

**STATEMENT BY THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF
ALBANIA, BULGARIA, CROATIA, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA,
MACEDONIA, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA AND SLOVENIA ON THE
OCCASION OF NATO SUMMIT IN PRAGUE (25.11.2002)**

[1] We, the Heads of State and Government of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, reaffirm that political solidarity and a commitment to the democratic values will continue to be the foundation of our cooperation with each other and with NATO allies.

[2] In the two and a half years since we first met in Vilnius, Lithuania, we have sought to make our own contribution to a Europe that is free, and united by the fundamental principles of democracy, free market economy, and human rights. We have also set the goal of acting in solidarity in response to the new threats to the Euro-Atlantic community. To this end, we have joined NATO nations in operations from Kosovo to Kabul and have acted as members of the Alliance in the fight against terrorism.

[3] We welcome the decision of the North Atlantic Council to invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks with NATO. This decision is a success for all of our countries and a success for democracy. It is also a recognition of the tremendous efforts our countries put into reforms. We believe that Albania, Croatia and Macedonia are an essential part of the Euro-Atlantic community and should be invited to begin accession talks at the earliest opportunity. We are committed to accelerate the process of reform in each of our countries and to work together to support the aspiration of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia for membership in NATO.

[4] We are grateful for the support of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to the Vilnius Group since its formation and trust that it will continue to act as an engine for further NATO enlargement. We welcome the invitation of Lithuania to host in Vilnius, on 22-23 May 2003, a meeting at the level of Parliamentary speakers of our countries, and the intention of Macedonia to host in 2004 a Vilnius Group Summit in Skopje.

[5] We reaffirm our support for a strong Alliance at the core of Trans-Atlantic security, capable to adapt to and meet new security challenges. We shall contribute to the fullest extent possible to NATO operations and to the modernization of NATO's defence capabilities. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to play an active role in the war against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We support the goal of the international community for full disarmament of Iraq as stipulated in the UN Security Council Resolution 1441. In the event of non-compliance with the terms of this resolution, we are prepared to contribute to an international coalition to enforce its provisions and the disarmament of Iraq.

[6] The process we began in Vilnius has enhanced mutual trust, solidarity and regional cooperation among our countries and strengthened democracy in Europe. We have accelerated the transformation of our civic societies and learned to work together as allies. We believe that this spirit of solidarity and responsibility has a meaningful role to play in the aftermath of the Prague Summit, in the furtherdance [sic!] of democracy and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We are ready to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to succeed in joining the Euro-Atlantic institutions, and we will

support the process of democratic reform in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the countries of Caucasus and the Central Asia.

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