

NATO ENLARGEMENT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MARCH 4, 2008

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NATO ENLARGEMENT

March 4, 2008

COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
WASHINGTON, DC

The hearing was held at 3 p.m. in room B-318 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding.

Commissioners present: Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Hon. Mike McIntyre, Commissioner, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Witnesses present: Michael Haltzel, Senior Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University; Janusz Bugajski, Director, New European Democracies Project, Senior Fellow, Europe Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Steven Pifer, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Senior Advisor, Russia and Eurasia Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies.

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Mr. HASTINGS. It's 1 minute ahead of 3. How about let's start ahead of time?

I'd like to call our hearing to order and welcome you to this afternoon's hearing on the timely and important issue of NATO enlargement and the Bucharest summit.

In approximately a month from now, leaders of the 26 countries belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will be meeting in Bucharest, Romania to look for ways to ensure security in the 21st century.

NATO is an alliance born in the cold war and NATO, however, has found a role meeting the challenges of the post-cold war world.

We've seen that with peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. We see it today in Afghanistan. And the Bucharest summit is going to address the many ongoing and emerging threats to the security of its members.

Obviously, the challenges at the International Security Assistance Force bases in Afghanistan will be a major focus of the summit participants.

I understand that maritime situational awareness and cyber defense will also be high on the agenda and there will be discussion of the missile defense project, the evolving situation in Kosovo, and other current topics of importance.

Just as a footnote, a week before last, I was in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia and in Austria at the winter meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The same subjects, particularly the missile defense project and Kosovo, were high on the agenda and minds of those that were my interlocutors and fellow parliamentarians.

While NATO adapts to change, it must change itself and one way it has done so is to extend its cooperation and membership to like-minded countries in Europe. This process has been in play from the beginning, but it took on a whole new dimension since the end of the cold war.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were invited to join at the Madrid summit in 1997. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were invited at the Prague summit 5 years later in 2002.

In Bucharest, three new countries may be invited to join the alliance—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia. The summit may also decide to extend Membership Action Plans, or MAPs, to Ukraine and Georgia.

NATO enlargement is something that has a lot of support in principal. Like the other issues addressed in Bucharest, however, enlargement is not without its controversy and disagreement when it gets down to the specifics, and all of the issues on the agenda can get mixed together in the effort to achieve a consensus view.

Despite the best efforts of diplomats, little is certain.

Our hearing today, fortunately, is much simpler. From a Helsinki Commission perspective, a key ingredient to common security is shared values regarding democracy and human rights.

Our hearing today will focus on just that—the degree to which five potential members of the NATO alliance, three near-term and two long-term, have transformed their policies and institutions in order to join what is viewed as an alliance of democracy.

That is, in our view, an important consideration, just as much so as their prospective contribution of military and other resources to a common defense there.

No matter what our affinities for any of these countries, we must be sure they are ready to take the next step and seek improvements if they are not. That is in our own national interest, but it is also to the benefit of the citizens of these countries, as well.

I'm very pleased, and my Co-Chairman from the Senate will be here at some point shortly, and I'd say to you now that I have a matter on the floor that will allow that, when he arrives, I will have to leave during that period of time.

But with us today, we have a truly distinguished panel.

Dr. Michael Haltzel is a senior fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and Dr. Haltzel was a senior Senate staffer, deeply involved in two previous rounds of NATO enlargement.

Dr. Janusz Bugajski is Director of the New European Democracies Project and senior fellow, Europe Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and he has testified before the Commission, and we thank you, on several prior occasions.

And my friend, Ambassador Steven Pifer is a senior adviser with the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program, and his 25-year foreign service career included assignments as Ambassador to Ukraine and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia.

I'd also like to note and welcome the presence of the embassies of some of the countries under consideration today, including the Ambassadors of Albania, Your Excellency; the Ambassador of Macedonia, Your Excellency, we're pleased that you're here; and, Ukraine, en route, I'm told; and Chargé d'Affaires of Croatia I believe is with us.

We thank you all.

And they've each provided us with a statement making their case for their NATO aspirations, which will be included in our record of these proceedings today.

And I want to thank you for your input, as well as your willingness to hear our report and our concerns about human rights and democratic development over the years and again today.

You may not always like what we have to say, but I think you realize that constructive criticisms which come from the Helsinki Commission are designed to be helpful and that we do our share of criticizing our own country, where warranted. I certainly do my share of that. I don't know about everybody, but I certainly do, and it's warranted a lot under certain circumstances and in different instances.

Dr. Haltzel, since you carry that title "senior" like I do, let's start with you, if you don't mind.

MICHAEL HALTZEL, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS, PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Mr. HALTZEL. Thank you very much.

Chairman Hastings, it's an honor to testify before the Commission today.

I'd like to give my views in summary form and I would ask that my full written testimony be entered into the record.

Mr. Chairman, I support extending invitations to membership to Croatia, Albania and Macedonia at the Bucharest NATO summit. I also support, but with reservations, granting Membership Action Plans, known, as you said, by their acronym, MAPs, to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest.

Of the three candidates, Croatia, in my view, has the strongest case for membership. It is the only one awarded the designation "free" by Freedom House in its 2007 Freedom in the World survey.

Its two leading political figures, President Stjepan Mesic and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, while belonging to different parties, are both democrats.

Sanader, in particular, deserves credit for having successfully reformed the Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ, which the late President Franjo Tudjman had run in a fascist manner.

Parliamentary elections held in Croatia in November 2007 were judged to be free and fair.

Popular support for NATO membership, once quite low, has increased dramatically, and I've just been informed that according to a poll that was taken by a U.S. agency, released last weekend, it's now up to 67 percent. That's a dramatic increase.

I suspect the events in Belgrade a week and a half ago may have had something to do with that.

Most of the Serbs who fled Croatia during the 1991 to '95 war had been resettled, although there have been instances of violence against returnees.

Some antidemocratic right-wing elements do remain active in Croatia, especially among veterans groups that resent the government's cooperation with the Hague tribunal. Such groups, however, appear, to me, to be marginal remnants of the Tudjman era.

Albania has made remarkable political and economic strides in the less than two decades since its people cast off Europe's most retrograde and paranoid communist dictatorship.

The country's political life is raucous and often centered on disputes among a few leading personalities. The government is implementing a comprehensive reform program of the judiciary and the electoral system.

Progress has been made against corruption and organized crime, but they remain serious problems.

Albania is religiously diverse, with about half its population Muslim and the rest divided between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism, living in relative harmony.

All groups support NATO membership for the country, with more than 90 percent of the populous in favor.

Despite its own ample post-Communist problems, Tirana has an admirable record of being a prudent good neighbor. During the Kosovo war of 1999, Albania took in hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Later, in 2001, it took a responsible stance during the inter-ethnic armed clashes in Macedonia, eschewing any desire for a greater Albania.

The third candidate country, Macedonia, has also made recent notable progress, but its path to membership may be the most difficult of the three.

Unlike Croatia and Albania, where the titular nationality accounts for about 90 percent of the population, Macedonia Slavs total only about 64 percent, with Albanians comprising 25 percent, and Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bulgarians, and others making up the rest.

Relations between Orthodox Macedonian Slavs and ethnic Albanians have been very contentious, nearly erupting into civil war in 2001, until the United States and the European Union brokered the Ohrid Framework Agreement, whose decentralization provides enhanced minority rights in language and education and, thereby, has kept a tenuous peace ever since.

The national government, which traditionally includes an ethnic Albanian party, the ruling coalition has made good faith efforts at police, justice, and economic reforms and at combating the pervasive corruption in the country.

An overwhelming majority of the population supports NATO membership. And like Albania, Macedonia hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kosovo during the war in 1999.

Presenting the most serious barrier to NATO membership perhaps is the unfortunate and unresolved dispute with Greece about the country's very name.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia all fulfill the requirements for NATO membership and all three, especially Macedonia and Albania, have been enthusiastic contributors to alliance military operations.

Nonetheless, some analysts are opposed to their accession on institutional grounds. I address these concerns in my written testimony and perhaps we can go into some of them during the question-and-answer period.

One current provocative assertion is that the Kosovo crisis necessitates a postponement of the enlargement process in the western Balkans.

On the contrary, I believe the challenge of Kosovo strengthens the case for enlargement at Bucharest.

If the government in Belgrade persists in a policy of self-isolation from the Euro-Atlantic community and perhaps even gravitates toward temporarily becoming a semi-satellite of Russia, then it would be a useful insurance policy to have NATO members on most of Serbia's borders and on the border with northern Kosovo.

The granting of MAPs to Ukraine and/or Georgia at the Bucharest summit appears to me to be more problematic. Ukraine does rate a free and Georgia a partly free overall designation in Freedom House's Freedom of the World 2008 survey, with Ukraine scoring higher on civil liberties than Georgia and higher than Macedonia and Albania, for that matter.

No one can doubt Ukraine's geo-strategic importance. A stable, democratic Ukraine inside NATO would dramatically increase stability in Europe. It is precisely because of Ukraine's importance that the alliance must give its qualifications very careful scrutiny.

On the positive side, over the past 2 years, Ukraine has conducted two free and fair parliamentary elections and has seen a peaceful change of administrations.

In mid-January, Ukraine's top three elected officials, President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, and Parliamentary Speaker Arseni Yatsenyuk, sent a letter to NATO asking that the alliance consider offering Ukraine a MAP at the Bucharest summit.

Over the past decade, Ukraine has been an active participant in alliance peacekeeping and military operations, including in a combat role in Iraq in 2004 and 2005.

And the new Tymoshenko government has gotten off to a very promising economic start.

On the negative side, Ukraine's democracy remains fractious and sometimes utterly dysfunctional. In fact, for over a month, the parliament, Verkhovna Rada, has been in a forced recess because of the opposition blocking the legislature, in a protest against the above-mentioned joint letter to NATO.

The opponents, it must be said, have lost some credibility through the publication of official documents showing that when

Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovich was prime minister from 2002 to 2004, he supported Ukraine's drive to NATO membership, including the annual NATO Ukraine action plans that were very similar to MAPs.

Whether the blocking maneuver in parliament is rooted in political opportunism or principled opposition, the fact remains that overall popular support for NATO membership currently stands at only about 20 or 25 percent.

The political leadership has said that the electorate would have to show its backing in a national referendum before the government makes a request for membership.

Years after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine remains a sharply polarized country.

Unlike Ukraine, in Georgia, there is more than three-quarters support for NATO membership. The small country, in the Caucasus, has been extraordinarily willing to commit its troops to alliance missions, including combat operations.

In fact, Georgia is now one of the leading non-U.S. contributors to the coalition forces in Iraq.

Until last fall, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, the architect of the 2003 Rose Revolution, was seen in the West as an exemplar of democracy. His reputation, however, has been tarnished, first, by the excessive force used by police in breaking up anti-government demonstrations in November 2007 and then by opponents' insistent allegations of electoral irregularities in the January 2008 Presidential elections.

I know you know a bit about that, Mr. Chairman.

It should be added that respected international observers, while noting problems, did judge the election to have been generally fair.

Mr. Chairman, as was explicitly the case in the last two rounds of NATO enlargement, relations with Russia, I believe, must be a factor in our decision.

Taking the Kremlin into consideration does not, of course, mean giving it a veto. Every country, including former Soviet Republics, has the sovereign right to choose its own foreign and security policy.

Russian President Putin's recent comment about targeting Russian nuclear armed missiles on Ukraine if it joins NATO is a totally unacceptable attempt at intimidation and reveals an unwillingness to accept the fact that Kyiv is independent of Moscow.

President Putin, who, in May, will become Prime Minister Putin, plans to attend the Bucharest summit. Any negative decisions regarding NATO enlargement would likely be viewed as acquiescence to his opposition.

This is an impression I would not wish to be conveyed, but, in itself, is not sufficient reason for the alliance to move forward.

At the end of the day, each candidacy, whether for membership or for a MAP, should be evaluated on its own merits.

On that basis, I narrowly support offering MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia at the Bucharest summit. Both countries have room for major improvement in their domestic politics.

