PART I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ALLIANCE

What is NATO?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe committed to fulfilling the goals of the North Atlantic Treaty signed in Washington on 4 April 1949.

In accordance with the Treaty, the fundamental role of NATO is to safeguard the freedom and security of its member countries by political and military means. NATO safeguards the Allies' common values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of disputes and promotes these values throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. It provides a forum in which countries from North America and Europe can consult together on security issues of common concern and take joint action in addressing them.

Relations between North American and European members of the Alliance are the bedrock of NATO. These countries share the same essential values and interests and are committed to the maintenance of democratic principles, making the security of Europe and that of North America indivisible.

The Alliance is committed to defending its member states against aggression or the threat of aggression and to the principle that an attack against one or several members would be considered as an attack against all.

NATO remains an inter-governmental organisation in which each member country retains its sovereignty. All NATO decisions are taken jointly by the member countries on the basis of consensus. NATO's most important decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council, which brings together representatives of all the Allies at the level of ambassadors, ministers or heads of state and government. Each member country participates fully in the decision-making process on the basis of equality, irrespective of its size or political, military and economic strength.

The Allies therefore retain scope for independent action with respect to joint decisions and joint actions. However, Allied decisions, once taken, enable unified and concerted action to be reinforced by political solidarity. This was manifest, for example, in the decisions taken to provide assistance to the United States after the attacks of 11 September 2001. For the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which stipulates that an armed attack against one or more members of the Alliance is considered as an armed attack against all. All the members of the Alliance vehemently condemned the attacks and provided support to the United States in its response.

NATO has no operational forces of its own other than those assigned to it by member countries or contributed by Partner countries for the purpose of carrying out a specific mission. It has a number of mechanisms available to

it for this purpose – the defence planning and resource planning processes that form the basis of cooperation within the Alliance, the implementation of political commitments to improved capabilities, and a military structure that combines the functions of a multinational force planning organisation with an Alliance-wide system of command and control of the military forces assigned to it. In other words, under the command of NATO's strategic commanders, the Organisation provides for the joint planning, exercising and operational deployment of forces provided by the member countries in accordance with a commonly agreed force planning process. In sum, an important part of NATO's role is to act as a catalyst for generating the forces needed to meet requirements and enabling member countries to participate in crisis management operations which they could not otherwise undertake on their own.

Dialogue and cooperation with non-NATO countries have helped to overcome the divisions of the Cold War era and to extend security and stability well beyond NATO's borders. The Alliance is deepening and broadening its cooperation with Russia and Ukraine and with other Partner countries – some of which have since become members – as well as with countries in the Mediterranean Dialogue programme and in the broader Middle East. It is also reinforcing cooperation with other international organisations and, in particular, with the European Union, with which it is developing a strategic partnership. NATO's structures and mechanisms provide the framework for these varying forms of cooperation, which are an integral part of the day-to-day activity of the Alliance.

The origins of the Alliance

From 1945 to 1949, faced with the pressing need for economic reconstruction, Western European countries and their North American allies viewed with concern the expansionist policies and methods of the USSR. Having fulfilled their own post-war undertakings to reduce their defence establishments and demobilise their forces, Western governments grew increasingly alarmed as it became clear that the Soviet leadership intended to maintain its own military forces at full strength. Moreover, in view of the declared ideological aims of the Soviet Communist Party, it was evident that appeals for respect for the United Nations Charter, and for respect for the international settlements reached at the end of the Second World War, would not guarantee the national sovereignty or independence of democratic states faced with the threat of outside aggression or internal subversion. The imposition of undemocratic forms of government and the repression of effective opposition and basic human and civil rights and freedoms in many Central and Eastern European countries, as well as elsewhere in the world, compounded these fears.

Between 1947 and 1949 a series of dramatic political events brought matters to a head. These included direct threats to the sovereignty of Norway, Greece, Turkey and other Western European countries, the June 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia, and the illegal blockade of Berlin which began in April of the same year. The signature of the Brussels Treaty in March 1948 marked the determination of five Western European countries – Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom – to develop a common defence system and to strengthen the ties between them in a manner which would enable them to resist ideological, political and military threats to their security.

