

STATEMENT
of H.E. Oleh Shamshur,
Ambassador of Ukraine to the United States of America
at the hearing “NATO Enlargement and Bucharest Summit”

(Helsinki Commission, 4 March 2008)

Dear Chairman Hastings,
Dear Chairman Cardin,
Members of the Helsinki Commission,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The year of 2008 can become another landmark in the NATO’s development through further expanding the area of democracy, freedom and stability in Europe.

For Ukraine, consideration of its request to join the Membership Action Plan at the Bucharest summit will be the “moment of truth” proving the consistency and efficiency of its efforts to carry out fundamental societal change on the way to attain a strategic goal of NATO membership as well as testing the seriousness of NATO’s “open door” policy towards the new democracies in the East of the continent.

Ukraine’s position was clearly and unequivocally formulated in the joint letter signed by the President, Speaker of the Parliament and Prime Minister of the country on 11 January 2008 that was addressed to the NATO Secretary General. Stressing “profound and irrevocable democratic transformations” in Ukraine as the “objective prerequisites for resolving the critical issues to achieve all the criteria required for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”, effective interaction between Ukraine and NATO in many critically important areas and progress achieved by Ukraine in the framework of Intensified Dialogue on membership and relevant reforms, the Ukrainian leadership expressed their hope that this progress will be recognized by the Alliance in the near future and stated that “currently Ukraine is interested in the accession to the NATO Membership Action Plan”.

The history of Ukraine-NATO relations speaks for itself and reflects both the persistence and growing intensity of Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Ukraine’s rapprochement with NATO started almost immediately after the restoration of her independence in 1991. Already in January 1992 Ukraine for the first time participated in the meeting of the North-Atlantic Cooperation Council.

In 1994 Ukraine joined the Partnership for Peace Program. Under this program Ukraine has participated in over 200 military exercises. Over 20 thousand members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces participated in 1475 NATO-organized conferences, roundtables and seminars. Years of active cooperation and NATO assistance in radical reform of the military sector resulted in Ukrainian Armed Forces having a high degree of interoperability with the NATO forces and adopting NATO standards of cooperation and transparency in military affairs.

In 1996 Ukraine and NATO held their first joint exercise on Ukraine’s territory and opened the NATO Information and Documentation Center in Kyiv. In 1997 Ukraine and NATO signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership which codified their special relationship and established NATO-Ukraine Commission that has been meeting at different levels, including summits, on a regular basis. In 2002 the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan was launched (last Annual Target Plans that are AP’s implementation tools

by its structure and content are identical to a National Implementation Program of the MAP). In 2005 Ukraine and the Alliance started the Intensified Dialogue on membership issues and relevant reforms.

The perspective of the NATO membership has been stipulated by the fundamental pieces of legislation of Ukraine, such as the Law on National Security of 2003, the Military Doctrine of 2005 and the Strategy on National Security of 2007.

As of today, Ukraine is the only non-member state taking an active part in all peace-keeping and anti-terrorist operations of the Alliance (KFOR in Kosovo, NMT-I in Iraq, Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, ISAF in Afghanistan). In 2003-2004 Ukraine was one of the first and most significant contributors to the coalition forces in Iraq. Our input in those operations included – first and foremost – participation of Ukrainian military personnel and assets as well as sharing intelligence, providing overflight rights and indispensable airlift capacities. Among the latest initiatives, Ukraine has signaled her willingness to participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF).

Ukraine and NATO member-states have been performing together extremely important and often dangerous tasks in a number of peacekeeping missions - in Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Angola, Lebanon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, Ethiopia and Eritrea, etc. Five Ukrainian planes have returned to Darfur to help the UN mission in the country.

Ukraine actively interacts with NATO and its members within the new mechanisms and arrangements set to ensure compliance and implementation of the principal treaties in the field of non-proliferation and security in general. Ukraine has joined the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Fully sharing common democratic values and being NATO's reliable partner Ukraine perceives itself as an integral part of the indivisible Euro-Atlantic security area and is ready for concerted work to counter common security threats and challenges. We are willing to enhance our cooperation within the framework of UN, OSCE, other international fora in search for the adequate answers to the most pressing global and European problems, including issues of regional security where Ukraine as a recognized regional leader has been playing a prominent role.

Thus, Ukraine's request for the MAP corresponds to the logic and dynamics of its cooperation with NATO that has been acquiring new depth, scope and quality. It has also grown out of the internal development of Ukraine since 1991. In the course of this period Ukraine has been evolving– with the accompanying pains of growth – into a modern European democracy, creating and strengthening the democratic institutions, ensuring protection and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, introducing democratic standards in the political and social life of the country. During those years we have always enjoyed support and encouragement on the part of the United States and other NATO partners, which we highly appreciate.

Events of the Orange Revolution of 2004 constituted convincing proof of the maturity of the Ukrainian society. Ukrainian people put an end to the emerging authoritarian tendencies in governance and rejected results of the forged election. The irreversible character of choice in favor of democratic values has been proved by the fair and transparent parliamentary elections of 2006 and 2007, development of a competitive and free political environment, diverse mass media scene devoid of the government harassment, and further progress of NGOs and other civil society actors.

Market reforms resulted in an impressive rebound of the national economy that is now in its eighth consecutive year of economic growth. Now it is one of the most dynamic economies of Europe with the annual average GDP increase of 7 percent since 2000, rising foreign direct investment, growing middle class and gradually improving living standards. Ukraine is finalizing procedures necessary for acquiring full-fledged membership in the WTO and starting negotiations on the establishment of the Free Trade Area with the European Union.

Responsible behavior on the international stage, adherence to the highest democratic norms, and bustling economy define the image of modern Ukraine – a young democracy aspiring and deserving to join the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies, based on shared values.

We are convinced that Ukraine's joining the NATO Membership Action Plan is first of all about recognizing the new realities. One of them is that during the years of independence Ukraine has de facto become an important part of the Euro-Atlantic security space.

At the same time we are fully aware that the MAP doesn't guarantee membership and does not prejudge final decision by the Alliance on this matter. That is why acceleration and deepening of the far-reaching reforms in the political, defense, security, legal and other areas aimed at consolidating democratic achievements, improving the well-being and security of the Ukrainian people is at the centre of activities of the authorities of Ukraine. MAP will play an essential role as a major stimulus in this process.

The Policy of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration pursued by Ukraine is not directed against any third country. We see our quest for future NATO membership as an honest effort to create the most favorable conditions for making Ukraine a prosperous democratic state with a robust market economy that will be an increasingly significant contributor to the regional, European and global stability and security.