In May, Georgia will hold parliamentary elections, which will offer an opportunity to reassure its friends that its democracy is solid.

Ukraine must demonstrate that its antagonistic political rivals can cooperate to continue economic progress, to further reduce corruption, and to conduct a public information campaign on NATO so that popular support for NATO membership can grow substantially from its current extremely low level.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that if, because of opposition in some western European capitals, NATO decides not to grant MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest, the alliance then should explicitly declare that the door is still open to both countries, should express willingness immediately to consult with them on remaining actions needed to be taken, and should stress that Kyiv and Tbilisi will receive MAPs upon their satisfactory meeting of all criteria, a development—and I'd like to emphasize this—which might occur in advance of the 2009 60th anniversary NATO summit.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony and I'd be happy to answer any questions that you and other members of the Commission would like to pose later.

Mr. HASTINGS. Thank you very much, Dr. Haltzel.

Mr. Bugajski?

JANUSZ BUGAJSKI, DIRECTOR, NEW EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES PROJECT, SENIOR FELLOW, EUROPE PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Hastings, for inviting me again to testify. It's an honor and a pleasure to be here.

I will try to simply summarize my written testimony, which I would like to formally submit.

Let me begin by saying this—I think a NATO that embraces all of Europe's democracies is important for regional stability. It's important for U.S. strategic interests, and it's extremely important for rebuilding an effective trans-Atlanticism.

NATO, as we know, is the only transatlantic security institution in which members have pledged to defend each other's independence, in which they conduct common security operations, whether in combat, peacekeeping or reconstruction, and where the standards for NATO entry simulate a range of necessary democratic reforms among candidate states.

NATO's consistent enlargement over the past decade has brought most of Europe into the organization, except for two significant regions—the western Balkans and the Black Sea.

The inclusion of Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia, I believe, will significantly shrink this gray zone in the western Balkans and enhance NATO's mission as a generator of regional stability.

Hence, invitations to NATO membership for the three Adriatic charter states at the Bucharest summit will signal a positive contribution to the alliance for six principal reasons, and I will try and summarize these as briefly as I can.

First, democratic development. Each of the three countries—Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia—have committed themselves to democratic governance and the rule of law, and all three have registered steady progress during the past decade.

I go into a bit more detail in my testimony.

An indication and recognition of their development, both Albania and Macedonia have signed stabilization association agreements with the European Union as stepping stones toward EU accession.

Meanwhile, Croatia is already a candidate for EU membership and is expected to gain entry to the union within the next two to 3 years.

All three countries, I believe, have attained a level of democratic development evident among the last wave of NATO entrants, particularly the nearby Balkan states of Bulgaria and Romania, and the prospect of EU accession will help ensure continuing progress in their reformist agenda.

NATO membership, I believe, should not only be an objective for countries that have committed themselves to extensive democratic reform, it must also be a reward for steadfast progress in implementing those reforms.

Second factor, security sector. All three countries are well prepared for NATO accession, having implemented several Membership Action Plan programs since 1999.

Each government has conducted the political, economic, legal, and security sector reforms envisaged through the MAP framework and they are pursuing the restructuring, modernization, refurbishment and professionalization of their armed forces, in compliance with NATO standards.

In addition, there is overall consensus across the political spectrum in all three countries in favor of NATO accession. Opinion polls indicate that the public favors NATO entry by a wide margin, exceeding 90 percent in Albania, 70 percent in Macedonia, and with majority support now, I believe, over 60 percent in Croatia.

There is only limited opposition to NATO membership in all three candidate states. It doesn't mean that the remainder of that percentage is against NATO. They probably don't have an opinion or insufficient knowledge.

Third factor, contributions to NATO and U.S. missions. Each country has contributed to U.S. or NATO led missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and elsewhere.

In fact, at least six west European countries, which are demographically larger or economically more prosperous, provide less than the Adriatic-3 to the Afghani operation.

Seaports and airports have been made available by all three capitals to U.S. and NATO forces, together with access to various military facilities, over-flight rights, and the use of national air traffic control service.

In Afghanistan, all three countries participate in the NATO led international security force mission.

In Iraq, Albania, and Macedonia do have troops, whereas 10 NATO countries have not participated in the operation either during or after the U.S. led intervention.

Macedonia and Albania have also participated in the EU's peacekeeping force on Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Croatia is making preparations to contribute to Operation Active Endeavor, NATO's maritime counterterrorist operation in the Mediterranean.

Four, domestic stability and regional security. NATO membership will contribute to consolidating domestic stability and regional

security, essential in the wake of Kosovo's independence and the ongoing political uncertainty in Serbia.

Inclusion will prevent these countries from feeling isolated and vulnerable to any negative effects stemming from Kosovo's statehood of Serbia's reaction.

Membership for the Adriatic—I almost said Atlantic-3 already. Membership for the Adriatic-3 would mean that almost the entire Balkan peninsula is either within NATO or moving in that direction.

In addition, I believe Montenegro, which is committed to trans-Atlanticism, must also become a credible candidate in the near future and, also, receive a Membership Action Plan.

The inclusion of Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia would be a source of encouragement for the remaining states to pursue necessary reforms. It would also convince the more progressive forces in Serbia that closer cooperation with NATO would enhance their modernization and provide another stepping stone toward future EU accession.

Five, consolidating Atlanticism and the wider Europe. NATO enlargement over the past decades has not weakened the North Atlantic alliance. Instead, it is the lack of sufficient contributions by some member states that has undercut NATO's effectiveness, while Washington's tendency to use the alliance as a toolbox after 9/11 also contributed to making NATO's future uncertain.

Including the Adriatic-3 in NATO will not import regional instability into the alliance. All three countries maintain productive bilateral ties, participate in all regional multinational initiatives, and have no insurmountable disputes with neighbors.

I will say a word about the Greek-Macedonian relationship of disputes in a moment, at the end.

I believe that bringing these three strongly pro-American countries into NATO will contribute to consolidating the alliance and expanding its influence.

This will also connect the Adriatic, the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean region and enable NATO to focus its attention on securing the countries further east.

Thus, I believe NATO enlargement is an important component in consolidating a wider Europe.

And, six, countering Russia's expansionism. NATO enlargement throughout the Balkans and toward the Black Sea region would help, I believe, restrain Russia's expansive aspirations and negative influences in the region and provide a greater sense of security to U.S. allies and the new Atlanticist states.

The Balkans are now useful for Moscow in disrupting democratic expansion in the wide European theater and injecting the Kremlin's corrupt business practices and its disregard for the rule of law.

NATO enlargement in the western Balkans and the prospect of inclusion for all democratic states of the Black Sea region that meet the necessary conditions, including Ukraine and Georgia, which I believe should be included in the NATO process through Membership Action Plans at Bucharest. This, I believe, will send two strong signals to Moscow.

First, that the United States and its European allies are determined to reinvigorate the trans-Atlantic alliance by projecting secu-

rity to all nearby regions and, second, that the value of common security interests and the interests stemming from common democratic values are more effective than Russia's attempt to corrupt Europe's political leadership and to divide the alliance.

Let me just say, very briefly, a last word, because it cannot be left out, which is the Macedonian question.

One point of contention before NATO's April summit revolves around the dispute between Athens and Skopje over Macedonia's internationally recognized name.

As we know, while Skopje would accept NATO entry under the FYROM, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, label, by which it is currently included in the United Nations, Athens does see the pre-accession period as an opportunity to press for a permanent name that eliminates its concerns over identity, history, and territory.

Nobody, I believe, has discovered the magic formula in resolving the dispute. On and off, it's been going on for 17 years, even though I believe all parties, including Greece, want to see Macedonia enter NATO to enhance regional security.

Washington, I believe, must remain engaged in this process to find some interim arrangement that would at least temporarily satisfy both parties, prevent any kind of non-invitation in Bucharest, prevent the vetoing of Skopje's entry into NATO, and would thereby serve longer-term NATO goals.

After the Bucharest summit, because I don't think, simply, there's enough time to resolve this issue, I believe after the Bucharest summit, there has to be then a more concerted effort to press for a permanent solution, a permanent formula that would improve relations between Greece and Macedonia, which, after all, are both extremely important U.S. allies in the region.

Thank you.

Mr. HASTINGS. We've obviously been joined by Senator Cardin, who I'm sure will have some remarks and, as I indicated to you, is going to expel me.

But before leaving, I'd like to welcome and thank Ukraine's Ambassador for your presence, Your Excellency, and Georgia's Deputy Chief of Mission, I believe, came in, as well. Welcome, Your Excellency, as well.

Senator Cardin, we've heard from two of our presenters.

And I do wish to just take a point of personal privilege. We have to fight to get space for our meetings and this hearing, in and of itself, is indicative of a great need.

I wish we could send this over to the Speaker's office, this picture, so that she can see it and recognize our great need for space.

But, also, I'm always very, very deeply appreciative when I see young people that attend these hearings.

And so for all of you, Senator Cardin and I have held hearings on the campus of the University of Maryland and we have indicated a great desire to hold them at other universities in the near future, as well, as time permitting, around the country.

So you youngsters are welcome to come on in closer and sometimes you all even sit on the floor in class and I know that to be the case.

Ambassador Pifer, if you would proceed and allow that I take my leave, with no offense meant, and I leave it in the hands of Senator Cardin.

Thank you.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you.

STEVEN PIFER, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO UKRAINE, SENIOR ADVISOR, RUSSIA AND EURASIA PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Amb. PIFER. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to appear today to discuss Ukraine, NATO, and a Membership Action Plan in Bucharest.

I've also been asked to offer some brief comments on Georgia and I would like to offer some remarks on Russia, as well.

And with your permission, I would submit a written statement for the record.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you. It will be made part of the record.

Amb. PIFER. Mr. Chairman, NATO typically asks two sets of questions of prospective member states.

First, has the country in question made sufficient progress in terms of political, economic, and military reform to meet NATO standards and to reflect the values, the democratic values, the market economy values of the alliance?

Second, can the country contribute to Euro-Atlantic security?

The Membership Action Plan process was established by NATO in 1999 to help guide prospective countries in answering these questions.

MAP countries develop individual programs. NATO provides feedback and NATO provides assistance to implementing those programs.

Membership Action Plans, thus, are road maps. The process is open-ended. A MAP does not prejudice decision by a country to request membership nor does it prejudice a decision by NATO to extend an invitation to join.

In effect, what a Membership Action Plan does is help create the preconditions for consideration of membership at a later point.

Ukraine has a long history with NATO. Ukraine was the first country to join NATO's partnership for peace in 1994. In 1997, NATO and Ukraine signed the charter on a distinctive partnership and established the NATO Ukraine Council.

And in 2005, in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, NATO foreign ministers established an Intensified Dialogue for Ukraine.

In 2006, some thought a Membership Action Plan might be possible for Ukraine at the Riga summit in November. But that process was derailed when then Prime Minister Yanukovich visited NATO and said that he supported cooperation with NATO, but, at that time, he could not support a MAP.

NATO understandably looked to the Ukrainian government to articulate a unified position in favor of a MAP before granting one. That has now happened. In January, President Yushchenko, Prime Minister Tymoshenko, and Rada Speaker Yatsenyuk sent a letter to the NATO Secretary General, emphasizing their desire for deeper cooperation with NATO and requesting that NATO grant Ukraine a Membership Action Plan in Bucharest.

Ukraine has a very persuasive case to make. In terms of political reform, as Dr. Haltzel said, Freedom House has given Ukraine the ranking of free, actually, three times. Ukraine is the only post-Soviet state, other than the Baltics, to receive that ranking, and Ukraine has developed a pattern now of conducting elections that are free, fair, and competitive.

While politics in Ukraine sometimes are messy, sometimes frustrating, they're essentially democratic, and that is good news.

In terms of economic reform, we have seen the institutions of a market economy increasingly put in place in Ukraine and the economy is now growing, 8 years of consecutive growth, after the economic decline of the 1990s.

