

**TALKING POINTS FOR LÁSZLÓ KOVÁCS, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AT THE SEMINAR OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY ON “HUNGARY’S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY IN A
CHANGING AND ENLARGING ALLIANCE”
(BUDAPEST, OCTOBER 17, 2002)**

Madame Chairperson,
Mr. Deputy Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege and pleasure for me to deliver one of the keynote speeches at this traditional NATO conference of the Hungarian National Assembly. I am particularly pleased that NATO Deputy Secretary General Alessandro Minuto Rizzo has honoured the event with his presence. This conference is yet another proof of the commitment of Hungarian legislators and other decision-makers to NATO’s future and, more generally, to the enhancement of 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 modernisation of the Alliance.

– The world's attention will also be focused on the announcement of invitations for further countries to join NATO. Parallel enlargement of the Alliance and the European Union will constitute a historic moment that will bring about the reunification of Europe.

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

– Furthermore, Prague will be a turning point for NATO in the way it will work with Partner nations in the future. The development of regional dimensions within the NATO outreach programs is a key subject to be discussed at Prague.

Let me start with the item most interesting for the public: NATO’s next round of enlargement will definitely be launched at the Prague Summit. Although there has not yet been made any formal decision, I am convinced that in Prague the Alliance will open up its doors to a relatively large number of aspirant countries.

Our preference of course goes to countries neighbouring Hungary. At the same time, however, we also have a clear interest in realising the concept of robust enlargement. We believe that our security will significantly be enhanced if all candidates ready and able to join the Alliance are invited in November.

A less-known however very important collateral effect of NATO’s enlargement is about how to preserve the efficiency of the Alliance. We believe that a NATO at 20 something can still remain a functioning organisation if we consciously streamline structures and decision-making as well as decision-making procedures. Consensus-building and

cohesion will remain the core principles in this respect. With these two in mind I do not see any insurmountable difficulty for the preservation of efficiency within an enlarged Alliance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my perception, the subject of NATO's new capabilities will be the most important item on the agenda of the Summit. It is no exaggeration to say that NATO has arrived at a historic turning point: the Alliance can either live up to the new security challenges of the 21st Century or will face the danger of losing its relevance and influence in shaping security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

By stating this, we are not losing sight of NATO's traditional missions and core security tasks set among others by the 1999 Strategic Concept. Article 5 of the Washington Treaty prevails. At present, however, we need to recognise that to evoke Article 5 in case of the emerging security challenges of the Euro-Atlantic area poses relevant new questions, which require adequate answers.

This is a new way of thinking, a fundamental change in the security policy paradigm we used to follow in the nineties. This new phenomenon was triggered by the horror of the terror attacks against the US on 9/11 last year.

We have been well aware since then of the threat and we have made a great deal of efforts to counter the challenges threatening us. The US has been playing a key role throughout this endeavour, but it is clear that the widest and strongest possible coalition is needed to handle this threat in its entirety.

There is an urgent need for the enhancement of co-operation and for a new commitment of individual nations within NATO to jointly and successfully fight against terrorism. We are convinced that European NATO-members have a direct responsibility to assume in these efforts.

Although threat perceptions in the US and in Europe are still different, we Europeans, too, must be aware of the real dangers we are facing. Terrorism has an impact on everyone's security environment. The security and stability of the US and Europe is indivisible. Thus, both European and North American members of the Alliance must find common answers and take joint steps.

In order to find these common answers and joint steps, we must define NATO's new role and examine ways to jointly react by using NATO structures. The existing structures of the Alliance play an important role in pursuing NATO's traditional missions. However, the present capabilities of the member states and those of NATO are insufficient to counter new challenges.

This is why the Prague Capabilities Commitment, the New Capabilities Initiative will be the *primus inter pares* agenda item of the Summit. The new capabilities are more or less known to us, but until now there has not been enough commitment by nations to make these capabilities real and efficient.

We believe that by focusing on a tailored priority list we may considerably enhance the level of Alliance capabilities after the Summit.

The idea of establishing a NATO Response Force would be one of the most important and most far-reaching steps towards establishing a new level of capabilities. Hungary has been studying this proposal with great interest and I can assure you that by Prague we will have clarified the details of our force contribution offer. We are examining our possible contribution with a view to our defence review process and vice versa: our defence review will reflect the new capability needs of NATO.