The Brussels Treaty represented the first step in the post-war reconstruction of western european security and brought the Western Union Defence Organisation into being. It was also the first step in the process leading to the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 and the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Negotiations with the United States and Canada then followed on the creation of a single North Atlantic Alliance based on security guarantees and mutual commitments between Europe and North America. Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway and Portugal were invited by the Brussels Treaty powers to become participants in this process. These negotiations culminated in the signature of the Washington Treaty in April 1949, which introduced a common security system based on a partnership among these 12 countries. In 1952, Greece and Turkey acceded to the treaty. The Federal Republic of Germany joined the Alliance in 1955 and, in 1982, Spain also became a member of NATO. In 1990, with the unification of Germany, the former German Democratic Republic came under the security protection of the Alliance as an integral part of the united country. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined NATO in 1999. In 2003 seven more countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) were invited to begin accession talks and formally acceded to the treaty in March 2004.

The North Atlantic Alliance was founded on the basis of a treaty between member states entered into freely by each of them after public debate and due parliamentary process. The Treaty upholds their individual rights as well as their international obligations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Through the treaty, member countries commit themselves to sharing the risks and responsibilities of collective security and undertake not to enter into any other international commitments which might conflict with the treaty.

Since NATO's creation more than half a century ago, its central focus has been to provide for the immediate defence and security of its member countries. Today this remains its core task, but its main focus has undergone

fundamental changes to enable the Alliance to confront new threats and meet new challenges.

NATO's fundamental security tasks

NATO's essential and enduring purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. Based on common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Alliance has striven since its inception to secure a lasting peaceful order in Europe. However, the achievement of this aim can be jeopardised by crisis and conflict outside the Euro-Atlantic area. The Alliance therefore not only ensures the defence of its members but contributes to peace and stability beyond the geographical space defined as the North Atlantic Treaty area through partnerships and crisis management operations.

The guiding principle by which the Alliance works is common commitment and mutual cooperation among sovereign states in support of the indivisibility of security for all its members. Solidarity and cohesion within the Alliance, through daily cooperation in both the political and military spheres, guarantee that no single member country is forced to rely upon its own national efforts alone in dealing with basic security challenges. Without depriving member countries of their right and duty to assume their sovereign responsibilities in the field of defence, the Alliance enables them through collective efforts to meet their essential national security objectives.

NATO's fundamental security tasks are described in the Alliance's Strategic Concept. It is the authoritative statement of the Alliance's objectives and provides the highest level of guidance on the political and military means to be used in achieving them. It remains the basis for the implementation of Alliance policy as a whole. However, changing threats and threat perceptions have resulted in a continuous process of adaptation of this strategy to ensure that the political framework, military structures and military capabilities needed to deal with modern security challenges are all in place.

The Strategic Concept, first published in 1991, differed dramatically from preceding documents both in content and form. It maintained the security of its members as NATO's fundamental purpose but combined this with the specific obligation to work towards improved and expanded security for Europe as a whole through partnership and cooperation with former adversaries. In addition, it was issued as a public document, open for discussion and comment by parliaments, security specialists, journalists and the broader public. The Strategic Concept was revised in 1999, committing the Allies not only to common defence but to the peace and stability of the wider Euro-Atlantic area. It comprises the following political elements:

- a broad approach to security, encompassing political, economic, social and environmental factors, as well as the Alliance's defence dimension
- a strong commitment to transatlantic relations
- maintenance of Alliance military capabilities to ensure the effectiveness of military operations
- development of European capabilities within the Alliance
- maintenance of adequate conflict prevention and crisis management structures and procedures
- effective partnerships with non-NATO countries based on cooperation and dialogue
- the enlargement of the Alliance and an open door policy towards potential new members
- continuing efforts towards far-reaching arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements

This broad definition of security recognises the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the defence dimension. Partnership and cooperation with other countries, cooperation with other regional and international organisations such as the United Nations, and the strategic partnership that is evolving between NATO and the European Union all contribute to the establishment of mutually reinforcing and complementary relations and to more effective conflict prevention and crisis management.