In terms of military reform, Ukraine has made significant progress, moving from a post-Soviet military toward one that is compatible with NATO standards and is appropriate to the security challenges that Ukraine faces today.

In sum, in terms of its progress on political, economic and military reform, Ukraine's progress to date compares very well and probably exceeds that of some of the countries that received MAPs in 1999.

Ukraine, moreover, by virtue of its contributions to strategic airlift for NATO, its contributions to Balkan peacekeeping operations, its contributions to the Iraq coalition operation in 2003 to 2005, has demonstrated that it has significant military capabilities and the political will to make them available, and it has demonstrated that it can make a major contribution to Euro-Atlantic security.

The weakness in Ukraine's case is, at this point, the lack of public support. But public support for NATO membership in Slovakia and Slovenia was weak when they received their Membership Action Plans and those countries used the period of their MAPs to develop public support.

Ukraine's leaders say that they will develop a public information campaign to explain to the Ukrainian population the advantages and disadvantages of NATO membership, and that, in combination with the Membership Action Plan, can help crystallize a consensus in Ukraine in favor of joining NATO.

In my view, Ukraine has demonstrated sufficient progress to merit a Membership Action Plan. NATO should agree to one, ideally, at Bucharest.

Mr. Chairman, I've also been asked to say a few words about the case of Georgia. Georgia has also made significant political, economic and military reform progress and it has made significant military contributions to coalition efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Unlike Ukraine, NATO membership enjoys broad public support in Georgia.

Unfortunately, the political crackdown last November and the temporary declaration of a state of emergency was a setback for democracy in Georgia.

To its credit, the Georgian Government appears to recognize the damage that was done and it is now trying to make amends.

An early test of this will be parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in Georgia in May.

Overall, Georgia's progress lags that of Ukraine, but it is comparable to that of some of the states which have already received Membership Action Plans.

Georgia, therefore, merits consideration. If allied leaders in Bucharest wish to see another demonstration of Georgia's commitment to democracy, what they might do is task their foreign ministers to decide the question of a MAP for Georgia after the parliamentary elections.

That would give them time to ascertain that Georgia had, in fact, internalized lessons from last fall, but it would also create a powerful incentive for Georgia to hold free, fair, and competitive parliamentary elections.

I'd like to offer a few comments on the Russian factor. The Kremlin clearly is unhappy with the prospect of a Membership Action Plan either for Ukraine or for Georgia.

NATO has, since 1997, tried to engage Russia in cooperative efforts. Perhaps the alliance has not been sufficiently imaginative in terms of offering cooperative programs, but Russia, for its part, has failed to take full advantage of the opportunities for NATO-Russia cooperation.

Part of this is because the Russian political and security elite has chosen to regard NATO as an adversary. This ignores the dramatic changes in alliance force structure and the reorientation of alliance to new missions, peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism, and coalition operations in Afghanistan.

NATO should continue to seek cooperative relations with Russia, but it is also important that Russia do its part, and the Russians need to adjust their view to reflect the realities of today's NATO.

While the alliance should not ignore Russian concerns, it would be a mistake to grant Russia a veto, either explicit or tacit, over Membership Action Plan decisions. That would create a new dividing line between the former Soviet states in Europe and embolden Russia to reassert itself in the former Soviet states.

Mr. Chairman, NATO enlargement has been profoundly successful over the last 10 years in shaping a broader, more stable, and secure Europe. Consistent with the goal of enlargement and the logic of the Membership Action Plan, NATO leaders at Bucharest should set in motion the MAP processes for Ukraine and Georgia.

Thank you.

**HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. CARDIN. Well, let me thank all three of you for your testimony. I regret that I didn't hear the first two.

But, Mr. Bugajski, you were with us this morning in the Foreign Relations Committee and—

Mr. BUGAJSKI. A different one.

Mr. CARDIN. It's Kosovo. I assume it's a little different. But you have a doubleheader today.

So thank you all for your testimony.

This is an area that I'm sure the Chairman has indicated is of great interest to the Helsinki Commission in regards to NATO expansion.

I want you to comment a little bit more about the popular sentiment, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia, as to what are the conflicting concerns here as far as the populace is concerned and joining an alliance with NATO.

And, also, what impact has the Russian threat had on Ukraine in trying to intimidate it by claiming it would consider this a hostile move and change some of the configurations of its weapons?

It seems to me that could have mixed impact, but I'm very interested in your assessment as to what the populace view in those two countries particularly are having as it relates to NATO expansion.

Whoever would like to go. Doctor?

Amb. PIFER. Well, in the case of Georgia, there was a referendum held in January specifically on the question of NATO and 77 percent of the population pronounced themselves in support—voted for joining NATO.

So there is broad public support in Georgia for NATO.

It's a more difficult picture in Ukraine, where polls show somewhere between 25 and 33 percent typically are for NATO membership and about 50 percent are opposed.

What the Ukrainian Government says is that this reflects a lack of understanding, and, certainly, some of the polls, when they go down to second order questions, suggest that among those who oppose NATO membership, they often are thinking of the NATO 20 years ago, not today's NATO, in terms of how it's reoriented away from the then mission against the Soviet Union to new challenges that are really developed, again, to address common threats in terms of terrorism, Afghanistan and such.

And the government has said that it will conduct an information campaign and that it hopes and it expects that as it conducts that campaign, it can build broader support for NATO membership.

At this point, the members are such that I don't think Ukraine would qualify for an invitation now simply on the question of popular support. But I think it does have sufficient support to qualify for a Membership Action Plan.

And then the challenge is going to be before the Ukrainian Government, which has professed that it wants to join NATO, then to develop public support, explain the rationale and the logic of its decision.

Mr. HALTZEL. Mr. Chairman, I might say that the factor of having been part of the Soviet Union for 70 years cannot be exaggerated. I mean, it's huge.

The fact is that both Georgia and Ukraine people there heard unremitting propaganda against NATO—NATO was aggressive, NATO allegedly had plans to invade the Soviet Union.

We have a very interesting control in terms of public opinion in the case of Germany, where support for NATO is much higher in the old part of Germany, the western part, than it is in the five states of what used to be the GDR.

Why? Because these people were undergoing the same sort of propaganda barrage.

With regard to public support and campaigns, there's nothing wrong with campaigns. I mean, I think they're absolutely essential.

I might say that when I was on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden and I went to candidate coun-

tries in the winter of '97. I remember sitting in Hradcany Castle in Prague, hearing Vaclav Havel essentially lament the fact that his countrymen and countrywomen simply didn't understand NATO and he said, "I'm going to have to do something about this or we're not going to be able to join."

Then we went to Budapest and Gyula Horn, who was a former Communist, unlike Havel, said essentially the same thing.

With regard to Slovenia, I mean, sometimes external events can turn things around very quickly.

Slovenia, even as late as the winter of 2002–2003, had way under 50 percent popular approval. And then a horrible thing happened in early March 2003. Zoran Djindjic, the Prime Minister of Serbia, reformer, pro-Western, was assassinated.

Overnight, literally overnight, support in Slovenia went from the high 30s to the low 60s in support for NATO, because people realized that they're living in a dangerous neighborhood.

Support in Croatia, until very recently, had only just barely climbed over 50 percent. I was told at the beginning of the hearing today that a poll released this weekend had it at 67 percent.

I have to believe that the riots in Belgrade, which included trashing of the Croatian Embassy, had an effect on this.

So public opinion is volatile. Public education campaigns are essential, and I believe that the percentage in Ukraine can be made to go much higher.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. If I could just add, very briefly. Studies, particularly in Ukraine, and studies by NGOs indicate that one of the factors that restrain people from supporting NATO or misunderstanding NATO is that much of the public relations or propaganda from Russia underscores that somehow Ukraine's membership of NATO would hurt, damage relations with Russia.

This is persistently being promulgated, I would say, by the leadership. Hence, this missile threat, which I don't think is serious, is really aimed largely at public opinion. "See, it will damage relations with us if your government moves toward NATO."

I think what is needed, and Ambassador Pifer is right, is better education not only in terms of what NATO is, but even in terms of what the process is toward NATO accession.

In other words, what is the Membership Action Plan?

We just came back from Kyiv a couple of days ago and were quite astounded by the lack of information, the lack of knowledge in terms of what a MAP is, what process it actually begins.

And I think Russia and some of its supporters are deliberately mixing the Membership Action Plan with actual membership in order to increase public opposition, I'd say, public resistance to both.

Mr. CARDIN. Now, I can understand that after years of receiving propaganda against NATO, where it could have a significant hurdle as far as public opinion is concerned.

But in Ukraine, the history with Russia is not exactly a positive relationship either.

So my question is that when Russia makes a threat against Ukraine and pointing your missiles, it seems to me, is a direct threat, I'm just interested in whether that is perceived to be—as far as public opinion is concerned, it would seem to me that that

may even further the desire of the Ukrainian people to have an alternative as far as defense is concerned.

Amb. PIFER. When President Putin made his threat, he actually had two conditions. He said if Ukraine joins NATO and if Ukraine then deploys NATO bases on its territory, that would be a cause for targeting.

President Yushchenko said, "We wish to join NATO, but we also do not intend to deploy either NATO nuclear weapons or NATO bases on our territory." Indeed, there's no requirement that Ukraine joins NATO to have NATO forces based permanently on Ukrainian territory.

So I think President Yushchenko tried to diffuse it and said, "We've given two conditions," one condition is not going to be fulfilled.

At least at this point, when we were in Kyiv, we did not hear much talk—we heard a couple of allusions to Mr. Putin's comments, but it doesn't seem to have had any major impact yet and we haven't seen any polling that suggests that this is pushed, that the number is either up or down in terms of support for NATO membership.

That may come a little bit later.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. If I could just add. In the case of Ukraine, it may be a little bit different to Poland, because such a threat was made by Poland in the petition to be the 51st state. I mean, things have moved in the opposite direction to the threat.

I think in the case of Ukraine, because there are so many close ties, family connections and economic connections, and people really don't know enough about NATO, about American strategy, even about the European Union, there may be more of a fear factor involved that Moscow at times tries this.

But as Ambassador Pifer said, I haven't seen public opinion poll reactions to the Russian threat. But Putin also said—you're right what he said, but he also added that it's almost inevitable that once you become a NATO member, as with Poland, Czech Republic, he pointed to Romania, Bulgaria, you either get U.S. missiles or you get U.S. bases, which is, of course, an exaggeration, but that's the illusion vis-a-vis Ukraine, as well.

Mr. CARDIN. Well, I would just say that we can never forget that—I think the newest population figures show 17 percent of Ukraine Russian, sometimes people go as high as 20, but the fact is there are really close ties there and there are a lot of people in Ukraine who simply don't want to do anything that would presumably alienate the country from Russia any further.

How long that will persist, I'm not sure, but it continues to be a factor.

Would any of you like to venture a prediction as to what impact the Ukraine's membership in NATO would have on the relationship between either Ukraine or the United States and Russia?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. I could venture. I think relations—let's say relations have deteriorated and it's largely, I would say, because of increasing Russian assertiveness through various ways.

I think it would add another, let's say, conflict point between Russia and the United States.

It doesn't mean, of course, that one should avoid, if this is what Ukraine wants, that one should avoid that sort of conflict. But, ultimately, I think Moscow respects unity and steadfastness rather than weakness.

And sometimes I think it's a question of them testing how far we're willing to go. This is what I think is also the case in Kosovo, but it may also be the case in Ukraine.

Mr. CARDIN. We've been joined by Congressman McIntyre. So let me turn to Congressman McIntyre.

**HON. MIKE McINTYRE, COMMISSIONER, COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

Mr. McINTYRE. Thank you, Senator. Thank you all for being here today.

And we go back into session tonight, which is why we do not have greater Commission attendance here, but we are thrilled with the attendance, with the room literally being filled up and I think that speaks well of this topic and the testimony that each of you men have given is so well respected.

So thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

If I may ask. I was with the Senator and other members of our Commission back in July, when we were in Ukraine. And in Ukraine, we know that there was a great talk about energy. That was one of the topics we discussed at our meeting in July in Ukraine, the reality being Ukraine has been relying on Russia for its gas supplies for so many years.