There is a clear tendency that NATO's geographical scope will not be limited to the Euro-Atlantic area any more. NATO must build the capabilities to be ready to cope with a wide range of threats emanating from different corners of the globe. This does not mean that NATO should become a "global policeman" in the coming years; it only means that NATO must be prepared to face new and asymmetric challenges, which – due to their nature and with regard to their origin – are usually not directly linked to the Euro-Atlantic area.

Another aspect of enhancing capabilities is closely connected to the future of the NATO-EU relationship. As a NATO member and an EU candidate with a perspective of joining the Union by 2004, Hungary considers the success of the NATO-EU relationship as part of its fundamental foreign and security policy interests. We are convinced that without a strong strategic partnership between the two organisations we will not be able to meet the challenges of the new Millennium.

Strengthening the transatlantic link is key to our future security. We Hungarians will do our utmost in both organisations to foster this strategic partnership and to optimise the use of resources of the two structures for the sake of our common security and stability. We must find a solution to the problem of Berlin+ as soon as possible. The sooner we do so, the bigger the likelihood of an efficient ESDP will be.

What we want to avoid by any means is duplication of planning and force capabilities between NATO and EU ESDP. We simply cannot afford and there is no reason for parallel structures in the field of security and defence. Both organisations have their distinct role to play, and they should do so in harmony.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not want to ignore current challenges to our security and as I elaborated on new capabilities I also bore in mind the Iraqi problem. We made clear that we want Iraq to comply with all previous Security Council decisions. Consultations in the Security Council have recently intensified, which, in my judgement, offers us the hope that the UN will be in the position to facilitate the settlement of the Iraqi question.

The best scenario would be if Saddam Hussein, due to intense international pressure, stops producing weapons of mass destruction and starts destroying them immediately. The worst case scenario would be just to sit and wait until the day when Saddam Hussein is able to threaten the entire world with an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction accumulated by him. This we cannot afford. Therefore, if all political options are exhausted, we will deem it necessary to use any means appropriate in order to stop Saddam Hussein from threatening world security.

We, of course, prefer measures that are supported by a UN resolution. However, in my opinion any action is better than doing nothing. We must not wait for the tragic consequences of Saddam Hussein's armament. If military action is inevitable, Hungary,

as an ally of the US, a member of NATO and a country strongly committed to fighting terrorism, will act accordingly. We will decide on Hungary's contribution if the need arises.

Public opinion is following the situation in Iraq with a great deal of sensitivity. Governments must do their best to inform the people about developments of the crisis. This is a responsibility primarily shared with parliaments, so one cannot overestimate the importance of jointly convincing the public about our involvement in finding solutions to this crisis. I hope this conference will become another vehicle of conveying the most important messages to the public and can contribute to the better understanding of the present security situation and the need for new types of answers to new challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a third item, we should not forget the renewal of NATO's policy of Partnership and Co-operation, either. This framework is meant to preserve peace, as well as to promote democracy and stability by helping nations in transition with their reforms, and to foster genuine security and defence co-operation. 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.

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 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. At the same time, Allies do have a stake in building a stronger, more fruitful relationship with Russia, while preserving the integrity of the Alliance.

The NRC has also proven that it is capable of functioning as a very effective confidence-building tool. It is not by chance that Russia understood the philosophy of enlargement and that it accepts NATO's right to project peace and stability towards the East and South by incorporating new member states. The new level of NATO-Russia co-operation will enable us to clarify matters or debate questions more easily and to seek answers that serve our common interests.

For Hungary as a neighbour, strengthening Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic orientation remains essential. Recent controversies notwithstanding, we have to help this country find its European destiny. We need to facilitate further democratic development of the Ukrainian society, as well as their economic transition and defence reform.

Looking at the Southeast-European dimension of NATO's Partnership, we can safely say the Alliance has achieved a great deal of success. 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 in the Western-Balkans needs constant international attention and several fundamental problems still remain unresolved. 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, including that of NATO, in the region remains essential.

Madame Chairperson,
Mr. Deputy Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I underlined earlier, legislators and governments will in the coming weeks have a role in making the public understand the new security situation, a task that is difficult to overestimate. The success of the Prague Summit, including the definition of NATO's new role and the commitment to new capabilities – all in one: NATO's future – depends to a great extent on common action within the Alliance as well as towards our public. This common task puts a sort of joint responsibility on our shoulders and I am more than confident we can live up to the momentum.

Bearing all this in mind, I wish the conference success and hope that it will contribute to the achievement of our goals for Prague, namely to increase and refocus our common strength to better cope with new threats, while seizing the historic opportunity to create a Europe stable, free and united.

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