The specific tasks of the Alliance are also described in the Strategic Concept. They are as follows:

> To provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable Euro-Atlantic **security** environment, based on the growth of democratic institutions and commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes, in which no country would be able to intimidate or coerce any other through the threat or use of force.
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> To serve, as provided for in Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, as an essential transatlantic forum for Allied **consultations** on any issues that affect their vital interests, including possible developments posing risks for members' security, and for appropriate coordination of their efforts in fields of common concern.
>
> To **deter and defend** against any threat of aggression against any NATO member state as provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty.

And in order to enhance the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area:

To stand ready, case-by-case and by consensus, in conformity with Article 7 of the Washington Treaty, to contribute to effective conflict prevention and to engage actively in **crisis management**, including crisis response operations.

To promote wide-ranging **partnership**, cooperation, and dialogue with other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, with the aim of increasing transparency, mutual confidence and the capacity for joint action with the Alliance.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States, the priority has been given to aspects such as better sharing of intelligence relating to the threat from terrorism, strengthening cooperation and partnership with other countries outside the Alliance and with other organisations across the board but above all in addressing the threat from terrorism, reinforcing the role of NATO's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Centre in contributing to military preparedness to counter WMD threats and to the ability to operate in a WMD environment, adapting forces structures, and improving military capabilities in other relevant areas.

Facing the changing security environment

The historic decision taken by NATO to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and extend its assistance to the United States following 11 September 2001 marked the beginning of a new impetus in NATO's transformation process that was to touch on virtually every aspect of Alliance activity.

In addition to combating terrorism, a variety of other factors have reinforced the need for adaptation of Alliance structures and policies. These include the increased threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and the need for new operational capabilities in critical areas. The demands of NATO's enlargement have also had an impact, as have the developing role of partnerships with Russia, Ukraine and partner countries, the importance of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and the strategic partnership with the European Union. NATO's leading role in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and its continuing role in the Balkans have also led the Organisation to adapt itself to the requirements of these operations, of its missions in Iraq and Sudan, and of its relief efforts in Pakistan.

Many of the changes needed to carry forward the transformation process were introduced at NATO's Prague Summit on 21–22 November 2002 and

were pursued at its Istanbul Summit on 28–29 June 2004. Five major areas have been affected: membership of the Alliance, the reform of NATO's civilian and military structures, the acceptance of new roles, the development of new capabilities and the promotion of new relationships.

The accession of new members

The accession of the first three Eastern European countries in 1999 coincided with the Alliance's 50th anniversary, which was marked at the Washington Summit in April of that year. This was followed in 2004 by NATO's largest wave of enlargement since its creation, when seven new member countries were admitted. It was at the Istanbul Summit that the leaders of the 26 member countries gathered for the first time since the Alliance's fifth round of enlargement. Allied leaders reaffirmed that NATO's door would remain open to European democracies willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, in accordance with Article 10 of the Washington Treaty.

Reforming NATO's civilian and military structures

The enlargement process had repercussions on the physical working space needed at the political headquarters in Brussels, and the construction of new, larger premises was agreed in 1999. In addition, a number of internal reforms were adopted in 2002 to adapt the International Staff and the International Military Staff to the new missions and priorities of the Alliance.

In parallel, NATO's military command structure was totally reorganised, reflecting a fundamental shift in Alliance thinking. The command structure had previously been divided into two main geographic areas, with one strategic command covering Europe and the other the North Atlantic area. These commands have been replaced by one operational command – Allied Command Operations (ACO) – and a functional command – Allied Command Transformation (ACT). ACO is a strategic command for all NATO operations whereas ACT is responsible for the continuing transformation of NATO's military capabilities and for promoting interoperability. Although the command structure had already changed considerably since the end of the Cold War, this reform provided a structure with the capacity to focus systematically on facilitating the transformation of military capabilities on a continuous basis as new needs are identified. In effect, its role is to help to ensure that the Alliance has the capabilities it needs to carry out its tasks and that the forces needed to meet new commitments are available to NATO quickly and reliably.

The increased scope of NATO's military operations

The scope of the military operations undertaken by NATO has increased significantly since its initial involvement in restoring stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s. Since then, NATO has committed itself to several peacekeeping operations in and beyond its traditional area of responsibility and has enhanced its efforts in confronting the growing threat posed by terrorism.