And I guess the question is: do you think Russia is using the energy issue to pressure Ukraine to stay out of NATO?

Mr. HALTZEL. I think it's certainly a factor. The last couple of days, of course, would lead you to believe so.

First, we thought that there was a deal between President Yushchenko and President Putin on the gas and cutting out the middleman, UkrEnergo.

Then we were told 2 or 3 days ago that Gazprom was cutting back by 25 percent and then, yesterday, by 35. I mean, I think it could be a coincidence that it's just before the Bucharest summit. I'm a skeptic. I think there probably is a relationship.

I think with regard to Russia and how it would feel about Ukraine, and this is part of it, is really a mentality question. I mean, I think that Russia, unfortunately, has a 19th century great power mentality, whereby it would prefer to see weaker neighbors rather than stronger ones, and this has—it's kind of a 19th century great power mentality with a Marxist zero sum overlay.

The fact is, in the 21st century, you'd want to have stable neighbors. I mean, weak, failed states on your border are a transmittal point for all sorts of social and economic ills.

And I would have hoped that way back in the round of enlargement with Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary, we felt that extending the zone of stability eastward in Europe was good for Russia and I still think it was.

That simply has fallen upon deaf ears and the sentiment against that has increased.

But I would be very surprised if the timing were accidental. I think that they're ratcheting up the pressure.

But my colleagues may want to say something.

Amb. PIFER. If I could add two comments.

First, the timing is interesting in that the debts about which Gazprom is complaining were apparently run up in 2007, when Mr. Yanukovich was prime minister.

Now, they're making an issue, though, when Mr. Yushchenko is prime minister and that timing, I think, raises some questions. Why is it an issue now as opposed to an issue in 2007?

The second comment would be, I mean, this problem that we're seeing in the last month, where there's been really a couple of suggestions by the Russians that they might be reducing gas flows to Ukraine, it does point up, though, the need for Ukraine to do two things.

First of all, address in a serious way its energy security situation. Ukraine could take some fairly straightforward steps in terms of conservation, increasing domestic production. That would dramatically reduce its dependency on Russia.

Right now, for example, Ukraine receives about 75 percent of its natural gas either from Russia or from central Asia via pipelines that transit through Russia.

There's really no reason why Ukraine could not double its domestic production and dramatically reduce its reliance on imports.

But it also points up the need for Ukraine really to introduce a huge degree of transparency into gas sale operations. Right now, it's a very, very murky subject. There's an intermediary company, RosUkrEnergo, which nobody quite understands what value added it provides for the profits it generates.

And last week, in Kiev, I talked to a senior Ukrainian official who says, "We don't know who owes what to whom on gas."

So I think this does point out the importance of Ukraine getting a system for purchasing gas that is far more transparent and that would help us understand how much of this is really a commercial dispute as opposed to, as many of us suspect, having perhaps some other political motives.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. Just to add very briefly. I think for Russia, for the Russian Government, energy isn't just a strategic weapon in terms of projecting its aspirations to regional leadership, to global power status, but it's also a political weapon in trying to divide political forces in the country by putting pressure on resources, particularly essential resources, energy resources.

The last time they tried it, though, in a major way, it backfired, and we'll wait to see. Hopefully, rather than divide, it will unify the Ukrainian leadership around a more effective energy program and it won't push them into backtracking from what they've already stepped forward to request, which is a Membership Action Plan.

So it's really a test for the Ukrainian leadership, as well.

Mr. HALTZEL. Can I just say, just add a word to what Ambassador Pifer said?

Here's a case where the MAPs or NATO enlargement have, in a sense, a broader meaning.

Not only would it be good for Ukraine to get its own energy house in order, but if the West, in general, is concerned about Russia's using gas as a political weapon, then it would behoove all of

us, and I'm talking about the United States and the European Union, to form some sort of consumers' agreement.

The European Union itself has ideas, but they're not implemented yet and I think this is an issue of the absolute first magnitude that we should be looking at for our own security.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you.

Senator, do you want me to proceed? I have just one or two more questions.

Mr. CARDIN. Please.

Mr. MCINTYRE. I want to ask, having been to both Kosovo and Afghanistan, which of the five countries that we're discussing today, can you tell us, has participated in NATO organized international security assistance forces in both of those, or in Afghanistan and K-4 in Kosovo, and do you think their participation has been really just perfunctory or do you think they've truly been committed to wanting to help?

Mr. BUGAJSKI. All three countries actually have participated in the international security force mission in Afghanistan and as I said in my talk, that beats the record of several current NATO members.

Obviously, these are still fairly poor countries and small, demographically small. The figures I have is that Croatia has deployed 190 troops in Afghanistan, Macedonia 130, Albania 140. There may be some variation there.

And I know Zagreb has pledged to increase Croatia's contribution during the course of this year.

In Iraq, also, Albania has troops and Macedonia has troops. Albania has about 120 and Macedonia 40, whereas I also point out that 10 NATO countries have not participated at all in that operation, either in the coalition that went into Iraq or the coalition that stayed in Iraq and further contributed to stabilization.

In terms of Kosovo, the most important contribution, I think, was made by both Albania and Macedonia in terms of, one, allowing NATO to use their territory for operations; two, allowing huge numbers of refugees and sheltering huge numbers of refugees in both countries for several weeks, actually—we didn't know how long the operation would go on—and maintaining, I would say, the openness vis-a-vis NATO ever since, the United States.

In other words, their territories, their airspace, forts and so forth, are open to our military forces to supplement our troops on the ground.

So all have been contributors, even though relations with Serbia may have been affected by that participation. They were more concerned, I think, in terms of regional stability than a bilateral relationship with Belgrade, which I think proved correct in the long term.

Mr. HALTZEL. I'd like to just add that Macedonia recently assumed command of NATO's former host nation support coordination center that provides the logistical support for K-4's operations, and that's a huge contribution.

I mean, it's understandable that Macedonia and Croatia would not be eager to be included in K-4, since they're obviously former Yugoslav states. That would be asking too much. But Macedonia's contribution has been substantial.

Amb. PIFER. In terms of Ukraine and Georgia, Ukraine did contribute to the K-4 force in the context of a joint Polish-Ukraine peacekeeping battalion.

Ukraine also contributed substantial forces to coalition operations in Iraq between 2000 and 2005. In 2004, Ukraine was the fourth largest contributor to Iraq operations.

Ukraine does not have a presence in Afghanistan. That's a particularly neuralgic subject there, of course, given the Soviet experience in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

As for Georgia, it does contribute to forces in Afghanistan and, also, now has 2,000 troops in Iraq as part of the coalition.

So both of these countries have made significant contributions to serious military operations.

Mr. MCINTYRE. And I just have one last question, if I may. I know I'm going to have to go to another event.

And I wanted to ask you, what are the implications for these countries if they do not get what they want? I mean, we've been looking at the optimistic side of this.

But are we looking at an economic downturn? Are we looking at a backsliding on democratic development? What are the ramifications if this does not work as we wish?

Mr. HALTZEL. I'm not concerned about that very much. I have to say we have examples in—at the Madrid summit, there was—before the Madrid summit, there was a push for not only including Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary, but also Slovenia and Romania.

The latter two were turned down by the United States, which essentially meant they were turned down by the alliance, and they went back to the drawing board and greatly increased their case for the next round, where they got in fairly easily; certainly, in the case of Slovenia, fairly easily.

People are worried about backsliding. I think there are two other reasons why this should not be such a huge concern.

No. 1, all these countries are also hoping to become members of the European Union. So, I mean, if they would backslide on fundamental questions of democracy and rule of law, that would be a killer for their EU candidacy.

And then, finally, if—let's take the absolute worst case scenario that these countries get in and then backslide. What happens? Well, we even have examples of that in the history of NATO.

In the late 1960s, when the colonels took over in Greece and set up a fascist government for 6 or 7 years, they were effectively excluded from the inner circle. They weren't kicked out of NATO, but they were excluded from a lot of the information sharing.

And a less known example occurred in the summer of 1975, when it looked like Portugal was going to be taken over by a Communist coup. For a few weeks, it was really touch and go, and the Portuguese were very quietly kept. They were sort of excluded and kept at arm's length.

So, I mean, even if countries get in and backslide, I don't think it's a real problem. And I would say that if any of these countries are turned down, for whatever reason, I think they're mature enough to go back and just simply try to improve their case for the next time.

Amb. PIFER. I would concur in that. I think in the case of Ukraine and Georgia, if either of those countries does not receive a Membership Action Plan at Bucharest, you're not going to see backsliding on either political reform or economic reform.

But I'm also confident that NATO leaders will be smart enough that if they cannot, in the end, reach consensus on doing a Membership Action Plan for Ukraine or Georgia at this point, that there will be positive signals sent to both those countries.

So it won't be a "no," but those countries will receive a reaffirmation that NATO's door remains open and that they can hope later on to move closer to the alliance.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. I would largely agree with Mike Haltzel, but not completely. I think particularly in the case of Albania and Macedonia, for so many years, Albania was the first country to actually ask for NATO membership in the early '90s, I remember, when I used to travel to Tirana.

And after almost, what, 15, 16, 17 years, quite solid efforts on the security side, even though some of their democratic progress has been, let's say, slow, with many ups and downs, I think, for them, NATO is really the connection with America.

To them, it's a demonstration that just as they've shown their commitment to the United States, that the United States has shown commitment to them. It doesn't necessarily mean we're going to come to their defense if attacked, but it's that close relationship that I think NATO symbolizes between the two.

It's also, I think, a stepping stone, and I know quite a few businessmen who look at NATO and say, "Well, if they're in NATO, then there's a certain secure environment here for us to be able to do business in." It doesn't guarantee that they will come in, that they'll invest, but it's another sort of threshold that's passed.

It's one of the first questions that new investors tend to ask—are they in NATO? Are they about to come into NATO?

So I would agree there's not going to be—the sky isn't going to collapse if they're not admitted, but I think it would unnecessarily prolong the process of admission for them.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you. Thank you for your questions.

Let me ask you. Obviously, the NATO expansion has been well received here in the United States, both in Congress and I think with the American people.

We look at it as a way of expanding security and as the right model to expand democratic principles in countries.

My question is we're now going through another enlargement round and there are certain standards that need to be met either to become members or to get a MAP.

Have the standards remained consistent or are there changes occurring as we go to each of the new rounds for enlargement? Are we maintaining comparable standards or do you see changes in expectations for those countries that are now seeking participation in NATO?

Mr. HALTZEL. I'm going to revert to my former life and play historian again and say that if you go all the way back, you can only believe that the standards have gotten tighter, because one of the 12 founding members of NATO was Portugal that, at the time, was

ruled by Salazar, who was an autocratic dictator and sort of a corporative.

I don't think we'd put up with anything like that today. There's no chance of that.

So if you go back to the original treaty, certainly, we've improved.

I don't see any huge difference. I mean, significant difference, certainly, since '99 or 2002. The country that was really on the bubble in 2002 was Bulgaria, more than Romania, which was the other one.

The first five or the three Baltic countries, Slovenia and Slovakia were generally, by the summer of 2002, it was generally accepted that all five would get invitations.

Bulgaria and Romania were not quite certain for a variety of reasons and Bulgaria eventually became the biggest problem for a rather flagrant reason, that in spite of assurances that they would halt exports of weaponry to rogue states, they didn't have control over some of their arms industry and it was at the last minute that there was a real chance they might not get in.

I mean, when I look at that, it's hard for me to think that any of the three candidates—Croatia, Albania, or Macedonia—come anything close to that borderline status.

I think that if you want to take general overall economic development, then I think there's a problem. I mean, Albania is still a poor country. It's pulled itself up. It's no longer, by the statistics I've seen, the poorest in Europe. It's made great progress. It's still a very poor country.

Macedonia, we've talked about, has problems, but I—the only thing that seems to me to be a real danger, if people look at this, is the name issue, which Mr. Bugajski described.

