic reforms. Similar efforts are currently underway in Afghanistan. NATO should be proud of its record. It has stabilized Europe, created new partnerships with Russia and the Ukraine, as well as pursuing initiatives to provide stability to the Mediterranean region. Undoubtedly, NATO will prove effective in projecting this success to the Middle East as well.

While the EU and the US can agree to "disagree," the fundamental fact remains that both sides need each other. The EU's greatest strength is its potential for political consensus building, its greatest weakness is a lack of common foreign and defence policy and military capabilities. The US' greatest strength is its military power, but it cannot do everything alone. As new security challenges evolve, so too will NATO. Therefore, the Alliance has to develop new mechanisms and capabilities to meet these new challenges and members have to work closely together to provide the necessary resources and equipment to make NATO a flexible, modern security organization capable of rapid and effective action. Whether critics agree or not, NATO is at the center of global security issues, from civil defence and emergency planning, to collective defence and peace-enforcement. NATO is stability: past, present, and future.

Therefore, youth must be made aware of NATO's successes so that future generations of leaders and decision-makers have an informed and comprehensive understanding of NATO's role in underpinning global security. YATA, as a youth organization is endeavoring to provide an institutional framework coordinating and supporting national youth initiatives. To achieve this goal YATA needs the full institutional and political support of NATO, the ATA and national governments. Together we can insure greater youth interest and active participation on issues pertaining to NATO's goals and objectives for the future.