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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege to speak before this distinguished audience on a topic of high importance for Europe and for the transatlantic community as well as for Asia, and indeed for the world as a whole, that of our growing inter-dependence, not only in field of economics and trade, but also of security.

This conference is a unique opportunity to exchange views and reflect -- here in this beautiful city of Prague, one of the cultural centers of Europe – on the implications of Asia’s rise for NATO and the European Union and on the opportunities before us for greater partnership between Euro-Atlantic institutions and Asia.

I do not need to remind this audience of the far-reaching geo-political and geo-economic transformation of the international system brought about by the confluence of several factors over the last 20 years:

- (i) the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Communism;
- (ii) the steady march of globalization and the attendant revolutions in the fields of information, travel and trade;
- (iii) the rise of China, India, and the ASEAN nations;
- (iv) growing trade flows between East Asia, Europe and North America; and
- (v) the expanding economic presence of East Asia in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America – and the political and military engagement of the United States in



Afghanistan and Central Asia following the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001.

While East Asia and the North Atlantic area – NATO's centre of gravity – were, literally, poles apart for the 4 decades of the Cold War between 1949 and 1989, today globalization – the globalization of values, interests and risks – has made East Asia and the North Atlantic community growing partners.

This trend towards ever increasing interaction and inter-dependence is just another indicator of the truly transformational nature of our time.

The reality and the memory of the 20th Century are fast receding into a seemingly distant past, and we are witnessing the emergence of an international system quite unlike what we had in place during the preceding half century.

Admittedly, there are two sides to globalization. On the one hand, globalization has lifted millions out of poverty world-wide, helping developed countries maintain a healthy growth – look at Germany's performance as an exporting country – while propelling giants like China, India and Brazil, but also many smaller Asian countries, upwards.

At the same time, there is a darker side to globalization – one that helps import radicalism, religious fanaticism and the techniques of terrorism into our democratic societies and that facilitates all kinds of traffics by shady groups and individuals – from human beings, to arms, narcotics and, even, weapons of mass destruction.

And then, there is the prospect of a growing competition for scarce resources, from oil and gas, to minerals, to even water.



In the last few weeks, we got in the Caucasus region a whiff of the inter-relationship between a relatively local crisis and its wider implications for a region of considerable importance in the energy field.

So, as we witness the world's growing inter-dependence, it is hardly surprising that several countries of the Pacific region – most noticeably Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand – would have expressed a desire to enter into a political dialogue, or even a partnership, with NATO, particularly because of shared values.

And following NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, starting in 2003, the motivation for expanded dialogue and partnership is not only one resulting from shared values, but also of shared security interests.

NATO's engagement in Afghanistan is of considerable importance for the security and stability of Asia as a whole, given Afghanistan's geographic position and the past capacity of Afghanistan for being an exporter of terrorism under the rule of the Taliban between 1995 and 2001.

As the Foreign Minister of Australia at the time of the 2007 Munich Security Conference, Mr. Alexander Downer, put it in a speech to that conference: "(...) NATO will not be a global alliance, but an alliance with global partners (...)". Indeed, NATO has no ambition to be a global policeman.

But as NATO assumes increasing responsibilities on behalf of the international community -- as we have done in Afghanistan under successive UN Security Council mandates -- it makes sense for the Alliance to work with countries well beyond the North Atlantic area that share our goals in helping maintain international peace and security and are willing and prepared to contribute to, or support, our operations.



Today, NATO's partnerships with global partners such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan, find expression in the following:

- (i) a significant contribution of over 1,100 Australian forces and some 160 New Zealand forces to NATO's International Security Assistance Force – ISAF; and
- (ii) Japan's financial contribution of some 20 million U.S. dollars to a fund supporting humanitarian projects in Afghanistan; these projects will be proposed through Provincial Reconstruction Teams – PRTs – deployed with ISAF across Afghanistan. To that end, Japan has posted in Kabul a liaison officer to the NATO Senior Civilian Representative.

In addition, Japan contributes naval logistic support in the Indian Ocean to the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom – OEF -- and, in the past, South Korea participated in an OEF PRT.

But these partnerships are not limited to our operations, as important as they are. We engage with these nations in regular political dialogue and consultation. This is accomplished by the attendance of special meetings of NATO's governing body – the North Atlantic Council – by representatives of these so-called “Contact Countries” at ambassadorial, ministerial and even Head of State and Government levels, as this was the case most recently at NATO's Summit meeting in Bucharest last April, which was attended by the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers and Japan's deputy Foreign Minister.

It also finds expression in visits by senior officials from these nations to NATO Headquarters in Brussels, visits by the NATO Secretary General and the Chairman of NATO's Military Committee to those countries, participation or observation of exercises on a mutual basis, attendance of courses and technical workshops, etc.

For instance, this year, for the first time ever a NATO airborne early warning aircraft – AWACS - - deployed to the Pacific region to take part in a major multinational exercise staged in Australia.



I should add that NATO's dialogue and cooperation in Asia is not limited to the Contact Countries I mentioned to date, nor to the partnerships we have with the nations of Central Asia through NATO's Partnership for Peace and with the Russian Federation.

We have had now for several years regular political consultations with India, Pakistan and China at senior level, designed to ensure that NATO's engagement in Afghanistan is well understood and actively supported by these nations, because, as I said before, the entire International Community has a major stake in the successful completion of its engagement there.

And we intend to maintain and, indeed, intensify our dialogue with these three countries and possibly expand our political consultations to other nations in Asia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you will have appreciated from my remarks, NATO has lost no time in acknowledging the growing importance of Asia in world affairs and the benefits of engagement and cooperation.

We no longer are at the stage where we are still asking ourselves whether we should engage with Asia. There is no contradiction between the Alliance's essential anchoring in its transatlantic dimension and a healthy dialogue with Asia and the nations of the wider Pacific region. Increasingly, these two aspects of a transformed NATO go together to our mutual benefit.

Thank you.