That I think is a serious issue. I regret it. I think that there are ways—there are compromises that could have been made and still can be made, but I think that if I had to name one possibility for a train wreck between now and the first, second, third of April, I would say that would be the most likely.

Mr. BUGAJSKI. I would add to that that if you look at Ukraine, comparing Ukraine to the 1999—the seven countries that in 1999 received Membership Action Plans, Ukraine compares very favorably with those in terms of political, economic and military reform progress that it's made.

Georgia probably doesn't have quite as strong a case, but I think Georgia compares at least with some of those states that in 1999 received Membership Action Plans.

So Ukraine and Georgia, they do compare well in terms of the 1999 standards for a MAP.

Mr. CARDIN. Let me thank our panel for being here. This is of continuing interest to our Commission. We look forward to seeing how the April meetings proceed and we obviously will be following this very closely in this Commission, as well as the other committees in Congress.

Again, I thank you all for your appearance here today, and we'll stand adjourned.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:10 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

This is not the first time the Helsinki Commission has held hearings on NATO enlargement. Back in 1997, this Commission held a series of hearings which addressed the role of human rights and NATO enlargement with OSCE countries that at the time were seeking NATO membership.

Then, as now, we recognize that the prospect of membership has been an extremely important factor in encouraging democratic development, human rights, and the rule of law in those countries as they take the reform steps necessary for full membership. As these countries demonstrate their own commitment to the Alliance's shared values by fulfilling the military and political obligations expected of all member states, they grow stronger and more secure. This, in turn, enhances security and cooperation in Europe and globally, which is, after all, the purpose of the OSCE process.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the readiness and possibilities of Croatia, Albania and Macedonia to receive invitations to join NATO at the Bucharest summit. Since 2003, the U.S. Congress has been on record supporting the creation of the Adriatic Charter which intensified U.S. relations with these three countries and brought them closer to the Euro-Atlantic family. Five years later, these countries have accomplished much in the way of reform. I believe we universally support their aspirations and hope to learn more about their preparedness to be called not only friends, but allies.

I also look forward to hearing about the prospects for the Alliance issuing Membership Action Plans (MAPs) in Bucharest to Ukraine and Georgia. I note that the Senate recently passed unanimously a resolution expressing strong support for MAPs for these two countries. I think that both Georgia and Ukraine have displayed an ability and willingness to meet the responsibilities of membership and have made substantial progress in their democratic development, as well as defense and economic reforms. I am confident that intensifying engagement with these two countries through MAPs will only serve to deepen these reforms.

I must say that I was profoundly dismayed by Russian President Putin's February 12 statement suggesting that Ukraine could be targeted with nuclear missiles if it joins NATO. The decision of any country to seek to join NATO, much less get on the track to join NATO, is the sovereign decision of that country, recognized by the Helsinki Final Act, and should be respected by all OSCE countries, including the Russian Federation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling this especially timely hearing.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL HALTZEL, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS, PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

Chairman Hastings, Co-Chairman Cardin, Members of the Commission—

It is an honor to testify today.

May I begin by taking this opportunity to congratulate the Helsinki Commission on holding this hearing on the crucial topic of NATO enlargement and the upcoming Bucharest Summit. The hearing follows in the tradition of the careful scrutiny given to the two most recent rounds of enlargement by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on whose staff I had the privilege of serving from 1994 to 2005.

The decision to extend invitations to three former members of the Warsaw Pact—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic—was anything but a “slam dunk,” despite assertions to the contrary by some historians. Nor should it have been, for many debatable issues were involved. My Republican colleague and I were entrusted with the responsibility of structuring hearings, editing committee publications, and organizing the floor debate—a process that extended over several years. The committee held no fewer than a dozen hearings, including six in October and November 1997. The 1997 hearing topics included the Strategic Rationale for NATO Enlargement; Pros and Cons of Enlargement; the Qualifications of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for Membership; Costs, Benefits, Burden-Sharing and Military Implications of Enlargement; the NATO-Russia Relationship; and an unusual, concluding hearing in which representatives of interested organizations and individual American citizens gave their views on enlargement. A full record of these hearings, plus voluminous appendices is contained in a 552-page committee report, “The Debate on NATO Enlargement” (S. Hrg. 105–285).

The Foreign Relations Committee voted 16 to 2 in favor of sending the recommended amendment to the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty to the Senate floor, where after seven days of morning-to-night debate it was ratified on April 30, 1998 by a vote of 80 to 19. In a notable gesture of bipartisanship, the Republican majority delegated the responsibility of floor managing the bill to Senator Biden of the minority. I have been told by officials of several NATO partner nations that no other country’s parliament came close to the United States Senate’s exhaustive scrutiny of enlargement.

The next round of enlargement, which added Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia to the Alliance, was non-controversial. It culminated in a unanimous vote of the U.S. Senate on May 8, 2003.

The Alliance now faces the decision of whether to embark upon another round of enlargement. Mr. Chairman, I strongly support extending invitations to membership to Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia at the Bucharest NATO Summit. I also support, but with reservations, granting Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest.

Each candidate country’s Membership Action Plan or “MAP” lays out military, political, and economic reforms necessary for member-

ship. It is to the non-military issues, and to broader strategic considerations that I will confine my remarks.

Of the three candidates, Croatia has the strongest case for membership. It is the only one given a “free” designation by Freedom House in its 2007 “Freedom in the World” survey. (Albania and Macedonia received “partly free” status, with Albania also gaining an “upward trend arrow” due to its increased efforts to combat corruption.) A relatively wealthy, Western-looking country, Croatia has gradually recovered from the bloody and highly destructive war with Serbia of 1991–95, during which elements of its own ethnic Serb population set up a secessionist mini-state in the Krajina region, not subdued militarily until the summer of 1995. After some initial hesitation, Zagreb has subsequently resettled all but a few thousand of the more than 200,000 Serb refugees who fled from the Krajina, Western Slavonia, and Northern Dalmatia in the wake of the Croatian re-conquest. Unfortunately, there have been reports that the local population has harassed Serbs who have attempted to return to their prewar property.

Croatia’s two leading political figures, President Stjepan Mesić and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, while belonging to different parties, are both democrats. Sanader, in particular, deserves credit for having successfully reformed the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which the late President Franjo Tudjman had run in a fascist manner. Parliamentary elections held in November 2007 were judged to be free and fair, but it took nearly seven weeks of post-election negotiations until Sanader was able to put together a coalition government in mid-January 2008. The OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) judged that the Croatian elections had been “administered transparently, professionally, and represented further progress in fully meeting OSCE commitments for democratic elections.”

In August 2007, Croatia and Slovenia agreed to seek a settlement of a long-standing border dispute through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Some anti-democratic, right-wing elements do remain active in Croatia, especially among veterans’ groups that resent the government’s cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. Last month a Croatian reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty received a death threat because of his reporting about the trial of a suspected Croatian war criminal. Such groups and activities, however, appear to be marginal, albeit troubling, remnants of the Tudjman era.

Support for NATO membership languished at about 30% until the Zagreb government undertook a public education campaign. That project, and the near-victory of the Radical Party in last month’s elections in Serbia, combined to push support over the 50% mark by mid-February. The Kosovo-related mob violence last month in Belgrade, including against the Embassy of Croatia, may serve to increase pro-NATO sentiment even further.

Albania has made remarkable political and economic strides in the less than two decades since its people cast off Europe’s most retrograde and paranoid communist dictatorship. The 1990’s saw several violent outbreaks, including one in the wake of a pyramid scheme that wiped out the life savings of thousands of citizens. Al-

though many parts of the country are still poverty-stricken, Albania has recently shed the dubious distinction of being Europe's poorest state, and the capital Tirana is in the midst of a building boom.

Albania's political life is raucous and often centered on disputes among a few leading personalities. Seven parties are represented in parliament. In July 2007, it took four ballots, which included opposition boycotts, before the parliament elected Bamir Topi as the country's new president. The government is implementing a comprehensive reform program of the judiciary and the electoral system. Progress has been made against corruption and organized crime, but they remain serious problems.

Albania is religiously diverse, with about half its population Muslim and the rest divided between Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism. The government emphasizes the need for inter-communal tolerance, and friction is at a relatively low level. All groups support NATO membership, with more than 90% of the populace in favor.

Despite its own post-communist problems, Tirana has an admirable record of being a prudent, good neighbor. During the Kosovo war of 1999, Albania took in hundreds of thousands of refugees. With Kosovo now independent, the government has made the completion of a modern highway between Tirana and Pristina a top priority. Albania took a responsible stance during the inter-ethnic armed clashes in Macedonia in 2001, eschewing any desire for a "Greater Albania." Its relations with the third bordering country containing an Albanian minority, Montenegro, are excellent.

The third candidate country, Macedonia, has also made recent, notable progress, but its path to membership may be the most difficult. Unlike Croatia and Albania, where the titular nationality accounts for about ninety per cent of the population, Macedonian Slavs total only about 64% with Albanians comprising about 25%, and Turks, Roma, Serbs, and others making up the rest. It is a country, parts of whose territory at various times has been claimed by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece.

Relations between Orthodox Macedonian Slavs and ethnic Albanians have been very contentious, nearly erupting into civil war in 2001 until the U.S. and the European Union brokered the Ohrid Framework Agreement, whose decentralization provides enhanced minority rights in language and education and thereby has kept a tenuous peace ever since. The national government, which traditionally includes an ethnic Albanian party in the ruling coalition, has made good faith efforts at police, judicial, and economic reforms. Macedonia has a fully professional, multi-ethnic army, and all groups in the country strongly support NATO membership. Like Albania, Macedonia hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kosovo during the war in 1999.

Presenting the most serious barrier to NATO membership is the issue of the country's very name. Greece considers Skopje's use of "Macedonia" a violation of its own cultural patrimony, and although Athens gave up its trade embargo in 1995, nearly two decades of negotiations still have not yielded an agreement. Skopje has declared that it harbors no designs on Greek territory. Its willingness to accept a "Double Formula" compromise, by which the

country is known internationally as the Republic of Macedonia, but by another name by Greece, has not satisfied Athens, and it and most other EU members continue to use the provisional “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” or FYROM. The name issue is not a consideration in U.S. support for Macedonia’s NATO candidacy, since Washington has joined well over one hundred other countries in recognizing the Republic of Macedonia as the official name, but if no compromise is reached before the Bucharest Summit, Greece threatens to veto Skopje’s membership bid, an action which would be extremely unwise and regrettable.

Mr. Chairman, I support the issuing at the Bucharest Summit of NATO membership invitations to all three candidates: Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. I believe that all three fulfill the requirements for Alliance membership, and all—especially Macedonia and Albania—have been enthusiastic contributors to Alliance military operations. Nonetheless, some analysts are opposed to their inclusion on institutional or geo-strategic grounds. Allow me to address some of these concerns.

NATO makes decisions on a consensus principle. Some believe that further enlargement would severely complicate Alliance business. But before Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined, skeptics similarly warned that increasing the membership would seriously complicate decision-making. Their fears have proved to be unfounded. Achieving consensus among nineteen members was no more difficult than it had been among sixteen, and after the “big bang” enlargement of 2004, twenty-six members have worked together relatively harmoniously. In fact, most of the ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe that joined in the last two rounds are closely tied to the United States by bonds of history, culture, kinship, and world-view and tend to follow Washington’s lead.

I find unconvincing the related argument that the addition of Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania would somehow undermine the Alliance’s stability. On the contrary, membership in NATO has defused inter-ethnic rivalries in Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria and several international rivalries, including between Poland and Germany, Romania and Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, and Slovenia and Italy.