Helping to stabilise the Balkans

The nature of NATO's engagement in the former Yugoslavia is changing, although its commitment to long-term stability throughout southeastern Europe remains as strong as ever. The aim is to restore a secure environment in the region and work with its partners to integrate southeastern Europe into Euro-Atlantic structures. This calls for building enduring multi-ethnic democracies, rooting out organised crime and corruption and establishing the rule of law, regional cooperation, and full compliance with international obligations, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

At the Prague Summit in November 2002, the Alliance confirmed its intention to maintain a presence in the region and its readiness to assist the countries through individual assistance programmes. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro have manifested their desire to take part in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* has joined NATO's Member Action Plan, together with Albania and Croatia, to prepare for future potential membership.

By the turn of the century NATO had committed itself to operations in the Euro-Atlantic area. However, at a meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland on 14–15 May 2002, NATO crossed the Rubicon by stating that it was prepared to engage in operations beyond its traditional area of responsibility. This decision opened the way to new challenges and opportunities for the Alliance, which later committed itself in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Pakistan.

Leading the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington, DC, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, which was complemented two months later by the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ultimate aim of ISAF is to help lead Afghanistan out of nearly four decades of authoritarian rule, foreign occupation and civil war, which had made

Afghan territory a suitable base for the training of terrorists. Initially, individual countries assumed command of the force on a rotational basis, with technical support from NATO. However, NATO took over full responsibility for its leadership in August 2003. In autumn 2003, the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution that authorised the expansion of ISAF's operations to areas outside Kabul through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

NATO is progressively taking over a growing number of PRTs in different parts of Afghanistan, and although the UN mandate clearly stipulates that the ISAF mission is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in providing a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and the reconstruction of the country NATO's role in Afghanistan can also be considered as part of NATO's efforts to combat terrorism. There are ongoing debates to examine to what extent greater synergy can be achieved between Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF, especially since a number of NATO countries provide forces and equipment to both.

Establishing a training mission in Iraq

In Iraq, NATO has committed itself to providing various forms of support. On 8 November 2002, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1441 to offer Iraq, suspected of possessing weapons of mass destruction, a final chance to comply with its disarmament obligations that had been repeatedly stated in previous Security Council resolutions. In a special declaration issued at the Prague Summit on 21–22 November, NATO leaders also pledged support for the implementation of this resolution. However, Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, was still not complying and therefore raised suspicions among Council members, prompting some to support immediate military action and others to insist that the weapon inspectors be given more time to conduct their work. The division in international opinion was also reflected at NATO where, in the meantime, the Turkish government requested consultations within the framework of Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty in the event of a threat from Iraq. After intense discussion, defensive measures were implemented to assist Turkey under Operation Display Deterrence.

The United States led Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003 and ousted the regime of Saddam Hussein. Poland agreed to assume the lead of a multinational division within the international stabilisation force deployed in Iraq and, on 2 June 2003, the North Atlantic Council agreed to a request from Poland to provide support for this operation in a number of fields.

A year later, NATO leaders agreed to assist the Interim Government of Iraq with the training of its security forces and established a NATO Training Implementation Mission. Distinct from operational missions involving combat

forces, NATO's training mission works closely with the Iraqi authorities as well as with the United States-led Multinational Force in Iraq. Security and protection for the mission itself is provided in part by the Multinational Force and in part by NATO. Other measures have been adopted since that time, such as the establishment of a NATO-supported Iraqi Training, Education and Doctrine Centre that focuses on leadership training for Iraqi security staff, and NATO assistance in the coordination of training being provided bilaterally by different member countries both in and outside Iraq.

Providing logistical support to the African Union in Sudan

More recently, in April 2005, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Mr Alpha Oumar Konaré, wrote to the NATO Secretary General requesting NATO assistance in the expansion of the African Union's peacekeeping mission in the western region of Darfur, Sudan, in an attempt to halt the continuing violence in the region. The Alliance formally announced its support with airlift and training on 9 June, at a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Brussels, and started its first airlift operations on 1 July.

Fighting terrorism

Allied governments, in their individual and collective efforts to confront the growing threat posed by international terrorism directly, have also launched initiatives aimed at curtailing terrorist activity in the Balkan region that are implemented by NATO forces on the ground, as well as operations such as Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean and Operation Eagle Assist.

