

**ADDRESS BY FOREIGN MINISTER LÁSZLÓ KOVÁCS AT THE JOINT
HUNGARIAN-NORWEGIAN SECURITY POLICY SEMINAR ENTITLED
“REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF NATO’S PARTNERSHIP AFTER PRAGUE”
(BUDAPEST, OCTOBER 9, 2002)**

Your Majesty,

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege and pleasure for me to deliver one of the keynote speeches at this joint Norwegian-Hungarian security policy seminar. I am particularly pleased that His Majesty King Harald of Norway and President Mádl have honoured the event with their presence. This joint seminar is yet another proof of the common endeavours of Hungary and Norway to enhance security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

In the run-up to the Prague Summit, we are often faced with questions about the future of the Alliance, about its relevance in the 21st century security environment. We believe that Prague will be the summit of transformation and modernization of the Alliance.

– At Prague the Alliance will undoubtedly have to address the key challenge of building advanced military capabilities to ensure it can deal with both the new and more conventional threats in the decades ahead.

– The world's attention will also be focused on the announcement of new members who will be invited to join NATO. The parallel expansion of the Alliance and the European Union will be a historic moment that will bring about the reunification of Europe.

– Furthermore, Prague will be a turning point for NATO in the way it will work with Partner nations in the future. “Regional Dimensions of NATO’s Partnership after Prague” is, therefore, a key subject to be discussed, and I am pleased that Norwegian and Hungarian officials, representatives of NGOs and the media will jointly address issues related to this subject during the seminar.

The general objective of NATO’s policy of Partnership and Cooperation is to preserve peace, as well as to promote democracy and stability by helping nations in transition with their reforms, and to foster genuine cooperation among democratic Euro-Atlantic countries. Partnership is based on shared values and objectives. The first decade of Partnership was an indisputable success and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) has become an important element of the European security architecture.

Enhancing mutual trust and understanding is a particular feature of NATO Partnership.

NATO’s Eastward outreach has resulted in developing special relations with Russia and Ukraine.

One of the key efforts aiming at enhancing partnership and co-operation has been the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council. This newest political structure of the Alliance launched earlier this year has quickly become an important example of how NATO and Russia can work together in the joint pursuit of common interests. NATO and Russia should keep this momentum in order to produce an ambitious, effective and substance-driven Working Program for the year 2003. Allies do have a stake in building a stronger, more fruitful relationship with Russia, while preserving the integrity of the Alliance.

The NATO-Russia Council has committed itself to fulfilling the goals of the 1997 Founding Act by strengthening NATO-Russia relations through practical and pragmatic cooperation in a number of important areas – a project-based approach that will ensure the development of a new culture of co-operation, allowing for joint decision and joint action.

For Hungary, as a neighbour, strengthening Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic orientation remains essential. Recent controversies notwithstanding, we have to help the country to find its European destiny. We need facilitate further democratic development of the Ukrainian society as well as their economic transition and defence reform. We are interested in drawing up an Action Plan to these ends that would reinforce the Alliance's distinctive partnership with Ukraine in a way that may lead to an eventual accession to the Membership Action Plan process.

Looking at the Southeast-European dimension of NATO's Partnership, we can safely say the Alliance has achieved a great deal of success. NATO stopped the war in Bosnia and has kept the peace there for six years with the valuable participation of Partner countries in the NATO-led peace support operation. NATO stopped the killing of innocent civilians in Kosovo, and won a quick and decisive war that led to the emergence of a democratic order in Yugoslavia. When civil war appeared likely in Macedonia last summer, NATO forces arrived at the request of both sides to help keep the peace.

Apart from peace support operations in the region, NATO has launched its South East European Initiative to help promote democratic developments and regional co-operation. This Initiative has proved to be an important and valuable political mechanism, offering countries in the region a tool to enhance their ability to take control of their destiny.

The security environment has improved substantially and there are favourable tendencies in the Balkans. Despite all these positive developments, we have to face the fact that the situation is not irreversible and several fundamental problems still remain unresolved. Social and economic consolidation and the process of Euro-Atlantic and regional integration will have to continue. Governments of regional countries should take ownership of the reform process and aim at anchoring their countries in the Euro-Atlantic community. To promote this process, the presence of the international community in the region is essential. "Western Balkans" are likely to stay on our agenda for the foreseeable future.

Therefore, the Alliance has to continue to play its full role in furthering the international community's objectives. NATO will place greater emphasis on engaging the countries in the region politically in cooperative security mechanisms such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace. It will continue to lead the necessary contingents of forces in Bosnia and in Kosovo – forces that will focus even more strongly on the current security challenges in the region.

All in all, whether in the Balkans, or with Russia and Ukraine, the Alliance looks beyond Prague to become a greater force for advancing Euro-Atlantic security goals.

When addressing regional dimensions of NATO's Partnership, one has to highlight the significance of Nordic cooperation. All components of the Nordic dimension of European security, whether Allies or Partners, work actively, constructively, and generously together to advance the cause of peace and security.

Our non-Allied Partners are among the most proactive countries in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, both consistently and creatively advocating ways and means to strengthen the Partnership through enhanced Partner-to-Partner cooperative activities, as well as through Partnership for Peace.

Furthermore, Nordic countries were among the firsts to co-operate with Russia in such important fields as nuclear safety and environmental hazards and they have been among those who recognize the importance of working closely particularly with partners in Central Asia, to ensure that when the Alliance takes in new members, the loss of Partners from the aspirant rolls will not disadvantage other Partners seeking to strengthen their access to Allies and to the Partnership for Peace.

Your Majesty,

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

New Partnership should reflect the new security environment. Democratic nations of the Euro-Atlantic area depend heavily on each other and we need to develop means and structures to be able to better meet the security challenges of the 21st century. We can only be successful in these endeavours if we continue to reach out and expand cooperation with all of NATO's Partners.

When shaping the new modalities of partnership and cooperation after the Prague Summit, we have to consider that after Prague allied countries will – most probably – outnumber Partners. Consequently, one of the main roles of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council/PfP as a promoter of rapprochement to NATO will seem to be less significant. At the same time, in a wider context, we should not forget about the impact that the qualitatively new relations with Russia or the foreseeable enhancement of NATO-Ukraine cooperation will have on the process of transforming NATO's Partnership relations.

Having all these in mind, we can conclude that we need a more flexible mechanism enabling NATO to work with interested Partners on an individual or collective basis pursuing a regionally focused agenda of cooperation. One can envisage, for example, NATO's relations with Partners as relations with countries of Central-Asia, the South-Caucasus and South-East Europe or non-Allied EU-members. Regional dimensions of NATO's Partnership are likely to increase significance after Prague. Therefore, we have to work out new mechanisms of cooperation allowing for flexible and pragmatic arrangements for Partners' involvement in our common work.

In short, we need to take a qualitative step forward in building a renewed Euro-Atlantic Partnership which will make the fullest, better coordinated use of all the instruments provided by EAPC and PfP. At the same time, the new Partnership should be one better prepared to meet the specific needs of Partners, advancing the cause of defense and economic reform, and facilitating the improvement of relations with their neighbours.

The objective of Partnership will remain unchanged, but the Alliance hopes to revitalize the concept with resolve and determination. Our goal for Prague must be to increase and refocus our common strength to better meet new threats, while seizing the historic opportunity to create a Europe stable, free and united.

[Quelle: <http://www.kum.hu/Szovivoi/2002/KovacsL/1009KLNATO.htm>]