Some critics complain that Albania and Macedonia would become “consumers of,” not “contributors to” the security of the North Atlantic area. This assertion strikes me as odd, given the fact that all three candidates have put their blood and treasure on the line by contributing to NATO operations in Afghanistan, and Albania and Macedonia to the U.S.-led effort in Iraq. Two weeks ago the Croatian Minister of Defense declared that his country wants to contribute to the full spectrum of NATO operations. Moreover, the “consumer/contributor” criterion has been regularly misconstrued. In the detailed Senate floor debate in 1998 on the inclusion of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, the proponents of enlargement, echoing a Pentagon assessment, made clear that becoming a net-contributor was a process. Only Poland was judged able to become a net-contributor immediately upon accession; it would take Hungary and the Czech Republic a few more years to attain that status. Yet all three countries joined NATO in 1999.

It is also true, as many point out, that the Alliance is currently wrestling with other weighty problems, above all the unwillingness of several European members to commit troops to combat roles in Afghanistan. But, as former President Lyndon Johnson used to say, surely we can walk and chew gum at the same time. The addition of three spirited new members might even have a salutary effect upon some of the more hesitant, older ones.

Recently a tactical argument has been put forward that several years from now Ukraine and Georgia may be ready for membership, but supposedly they would have to be included in a larger group of candidate countries in order to gain the necessary unanimous support. Hence, the argument goes, it would be better to admit only Croatia at the Bucharest Summit, and leave Albania and Macedonia for the next round.

I am not sure that even the fundamental assumption is correct. It is quite possible that in a few years fully qualified Ukraine and Georgia would quickly gain admittance, with or without other candidates. Even if that does not prove to be true, the argument strikes me as flawed. First of all, it cavalierly plays with the security concerns of Albania and Macedonia as if they were expendable pieces on a chessboard. Might they not be threatened before the next NATO summit comes around? Moreover, the argument overlooks the fact that one or more additional candidates may be qualified by the time Ukraine and Georgia are ready. Montenegro readily comes to mind.

An even more interesting possibility, less remote than is often supposed, is that already qualified, non-candidate countries may change their policies and apply for membership. I am talking principally about Finland, Sweden, or Austria. Currently majority sentiment in all three countries is against NATO membership, but influential segments of opinion are pro-membership. In Finland, for example, a working group is preparing a Defense White Paper to be presented to parliament next fall, in which NATO membership is reportedly an option being considered.

Finally, some assert that the Kosovo crisis necessitates a postponement of the enlargement process in the Western Balkans. On the contrary, the challenge of Kosovo strengthens the case for enlargement in Bucharest. If the government in Belgrade persists in a policy of self-isolation from the Euro-Atlantic community and perhaps even gravitates toward temporarily becoming a semi-satellite of Russia, then it would be a useful insurance policy to have NATO members on most of Serbia's borders (Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia) and on the border with northern Kosovo (Albania).

The granting of MAPs to Ukraine and/or Georgia at the Bucharest Summit appears to me to be more problematic than the decision on invitations to membership for Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. Ukraine rates a "free" and Georgia a "partly free" overall designation in Freedom House's "Freedom in the World 2007" survey, with Ukraine scoring higher than Georgia—and Macedonia and Albania, for that matter—on civil liberties, at the same level as Croatia.

No one can doubt Ukraine's geo-strategic importance. A stable, democratic Ukraine inside NATO would dramatically expand the

zone of stability in Europe. It is precisely because of Ukraine's importance that the Alliance must give its qualifications very careful scrutiny.

On the positive side, over the past two years Ukraine has conducted two free and fair parliamentary elections and has seen a peaceful change of administrations. The new government in Kyiv led by Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has gotten off to a promising start by making the country ready for accession to the World Trade Organization and by moving to curb the serious corruption that has afflicted the economy.

During the past decade Ukraine has already been an active participant in Alliance peacekeeping and military operations, including in a combat role in Iraq in 2004–05. In April 2005, NATO and Ukraine launched an Intensified Dialogue on membership. On January 15 the country's three top elected officials—President Viktor Yushchenko, Prime Minister Tymoshenko, and Parliamentary Speaker Arseny Yatsenyuk—sent a letter to NATO, asking that the Alliance consider offering Ukraine a MAP at the Bucharest Summit.

On the negative side, Ukraine's democracy remains fractious, and sometimes dysfunctional. In fact, for over a month, the parliament has been in a forced recess as the opposition blocked the legislature to protest the above-mentioned joint letter to NATO. The opponents, it must be said, have lost some credibility through the publication of official documents showing that when Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovich was Prime Minister from 2002 to 2004, he supported Ukraine's drive to NATO membership, including the annual NATO-Ukraine "Action Plans" that were similar to MAPs.

Whether the blocking maneuver in parliament is rooted in political opportunism or principled opposition, the fact remains that overall popular support for joining NATO currently stands at only about 20%. The political leadership has said that the electorate would have to show its backing in a national referendum before the government makes a request for membership. Three years after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine remains a sharply polarized country.

Unlike Ukraine, in Georgia there is strong support for NATO membership, more than 76% having voted for it in a national referendum in January 2008. NATO and Georgia entered into an Intensified Dialogue on membership in September 2006. The small country in the Caucasus, fractured shortly after its post-Soviet independence by civil war and violent secessionist movements, has been extraordinarily willing to commit its troops to Alliance missions, including combat operations. In fact, Georgia now is one of the leading non-U.S. contributors to the coalition forces in Iraq.

Until last fall, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, the architect of the 2003 Rose Revolution, was seen in the West as an exemplar of democracy. His reputation, however, has been tarnished, first by the excessive force used by police in breaking up anti-government demonstrations in November 2007, and then by opponents' insistent allegations of electoral irregularities in the January 2008 presidential elections. It should be added that respected international observers, while noting problems, judged the elections to have been generally fair.

Georgia's relations with its Russian neighbor are acrimonious. Moscow has levied economic sanctions against Tbilisi and maintains a constant propaganda barrage against President Saakashvili. Russian troops have recently withdrawn from their bases in Georgia, but Russian "peacekeepers" continue to patrol in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow may utilize the Kosovo situation to recognize one or both of these two secessionist regimes.

Mr. Chairman, as was explicitly the case in the last two rounds of NATO enlargement, relations with Russia must be a factor in our decision. Taking the Kremlin into consideration does not, of course, mean giving it a veto. Every independent country has the sovereign right to choose its own foreign and security policy. That includes formerly communist-ruled Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia as well as former Soviet republics Ukraine and Georgia.

Moreover, NATO is not an offensive alliance. It never had plans for launching an unprovoked attack on the U.S.S.R. (unlike the Warsaw Pact's battle plans for conquering Western Europe), and it has no plans to invade Russia now. If Russian President Vladimir Putin views NATO as a potential aggressor, his attitude has more to do with a KGB-inculcated, zero-sum view of the world than with reality. His recent comment about targeting Russian nuclear-armed missiles on Ukraine if it joins NATO is a totally unacceptable attempt at intimidation and reveals an unwillingness to accept the fact that Kyiv is independent of Moscow.

U.S. policy toward Russia can be firm and, at the same time, avoid being gratuitously provocative. Extending membership invitations to the three Balkan candidates or granting MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia, if they qualify, would not fall into the gratuitously provocative category. On the contrary, a rational, twenty-first century Kremlin assessment would welcome increased stability on its borders. Unfortunately, Putin and his circle seem to be mired in the mindset of a nineteenth-century Great Power, desirous of weak, unstable neighbors.

President Putin—who, in May, will become Prime Minister Putin—plans to attend the Bucharest Summit. Any negative decisions there regarding NATO enlargement would likely be viewed as acquiescence to his opposition. This is an impression I would not wish to be conveyed, but in itself it is not sufficient reason for the Alliance to move forward. At the end of the day, each candidacy, whether for membership or for a MAP, should be evaluated on its own merits.

On that basis, I narrowly support offering MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia at the Bucharest Summit. Despite the fact that receiving a MAP is not a guarantee of a later offer of membership, it nonetheless is a watershed in the membership process that makes eventual success highly probable, if not inevitable. Both countries, in my opinion, still have room for major improvement in their domestic politics. This May, Georgia will hold parliamentary elections, which will offer an opportunity to reassure its friends that its democracy is solid. Ukraine must demonstrate that its bitterly antagonistic political rivals can cooperate to effect economic progress and further reduce corruption, and conduct a public information

campaign on NATO so that popular support for membership can grow substantially from its current extremely low level.

It has been reported that some Western European allies are inclined to oppose granting MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia. I would like to emphasize that if NATO does decide not to grant the two MAPs at Bucharest, it should explicitly declare that the door is still open to both countries, should express willingness immediately to consult with them on remaining actions to be taken, and should stress that Kyiv and Tbilisi will receive MAPs upon their satisfactory meeting of all the criteria, a development which might occur in advance of the sixtieth anniversary NATO summit in 2009.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the Members of the Commission wish to pose.

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANUSZ BUGAJSKI, DIRECTOR,
NEW EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES PROJECT, SENIOR FELLOW,
EUROPE PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTER-
NATIONAL STUDIES**

A NATO that embraces all of Europe's democracies is important for regional stability, for U.S. strategic interests, and for rebuilding an effective trans-Atlanticism. NATO has evolved significantly since the end of the Cold War and no longer faces a single and tangible common threat. However, it remains the only trans-Atlantic security institution in which members have pledged to defend each other's independence, in which they conduct vital common security operations, whether in combat, peace-keeping, or reconstruction, and where the standards for NATO entry stimulate a range of necessary democratic reforms among candidate states.

NATO's consistent enlargement and enhancement over the past decade has brought most of Europe into the organization except for two significant regions: the West Balkans and the Black Sea region. The inclusion of Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia will significantly shrink the "grey zone" in the western Balkans and enhance NATO's mission as a generator of regional stability. Invitations to NATO membership for the three Adriatic Charter states at the Bucharest Summit on 2-4 April 2008 will signal a positive contribution to the Alliance for six principal reasons:

1. DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Each of the three Adriatic Charter states (Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia) have committed themselves to democratic governance and the rule of law, and all three have registered steady progress during the past decade. In an indication and recognition of their development, both Albania and Macedonia have signed Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) with the European Union as stepping-stones toward EU accession. Meanwhile, Croatia is already a candidate for EU membership and is expected to gain entry to the Union within the next two years.

Albania has achieved political stability and curtailed the organized criminality and widespread lawlessness that plagued the country throughout much of the 1990s. Recent presidential and local elections demonstrated significant progress in meeting European standards for fairness and efficiency, public administration has been improved, the anti-corruption campaign has been intensified, and legislation has been adopted to promote a fully independent judiciary. Macedonia has established a workable multi-ethnic system by integrating the large Albanian community into all state structures through the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. Skopje has also taken substantial strides in ensuring good governance, judicial reform, and the combating of official corruption. Croatia's democracy and institutional development can now be favorably compared to neighboring Slovenia, the current holder of the EU presidency.

All three countries have attained the level of democratic development evident among the last wave of NATO entrants, including the nearby Balkan states of Bulgaria and Romania, and the prospect of EU accession will help ensure continuing progress in their re-

form agenda. NATO membership should not only be an objective for countries that have committed themselves to extensive democratic reforms, it must also be a reward for steadfast progress in implementing those reforms.

2. SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

All three countries are well prepared for NATO accession having implemented several Membership Action Plan (MAP) programs since 1999. Each government has conducted the political, economic, legal, and security-sector reforms envisaged through the MAP framework and is pursuing the restructuring, modernization, refurbishment, and professionalization of their armed forces in compliance with NATO standards. Their overarching objective is to establish professional, mobile, deployable, and financially viable forces that are fully interoperable with Allied forces.

For instance, in 2002 Tirana launched a ten-year reform program sponsored and supervised by the U.S. Department of Defense in order to streamline and modernize Albania's standing army and upgrade its equipment. In addition to military restructuring, Skopje is in the process of ensuring the equitable representation of ethnic communities in its armed forces thus demonstrating that military modernization is a factor in domestic stabilization. Zagreb is also modernizing its military and is cooperating with NATO in improving the capabilities of the Croatian coastguard and border policing activities.

In terms of defense spending, Croatia has steadily increased its share, which this year stands at 1.8% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Zagreb is committed to raising this figure to 2% by 2010. Albania's defense spending has surpassed 2% of GDP in 2008, while Macedonia's has exceeded 2.5% annually for several years.

