

**„THE DEMOCRATIC UNIFICATION OF EUROPE” - REMARKS BY H.E.
ADRIAN NASTASE, PRIME MINISTER OF ROMANIA - RIGA 2002
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a great honor to join such a distinguished panel and an even greater pleasure to be in the magical city of Riga at this time of the year.

It is little more than a year ago that President Bush set forth in Warsaw an historic vision of a Europe whole and free, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This vision closely matched the views already shared by every one of the countries that came together for this purpose in Vilnius in May 2000. Nevertheless, President Bush's affirmation in Warsaw has been a powerful inspiration this past year and he has challenged us again today.

This is the last major meeting of our democracies prior to the NATO Summit in November. This afternoon we are approaching the last bridge on the road to Prague. This is part of the journey that began in 1989 and has grown through our discovery of determination and of political cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe and now brings us within sight of our hoped-for rendez-vous with history. I would like to take a few minutes to review some important milestones on this journey and their meaning for the future.

Three months ago, I had the privilege to host „The Spring of New Allies” Summit in Bucharest. At that meeting, we learned two important things. Prime Minister Costas Simitis, in his Summit message reminded us that „the impending enlargement must encompass a balanced geographical dimension.” Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit expanded on this view stating that a Southern Dimension of enlargement at Prague will undoubtedly contribute to the extension of security and stability to Southeast Europe. President Kwasniewski's inspiring words reminded me that in Bucharest he too pointed out that „enlargement of NATO to the East and South is the cheapest and the most effective way to secure order and stabilization in Europe.” I have made the trip back from the Black Sea to the Baltic shore to reaffirm Romania's commitment toward continuous „heavy lifting” towards reform and preparation for NATO membership urged by Secretary Armitage in Bucharest.

The Riga Summit offers an appropriate venue to acknowledge the profound and positive evolution of our views about regional cooperation. Romania with our Turkish, Greek and Bulgarian partners has formed a „Southern Quartet” meant to develop a pattern of cooperation and thereby strengthen stability in Southeastern Europe. In the process, we are coordinating our efforts in the war on terrorism and developing new capabilities to respond to the broader challenges to the Trans-Atlantic security.

I am proud to be a part of this group of leaders, whose countries acted as „de facto” allies in the war on terrorism. The challenges of the „real world” have accelerated all our countries' preparations for NATO membership and the rethinking of our ideas about national security and international stability. We have readied ourselves to act as allies on the ground, shoulder to shoulder with NATO members in Afghanistan, while accelerating our preparations for NATO membership.

Both Romania and Bulgaria have opened airspace, airports and seaport facilities to Allied forces, shared intelligence and frozen the financial assets of terrorists. I cannot tell you how moved I was when the Romanian Parliament voted one week after September 11, with 386 votes in favor and only one abstention, in favor of contributing Romania's military forces to the international coalition against terrorism. Two days ago, I spoke with the commander of the additional Romanian troops deploying to Afghanistan. He described the high morale of his troops and their determination to be part of the effort to bring stability in Afghanistan. I can only imagine how my good friend Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha must have felt at the sight of planes taking off from the Bulgarian airport of Burgas on their mission to refuel Alliance fighters in the skies over Tora Bora.

All of the countries within the Vilnius Group have contributed to the new Alliance which responded to the attacks of September 11. We have all been willing and able to respond to the new threats of the 21st century, by sharing intelligence, opening air, land, and maritime transit space, freezing terrorism – related assets, and committing ground military forces. We have understood the security imperative of the future, and are pursuing military reform aimed at developing flexible, rapidly deployable forces, with strategic lift capacities, ready to plug into the NATO's capabilities and missions against terrorism. But, if we are to counter asymmetrical threats, I believe that it is equally important to enhance border security and strengthen our law enforcement capabilities to counter money laundering and transborder crime.

For all the countries in the Vilnius Group, the preparation for NATO membership has been one of our highest priorities. We have encouraged each other to reach our target goals and strengthened each other as we have encountered the inevitable difficulties. In Romania's case, we have focused on consolidating sound economic growth, strengthening the rule of law, and restructuring and modernizing our military.

Our economy grew over 5% last year, continuing the trend of the previous year. We have reserved 2.4% of GDP for the military budget for the next 5 years to allow for the modernization of our forces and the improvement of infrastructure. As Secretary of State Colin Powell recently observed, Romania has made significant progress in fighting human trafficking. We have developed our legal tools to combat anti-Semitism and to ensure the rights of minorities, to protect classified NATO information, and to fight corruption. We know that more has to be done. And we are committed to redouble our efforts in all these areas. Complacency is not an option for Romanians. The NATO Summit is not the finishing line; it is the start of a marathon in the course of which Romania society will assume complex and demanding missions.

Two weeks ago in a speech in Washington, Lord Robertson used the term the „democratic unification of Europe.” He went on to say that „Prague will ensure that [the democratic unification of Europe] is inevitable”. In my view, there is a democratic imperative at the heart of the transformation of our societies. Readiness to defend against the new, pervasive threats of the 21st century is not only a matter of military preparedness, but also a matter of weaving a healthy democratic fabric of our societies. Observing human rights and freedom of speech, ensuring multi-party political systems, strengthening rule of law unsullied by corruption, cultivating tolerance and respect for minorities, and coming to terms with the past must form the blueprint for our countries' future.

Our endeavors follow in the footsteps of the original leaders of the democratic unification of Europe: the leaders of Solidarity and Charter 77 and our own national heroes. They

began to break the grip of totalitarianism and opened the path for the rebirth of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. In Riga today, it is fair to say that, „We stand on the shoulders of giants.”

Their legacy continues to be powerful and compels us in the direction of further reform. I do not suppose that it is an accident that President Havel will host the Summit that will decide the future of our part of Europe. He encouraged us last year in Bratislava when he assured us that „the European post-Communist countries truly belong to the West - geographically, historically, culturally as well as in terms of their values.” But, he counseled us that „the Alliance is becoming not only an important pillar of international security, but also [...] a model of solidarity in the defense of human liberties”. It is thus imperative in our pursuit for NATO membership that we consolidate our democratic reforms as a strong defense of our shared values and a bulwark against the challenges of this century.

Prague is going to be a landmark summit not only for us, the candidate countries, but for the future NATO as well. We all want the Alliance which sooner or later we will be invited to join to be stronger, cohesive, having new capabilities to address the new threats. The Prague summit will also be a turning point for us as a group. I would therefore like to invite my colleagues to start thinking of the future of the Vilnius Group. It can still play an important role, especially as promoter of the „open door policy” of the future Alliance. It could also continue to act as a symbol of solidarity and source of encouragement both for those who will be invited to join and for the candidate countries. I am looking forward to informally exchanging views on the future of the Vilnius Group, in our meetings next months.

In conclusion, I would like to recall the words of Rabbi Andrew Baker, who spoke about democratic values at the Bucharest Summit. He challenged Europe’s new democracies to live up to our own aspirations. And to face our history directly. He exhorted us to commit fully to the reforms required for freedom, democracy, and prosperity to triumph in our countries. And to redouble our efforts in the months before Prague. For our children and the generations beyond them, we cannot do less.

Thank you.

[Quelle: <http://www.gov.ro/engleza/index.html>]