

## **Asharq Alawsat, 1 October 2005**

### **A Saudi Delegation discusses the “Istanbul Initiative” with the NATO Leadership in Brussels**

#### **NATO Secretary General: 3 factors threaten world peace, including terrorism Brussels, Mina el-Oraibi, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005**

NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, confirmed that “Islam does not threaten world peace, but that those who hijack planes and innocent people should be stopped from hijacking Islam”. Addressing Arab journalists at NATO Headquarters in Brussels yesterday, he added that terrorism threatens world peace, so does the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat from “failing states or states that might fail”.

The press conference coincided with a two-day visit to NATO Headquarters by a senior Saudi delegation lead by Prince Turki Bin Mohammad Al Saoud the Great, Asst. Foreign Under-Secretary for Political Affairs. In a series of meetings with Arab journalists, senior NATO leaders stressed the importance of co-operation between NATO member states and the Arab World, as well as confronting terrorism. Scheffer said “terrorism is everywhere”, thus NATO does whatever is necessary to protect the peoples of member states against terrorism.

Scheffer, who has just returned from a visit to Iraq to inaugurate an academy for training Iraqi Army Officers, admitted that Iraq suffered from terrorism, and added, “the random killing that Iraq witnesses now is pure terrorism”. He added that “there is no substitute for the political process which should continue”. He pointed out that “the failure of the political process in Iraq threatens not only Iraq, but also the whole region”, and went on to say that it was not possible to send NATO Forces to Iraq, as NATO is training Iraqi Forces and providing them with military equipment.

NATO’s invitation to a number of Arab journalists is amongst NATO’s attempts to “improve its image” amongst people in the region, said a NATO senior official. NATO seeks to intensify its activities to promote its work in order to encourage co-operation with Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Countries as part of the “Istanbul Co-operation Initiative” launched last year. Following the approval of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE, NATO is working towards establishing areas of co-operation with Saudi Arabia and Oman. The NATO senior official, who preferred to remain anonymous, described that the visit by Prince Turki Bin Mohammad Al Saoud took place “in a positive atmosphere”. He added that the delegation would inform the Saudi leadership of the talks with the NATO Secretary General and some of its members, hoping that official co-operation between NATO and Saudi Arabia would be the outcome of the visit. Scheffer announced that his forthcoming visit to Egypt would be on 12 October. He said, “Egypt is an important country in the region, I will meet the Egyptian Foreign Minister, and hope that I will also meet President Mubarak.”

A NATO senior official said that Egypt’s participation, in addition to six other countries, in the “Mediterranean Dialogue” since 1994 is not “a back door to join the NATO”. He added that this group, as with the “Istanbul Initiative” that focuses on GCC countries, is a way of co-operating to counter the three threats of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and failing states. It is not a means of joining NATO”.

On Afghanistan, the official confirmed that NATO was getting ready to take over peace-keeping responsibilities from international forces there. He added that the US Army would continue its operations after NATO takes over peace-keeping operations before the end of 2006.