In addition to the implementation of reform programs and commitment to military restructuring, there is overall consensus across the political spectrum in all three countries in favor of NATO accession. Opinion polls also indicate that the public favors NATO entry by a wide margin, exceeding 90% in Albania, 70% in Macedonia, and with majority support in Croatia. There is only limited opposition to NATO membership in all three candidate states.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATO AND U.S. MISSIONS

Each country has contributed to U.S. or NATO-led missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and elsewhere. In fact, at least six West European countries, which are demographically larger or economically more prosperous, provide less than the Adriatic Three to the Afghani operation. Seaports and airports have been made available by all three capitals to U.S. and NATO forces, together with access to various military facilities, overflight rights, and the use of the national air traffic control service.

Albania and Macedonia proved to be key partners during NATO's intervention over Kosova in 1999. They supported NATO operations and Allied forces were deployed to both countries to halt the spread of the conflict and to provide humanitarian assistance for refugees from Kosova. Tirana also contributed to the NATO-led

Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia until its replacement by the EU's Operation Althea in 2007.

In Afghanistan, all three countries participate in the NATO-led International Security Force mission. Croatia has deployed 190 troops, Macedonia 130, and Albania 140. Zagreb has pledged to increase Croatia's contribution in 2008. In Iraq, Albania maintains 120 troops and Macedonia 40, whereas ten NATO countries have not participated in the operation either during or after the U.S.-led intervention. Macedonia and Albania have also participated in the EU's peacekeeping force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Croatia is making preparations to contribute to Operation Active Endeavour, NATO's maritime counter-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean. Macedonia is increasing the number of soldiers designated for foreign operations by one third this year and the budget for foreign missions has also been raised.

All three countries also cooperate with NATO in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) format in a wide range of programs and exercises, as well as in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Each state has received annual Individual Partnership Programs that focus on meeting the goals set in their Annual National Programs. And each has contributed to the anti-terrorist campaign within the framework of the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T). This includes sharing intelligence and analysis with NATO, enhancing national counter-terrorist capabilities, and improving border security and maritime surveillance.

4. DOMESTIC STABILITY AND REGIONAL SECURITY

NATO membership will contribute to consolidating domestic stability and regional security, essential in the wake of Kosova's independence and the ongoing political uncertainty in Serbia. Inclusion will prevent these countries from feeling isolated and curtail their vulnerabilities to any negative effects stemming from Kosova's statehood or Serbia's reaction.

Membership for the Adriatic Three would mean that almost the entire Balkan Peninsula is either within NATO or moving in that direction. Montenegro, which is committed to trans-Atlanticism, must also become a credible candidate in the near future and receive a Membership Action Plan (MAP), while Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova will remain under EU and NATO supervision for several years. The inclusion of Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia would be a source of encouragement for the remaining states to pursue necessary reforms. It could also convince progressive forces in Serbia that closer cooperation with NATO would enhance reform and modernization and provide another catapult toward future EU accession. Serbia would be enveloped along its borders by the Alliance and can monitor how its neighbors benefit from inclusion in NATO.

5. CONSOLIDATING ATLANTICISM AND A WIDER EUROPE

NATO enlargement over the past decade has not weakened the North Atlantic Alliance. Instead, it is the lack of sufficient contributions by some member states that has undercut NATO's effectiveness while Washington's tendency to use the Alliance as a "tool

box” after 9/11 also contributed to making NATO’s future uncertain. Including the Adriatic Three in NATO will not import regional instability into the Alliance. All three countries maintain productive bilateral ties, participate in all regional multi-national initiatives, and have no outstanding disputes or territorial claims toward any neighbor. Moreover, the historical record demonstrates that the inclusion of Greece and Turkey in NATO in 1952 helped to improve their relations. Bringing three strongly pro-American countries into NATO will contribute to consolidating the Alliance and expanding its influence. It will also connect the Adriatic, the Black Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean regions and enable NATO to focus its attention on securing the countries further east. Thus, NATO enlargement is an important component in consolidating a wider Europe.

6. COUNTERING RUSSIA’S EXPANSIONISM

NATO enlargement throughout the Balkans and toward the Black Sea region would help restrain Russia’s expansive aspirations and negative influences in the region and provide a greater sense of security to staunch U.S. allies and new Atlanticist states. The Balkans are useful for Moscow in disrupting democratic expansion in the wider European theater and injecting the Kremlin’s corrupt business practices and its disregard for the rule of law. In this strategic context, Serbia is manipulated by Russia as a valuable bridgehead within South East Europe to further Moscow’s economic and political influences, especially through the expansion of its energy interests.

Russia’s administration is seeking to undermine the role of the OSCE in promoting democratic development among member states and is intent on eviscerating the role of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw. For Moscow, the emergence of Euro-Atlantic democracies in former communist territories undermines its strategic designs. Independent democratic governments invariably seek membership in NATO and the EU in order to consolidate the reform process and provide permanent security and the assurance of state sovereignty. Russia feels more confident in realizing its aspirations where neighbors are either predictable authoritarian states, isolated and marginalized countries with populist governments, or weak and internally divided states that cannot qualify for NATO or EU membership.

NATO enlargement in the western Balkans and the prospect of inclusion for all democratic states in the Black Sea region that meet the necessary conditions, including Ukraine and Georgia, which should be included in the NATO process through Membership Action Plans (MAPs), will send two strong signals to Moscow. First, that the U.S. and its European allies are determined to reinvigorate the trans-Atlantic alliance to project security to all nearby regions. Second, that the value of common security interests and the interests stemming from common democratic values are more effective than Russia’s attempts to corrupt Europe’s political leadership and to divide the Alliance.

POSTSCRIPT: THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

One point of contention before NATO's April summit revolves around the dispute between Skopje and Athens over Macedonia's internationally recognized name. While the government in Skopje would accept NATO entry under the FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) label by which it is included in the United Nations and other international institutions, the government in Athens sees the pre-accession period as an opportunity to press for a permanent name that eliminates its concerns over identity, history, and territory. Nobody has discovered the magic formula in resolving the dispute, even though all parties, including Greece, want to see Macedonia enter NATO to enhance regional security. Washington must remain engaged in this process to find an interim arrangement that would at least temporarily satisfy both parties and not retard Skopje's aspirations and NATO's goals. It can then press for a permanent solution that could improve relations between Greece and Macedonia, two important U.S. allies in the Balkans.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. STEVEN PIFER, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO UKRAINE, SENIOR ADVISOR, RUSSIA AND EURASIA PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission,

I am pleased to appear before you today to address the issue of NATO and Ukraine at the upcoming Alliance summit in Bucharest. I will also offer some comments on Georgia and on Russian concerns. I commend the Commission for its interest in the Bucharest meeting, which can have a significant impact on shaping a broader, more stable and secure Europe, something that is clearly in the interest of the United States.

Over the past 15 years, Ukraine has made great progress in transforming itself into a modern European democracy and has developed increasingly closer relations with NATO. NATO members should extend to Ukraine a membership action plan, given the country's commitment to—and progress in—political, economic and military reform, and the contribution it can make to Euro-Atlantic security. Georgia also deserves consideration. Extending a membership action plan would help each country continue its internal reform process to develop political and economic systems compatible with those of the Euro-Atlantic community; foster closer cooperation between those countries and NATO; and create the pre-conditions for consideration at a later point of membership.

Extending membership action plans to Ukraine and/or Georgia will raise concern in Moscow. NATO should continue to engage Russia in cooperative endeavors that promote stronger links between the Alliance and Russia, and that hopefully will help end Cold War stereotypes that persist in Moscow. At the same time, Russia also needs to do its part to build a more cooperative NATO-Russia relationship. The Russian foreign and security policy elite has to cease clinging to its image of NATO as an adversary. While seeking good relations with Russia, NATO should not allow Moscow a veto, either explicit or tacit, over relations between the Alliance and third countries.

THE MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN PROCESS

NATO has carried out two rounds of enlargement since the end of the Cold War. Enlargement has brought ten new members into the Alliance's ranks, and promoted a broader, more stable and secure Euro-Atlantic community. Enlargement also has underpinned the dramatic democratic and economic transformations that have swept Central Europe over the past two decades.

Since launching the enlargement process in the 1990s, NATO has asked two sets of questions of prospective members. First, has the country in question implemented the political, economic, military and security reforms necessary to bring it into compliance with NATO standards? Has the country's political-economic system embraced the democratic and market economy values of the Alliance? This reflects the fact that NATO is not just a security alliance but is also an alliance of shared values. Second, can the country make a contribution to Euro-Atlantic security? Does it have ca-

pabilities and the political will to use them that will strengthen the Alliance's ability to meet the challenges currently before it?

NATO launched the membership action plan, or MAP, process in 1999 to help guide prospective members in answering these questions. As described in the April 1999 communiqué issued by NATO leaders at their summit in Washington, the MAP process envisages the provision by prospective members of individual programs regarding their national preparations for possible future membership, focused and candid feedback from the Alliance, and assistance in implementing those national programs.

At the Washington summit, NATO announced the establishment of MAPs for Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Seven of those countries—Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia—progressed to the point where, at the November 2002 NATO summit in Prague, they received invitations to join the Alliance. They became full Alliance members in 2004. Albania and Macedonia, along with Croatia, continue with their MAPs and hope to receive invitations to join NATO in Bucharest.

Membership action plans thus serve as roadmaps to guide prospective NATO members. The process is open-ended: there is no fixed schedule for completing it, and receiving a MAP does not guarantee an automatic invitation for membership. The decision to extend an invitation is a separate political decision, taken by Alliance members after they have reviewed a country's progress on its MAP. A MAP process aims to create the preconditions for consideration of membership. While the presumption is that it will lead to membership, a MAP does not prejudice a country's decision to request membership, nor does it prejudice the Alliance's decision on extending an invitation.

THE CASE FOR A MAP FOR UKRAINE

Ukraine has a long history of deepening relations with NATO. Ukraine was the first former Soviet state to join NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994. As NATO planned for its initial wave of enlargement and in parallel discussed how to strengthen NATO-Russian relations, the Alliance decided to pursue a third track: formalizing a relationship with Ukraine. This reflected NATO's recognition that a country with the size and strategic position of Ukraine merited a special relationship with the Alliance. At the July 1997 NATO summit in Madrid, having the day before invited Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join, NATO leaders approved the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership with Ukraine and established the NATO-Ukraine Council.

NATO-Ukraine relations continued to develop over the remainder of the 1990s. In May 2002, then-President Leonid Kuchma announced Ukraine's ultimate goal of joining NATO. However, questions regarding the seriousness of the Kuchma government's commitment to join and about the course of democracy in Ukraine, as well as other difficulties in Ukraine's relations with the West, made progress in this regard difficult.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Orange Revolution, NATO-Ukraine relations acquired new energy and momentum. President Victor Yushchenko made full integration into the Euro-Atlantic commu-

nity, including joining NATO, the key priority of his foreign policy. In April 2005, NATO foreign ministers agreed to establish with Ukraine an intensified dialogue, typically a precursor to a membership action plan.

By the end of 2005 and early 2006, officials in Washington and other NATO capitals had begun to consider the prospect of extending a MAP to Ukraine at the Riga summit in November 2006 were Ukraine to continue its reform progress. Officials at the White House, moreover, reportedly even began to consider the possibility of inviting Ukraine at the 2008 summit to join NATO.

This surge in NATO-Ukraine relations was derailed in September 2006, however, when then-Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich met with the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. He said that, while he favored close cooperation with NATO, he did not support a membership action plan. Given the division between Yushchenko and Yanukovich on this question, NATO did not offer a MAP in Riga, understandably choosing to wait until the Ukrainian government could articulate a unified position in favor of a MAP.

This point has now come. In a January letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Yushchenko, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and Rada (parliament) Speaker Arseniy Yatseniuk reiterated Ukraine's commitment to full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community and requested that Ukraine be granted a MAP at Bucharest.