Operation Active Endeavour is a maritime operation led by NATO's naval forces to detect and deter terrorist activity in the Mediterranean. The operation was launched in October 2001 and, in view of its success and efficiency, was extended on two occasions, first to cover the Straits of Gibraltar in March 2003 and then to cover the entire Mediterranean in March 2004. The initial operation was limited to the eastern Mediterranean.

Operation Eagle Assist was one of the measures requested by the United States in the aftermath of 9/11. Aircraft from NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) patrolled American airspace for a period of seven months from mid-October 2001 to mid-May 2002. Approximately 830 crew members from 13 NATO countries flew nearly 4300 hours and over 360 operational sorties.

NATO Airborne Warning and Control aircraft have been used on several occasions to defend against the possibility of further terrorist attacks involving the use of so-called renegade aircraft, and in a more routine capacity when major NATO and EU events have called for extra protection. In July 2004, security protection was extended, at the request of the respective governments, to the European Football Championships in Portugal and the Olympic Games in Greece.

Modernising NATO's military capabilities

The widened scope of NATO military operations has radically transformed the military requirements of the Alliance. The large defence forces of the past needed to be replaced by forces geared toward relatively small-scale crisis response operations dependent upon flexibility and mobility and on the ability to deploy at significant distances from their normal operating bases.

At the Prague Summit, the member governments launched a modernisation process designed to ensure that NATO can effectively deal with the security challenges of the 21st century. A package of measures to enhance the Alliance's military operational capabilities was agreed. It included a new capabilities initiative called the Prague Capabilities Commitment, the creation of a NATO Response Force, and the streamlining of the Alliance's military command structure. These are the three key military transformation initiatives that are essential to adapting NATO's military capabilities.

In addition, NATO heads of state and government called for increased efforts in the areas of intelligence sharing and crisis response arrangements, as well as greater cooperation with Partner countries through the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism and in the field of terrorism consequence management assistance, including the implementation of a civil emergency planning (CEP) action plan for civil preparedness against possible attacks involving chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) agents. Five nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons defence initiatives were endorsed: a prototype deployable NBC analytical laboratory, a prototype NBC event response team, a virtual Centre of Excellence for NBC Weapons Defence, a NATO biological and chemical defence stockpile, and a disease surveillance system. Other initiatives included the establishment of a multinational CBRN battalion, defence against cyber attacks, and missile defence, with the launch of a new NATO Missile Defence Feasibility Study (MDFS) to examine options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centres against missile threats.

Implementation of the Prague Capabilities Commitment was pursued at the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, with the launching of a number of multinational projects aimed at enhancing military capabilities in critical areas such

as strategic sealift and airlift capabilities, air-to-air refuelling and the Alliance ground surveillance system. "Usability" targets were endorsed, involving commitments by member countries to maintain at all times the ability to deploy and sustain larger proportions of their forces on Alliance operations. Changes to NATO's defence planning and force generation processes were announced, designed to link political agreement to launch an operation to the provision of the forces needed to carry it out. However, important challenges remained, including the development of improved measures to combat threats posed by terrorism, failed states and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by state and non-state actors.

NATO leaders agreed to develop high-tech capabilities to protect both civilians and military forces from terrorist attacks. These capabilities include defence against weapons of mass destruction, protection of wide-body aircraft against shoulder-launched missiles, protection of helicopters from ground threats, protection of harbours and vessels, defence against improvised explosive devices, and improved mine detection. In addition, agreement was reached to improve intelligence sharing and to carry out a review of current intelligence structures at NATO. The mandate given to the Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit, created after the terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001, was made permanent and extended to include analysis of terrorist threats as a whole in addition to those more specifically aimed at NATO. Furthermore, NATO governments agreed to enhance the Organisation's ability to assist any member country in dealing with terrorist threats or with the consequences of terrorist attacks. NATO assets and capabilities such as AWACS aircraft, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre and the Multinational Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion can be made available to member countries requesting such assistance.

Strengthening and widening partnerships

With the need for greater solidarity in today's security environment, especially in combating terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, NATO's Partnership policies have been steadily extended with a view to building closer and more effective relationships with a wide variety of countries and international institutions. This includes Partner countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, countries in the wider Mediterranean region, "contact countries" such as Japan, Australia, Pakistan and China, and international organisations such as the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. These policies have put the spotlight on the major contribution to international security that strengthened cooperation can offer.

NATO-Russia relations

The development of a result-oriented NATO-Russia partnership geared toward finding common approaches to common security challenges is also considered an essential element of NATO's transformation agenda. The creation of the NATO-Russia Council in May 2002 marked the beginning of a more pragmatic relationship focused on activities such as defence against terrorism, defence reform, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, military cooperation and training, civil emergency planning, theatre missile defence, and preparing for possible new joint peacekeeping operations.

NATO-Ukraine relations

With regard to Ukraine, NATO Allies have been strongly encouraging the country to pursue much-needed reforms and to implement urgent measures that would be essential for the country to realise its long-term goal of full integration into Euro-Atlantic security structures. The Orange Revolution in November 2004 triggered hopes of accelerating this process and, in response to the country's aspirations to NATO membership, foreign ministers launched an Intensified Dialogue with Ukraine in April 2005. However, they stressed once again the need for consistent and measurable progress in democratic reform and reiterated that the pace of progress remains in Ukraine's hands.

Relations with Partner countries

When seven former Partner countries became members of NATO in March 2004, the balance between member and Partner countries cooperating within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace changed significantly. Moreover, the remaining Partner countries are in different regions and have more diverse security requirements. Some remain candidate countries for future NATO membership while others have demonstrated their desire to develop specific programmes of cooperation with NATO without seeking future membership. The quality of these partnerships has been upgraded and their scope broadened. At the same time, the Alliance has increased its focus on the Caucasus and Central Asia and is taking practical steps to develop closer cooperation with Partner countries in these regions, including the appointment of a special NATO representative for the two regions and the assignment of a liaison officer to each area.

The Mediterranean Dialogue

Since its creation in 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue has contributed to confidence-building and cooperation between NATO and the seven participating countries – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The political and practical dimensions of this programme have been progressively upgraded to encourage effective interaction on security issues of common concern, including terrorism, therefore moving the relationship from dialogue to partnership.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

At Istanbul in June 2004, Alliance leaders also launched the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. This is intended to reach out to the broader region of the Middle East by promoting practical cooperation with interested countries, starting with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The focus of the initiative is on offering advice, in accordance with each country's specific needs, on issues such as defence reform, defence budgeting, defence planning and civil-military relations. The initiative also addresses issues such as the promotion of military-to-military cooperation, fighting terrorism through information sharing and maritime cooperation, and addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Working with other international organisations

At the institutional level, international organisations including the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are recognising the need to meet threats such as terrorism square on, with all the resources available, and to coordinate this effort rather than to rely on the resources of any single organisation.

NATO-EU relations have evolved in leaps and bounds in a very short space of time. On 16 December 2002, the European Union and NATO adopted a joint declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which provided a formal basis for cooperation in the areas of crisis management and conflict prevention. and conflict prevention. On 17 March 2003, they agreed on a set of key cooperation documents known as the "Berlin plus" package, that allow EU access to NATO's collective assets and capabilities for EU-led operations. In effect, they allow the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged. This paved the way for the two organisations to work out the detailed modalities for the transfer of responsibility to the European Union for the NATO-led military operations in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in 2003 and, from December 2004, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Conclusion

As an intergovernmental organisation with shared values, a common determination to defend them and measures being developed to make the capabilities needed to do so available whenever and wherever necessary, NATO is able to focus on today's security challenges. The operations it is conducting in the Balkans and in Afghanistan and to which it is contributing in Iraq and Darfur, combined with the growing strength of its bilateral and multilateral partnerships with non-NATO countries and other organisations, demonstrate its continuing effectiveness.

Daunting challenges remain, however. As he took up his responsibilities as NATO's new secretary general in January 2004, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer outlined where the emphasis must lie in addressing them: successful implementation of the Alliance's current operational roles, particularly in Kosovo and in Afghanistan, responsiveness to any decision by member countries to increase the Alliance's role in Iraq, the continuing implementation of the transformation process and the accomplishment of a pragmatic, realistic and trusting transatlantic relationship.