Ukraine has a persuasive case. It has implemented significant reforms since regaining independence in 1991. As for political transformation, Ukraine is the only former Soviet state other than the Baltic nations to achieve a Freedom House ranking of "free," which it did in 2005, 2006 and 2007. Democratic elections have become the norm. Ukraine has held three national ballots over the past three years—the final round of the presidential vote in December 2004, Rada elections in March 2006, and preterm Rada elections in September 2007—that were assessed by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other monitors to be free, fair and competitive. While politics in Kyiv reflect an ongoing struggle for position and influence that is often not pretty, the struggle is largely based on democratic rules of the game. The country, moreover, boasts an increasingly professional and independent media that is unafraid to challenge power. Non-governmental organizations have flourished and have had real impact.

Ukraine has also made major progress on economic reform. It reversed the decline that devastated the economy during the 1990s and has achieved eight consecutive years of economic growth. Growth has averaged between six and seven percent per year, one of the most impressive growth rates in Europe or the former Soviet Union. Interestingly, Ukraine's growth rates are comparable to those of Russia. While Russia's economic boom since 2000 has been driven largely by the production and export of natural gas and oil, Ukraine has few such resources and instead must cope with dramatically rising energy prices. For example, Ukraine today pays more than three times the price for imported natural gas that it paid in 2005. Ukraine has put the basic institutions of a market economy in place and has begun to draw substantial foreign invest-

ment. The private sector now accounts for two-thirds of gross domestic product. Ukraine's trade patterns have increasingly oriented themselves toward European markets.

Ukraine likewise has made important strides in restructuring its military, moving from a large, Soviet-style army in 1991 to a much smaller, more mobile force that increasingly is configured to meet Ukraine's current security challenges and comply with NATO standards. Over the past 15 years, Ukrainian forces have acquired considerable experience in joint operations with NATO and American forces, often in the context of joint Polish-Ukrainian units created in the late 1990s.

Ukraine has moved well down the path of transforming itself into a modern European democracy, the kind of country that NATO has welcomed into its ranks over the past ten years. Indeed, Ukraine's progress in political, economic and military reform compares very well with the progress made by countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania when they received their MAPs in 1999.

Furthermore, Ukraine has demonstrated that it has serious military capabilities and the political will to use them. Ukrainian transport aircraft have provided strategic airlift to NATO forces; an agreement formalizing this cooperation was finalized in 2007. Ukrainian forces have participated alongside NATO and American troops in Balkan peacekeeping operations, such as in Bosnia and Kosovo. Ukraine deployed a chemical and biological weapons defense unit to Kuwait in 2003 and three battalions to Iraq in 2003-2005, making it at one point the fourth largest troop contributor to the coalition. Ukraine's military assets would make it a net contributor to Euro-Atlantic security.

The greatest weakness in Ukraine's case for a MAP is that ultimate entry into NATO does not now command broad support among the Ukrainian public. Opinion polls typically show that 25-30 percent of Ukrainians support membership, while some 50 percent oppose it. Much of this opposition may be related to a lack of understanding about how NATO has changed and what it is today. The Ukrainian government has stated its intention to conduct an information campaign regarding NATO and that, before submitting a formal request for membership, it would hold a referendum to gauge the views of Ukraine's citizens.

This should not disqualify Ukraine from a MAP. Other countries in the past have been granted a MAP despite low levels of domestic support for joining NATO. For example, polls showed relatively weak public support in Slovakia and Slovenia. But the governments of those countries used the period of their MAPs to broaden public support. Ukraine's leaders say that they will do the same. Polls in Ukraine have shown growing support for European integration, to the point where 60-70 percent of Ukrainians today favor joining the European Union. A MAP can help crystallize a consensus in Ukraine for full integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, including NATO.

Ukraine has demonstrated more than sufficient progress to qualify for a membership action plan, and NATO should agree to a MAP for Ukraine. Ideally, this will happen when Alliance leaders meet in Bucharest.

Washington has over the past 14 years led in shaping a forward-looking Alliance view on enlargement and on an open door for prospective members. I therefore hope that the U.S. government, over the next four weeks, will conduct an active diplomacy effort, working with other NATO members who support Ukraine's MAP aspirations, to achieve consensus by Bucharest. A MAP for Ukraine has been endorsed by the Senate in a unanimous vote on February 14, as well as in recent statements issued by Senators Clinton, McCain and Obama.

GEORGIA CONSIDERATIONS

I have been asked to briefly address Georgia. That country also has a long history of strengthening relations with NATO. Like Ukraine, Georgia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994. Then-President Edward Shevardnadze increasingly advocated his country's integration into the Alliance, as did President Mikhail Saakashvili, who came to power in the aftermath of the 2003 Rose Revolution. Georgia continued to develop relations with the Alliance and in September 2006 began an intensified dialogue.

Georgia has developed democratic political institutions, making an important break with the past following the Rose Revolution. However, the crackdown on demonstrators and imposition of a state of emergency last November represented a significant setback in the eyes of many Western analysts. Saakashvili attempted to recover by announcing a preterm presidential election, which was held on January 5. While observers noted a number of problems with the election, they concluded that, in essence, it was consistent with Georgia's democratic commitments under OSCE and the Council of Europe.

The Georgian government appears to recognize the damage done to its democratic credentials by the events of last fall. Since his reelection two months ago, Saakashvili has stressed the need for reconciliation, and the government has reached out to the opposition. Last week, the government and opposition agreed to the membership of a board on public television, and they are negotiating the rules for parliamentary elections to be held this spring. These elections provide Georgia an early chance to demonstrate anew its commitment to democratic principles.

Georgia has recorded dramatic progress on economic reform. The economy has grown each year since 2000, with the GDP growth rate exceeding nine percent in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The World Bank last year ranked Georgia the 18th easiest country in which to do business, reflecting the development of market economy institutions there. The new cabinet has made reducing the amount of state control in the economy a priority.

Georgia's military has changed in important ways over the past seven years. Largely as a result of the U.S. "train and equip" program, Georgia today has four battalions fully capable of operating with NATO forces. Two thousand Georgian troops currently are deployed in Iraq, and other Georgian forces serve under NATO command as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Such deployments demonstrate the kind of contribution that Georgia can make to Euro-Atlantic security.

In sum, Georgia has a solid case to support its request for a MAP. While its overall record on political, economic and military reform lags that of Ukraine, NATO membership has broad support among the Georgian people. In a referendum conducted in conjunction with the January 5 presidential election, 77 percent of Georgians expressed themselves in favor of Georgia joining the Alliance.

One other consideration affects Georgia. The breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia pose a special challenge for Tbilisi. This is complicated by the presence of Russian forces in those areas and overall Georgian-Russian tensions. Progress in settling these disputes and an easing of frictions with Moscow would undoubtedly ease concern among those NATO members reluctant to develop NATO-Georgian relations too quickly. The Alliance has made resolution of territorial conflicts on a prospective member's territory a prerequisite for membership. It has not, however, been a prerequisite for a MAP.

In sum, Georgia's progress to date is comparable to that of some states that in the past were awarded a MAP. NATO leaders should consider a MAP for Georgia, while reminding Tbilisi that nothing will strengthen its case for ultimate membership more than rapid consolidation of democratic institutions and practices. If NATO seeks a demonstration of Georgia's commitment to democratic practices, Alliance leaders could instruct foreign ministers to decide the question of a MAP for Georgia following the spring parliamentary elections. That would give the Alliance the opportunity to judge how Georgia has internalized the criticisms it received last fall as well as offer a powerful incentive for the conduct of free, fair and competitive parliamentary elections.

THE RUSSIA FACTOR

One cannot address the issue of MAPs for Ukraine and/or Georgia without considering the Russia factor. The Alliance has long made clear that any decision regarding membership is between NATO and the country concerned, and not subject to veto by any third party. Senior Russian officials have said that the decisions are for Kyiv and Tbilisi to make, but the Kremlin clearly does not like the idea of MAPs for Ukraine and Georgia. This reflects Russian unhappiness with NATO enlargement in general, even more so in light of Russia's effort to reassert special influence in the former Soviet space.

Part of this effort to reassert foreign influence stems from Russian disillusionment with what happened in the 1990s. It should be noted that NATO enlargement was not the cause of that disillusionment. The cause was weakness in Russia's internal structures as the country tried to organize itself and reconfigure its economy in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The economic bottoming out at the end of the 1990s and the sense of growing inequalities in wealth contributed to the disillusionment. These were internal Russian issues, not NATO questions.

Already in 1995, when NATO began formally to contemplate enlargement, the rationale in Washington and other NATO capitals for enlargement was to promote a broader, more stable and secure Europe, and to underpin the difficult political and economic transformations being made by the Central European states on the Alli-

ance's borders. NATO leaders made the point that the Alliance was not just a defense organization, but that it also represented a community of shared democratic and economic values. Spreading those values to NATO's neighbors benefited those countries, the Alliance and Europe as a whole.

The decision to enlarge NATO was not driven by anti-Russian motivations. Indeed, already in 1990, the Alliance began deemphasizing Moscow as a potential adversary and sought ways to promote cooperation. Shortly after deciding to proceed with enlargement, NATO members began to consider ways to develop a positive, forward-looking relationship with Russia. The decision at the May 1997 NATO-Russia meeting in Paris to establish the Permanent Joint Council aimed to put in place a mechanism to promote increasingly greater cooperation between NATO and Russia.

In advance of the second wave of enlargement, NATO made an effort to upgrade its relationship with Russia. The Permanent Joint Council became the NATO-Russia Council in 2002; NATO endorsed new areas for cooperation; and the Alliance agreed that members could discuss a number of issues in that forum on the basis of individual country views, rather than on the basis of a previously agreed NATO consensus.

In retrospect, Washington and other NATO capitals likely overestimated the Alliance's ability through greater NATO-Russian cooperation to ease Moscow's concerns about enlargement. Perhaps NATO members have not been as imaginative as they might have in developing new areas of cooperation with Russia. Perhaps the Alliance could have done more to change the image of NATO held by the Russian foreign and security policy elite and public, which appears to differ little from the image Russians held 20 years ago.

But Moscow bears a significant share of the responsibility for the failure to realize the potential of the NATO-Russia relationship. Moscow has failed to take full advantage of the opportunities of the past six years to thicken NATO-Russian cooperation. This appears due in part to a decision by the foreign and security policy elite to regard NATO as a main, if not the main, adversary. To be sure, one can appreciate that Russia is politically uncomfortable with NATO enlargement in the aftermath of the end of the Warsaw Pact and collapse of the Soviet Union. But it is difficult to understand the emphasis that senior Russian political and military leaders place on NATO as a military threat. Over the past 20 years, the Alliance has reoriented itself away from deterring and defending against a Soviet assault to peacekeeping in the Balkans, anti-terrorism efforts and coalition operations in Afghanistan.

NATO's military structure today looks nothing like it did 20 years ago. For example, at the end of the Cold War, the United States deployed some 300,000 troops, airmen and sailors in and around Europe, centered on four large, tank-heavy divisions based in Germany. The purpose was to deter and, if necessary, defend against a Soviet attack. Today, U.S. forces in and around Europe number around 50,000; U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe have been dramatically reduced; the force structure includes just two brigades in Germany; and the focus of U.S. forces in Europe is peacekeeping in the Balkans and support for coalition operations in Iraq and Af-

ghanistan. NATO's European members have made similarly dramatic reductions in and transformations of their armed forces.

Moscow seems to ignore this. Given the stability of Russia's Western border as opposed to the threat posed to Russian security by radical Islam and instability in the Northern Caucasus and Central Asia, and the challenge of a rising China, Moscow's emphasis on defending against a supposed NATO "threat" is strategically puzzling.

NATO should continue to work to transform its relationship with Russia. To the extent that that relationship becomes one of increased cooperation, perhaps even partnership on some issues, the easier it may become for Russia to accept that some of its neighbors wish to integrate fully into the Euro-Atlantic community. But that will require that Russians adjust their view of NATO to reflect the realities of today's Alliance.

While the Alliance should not ignore Russian views, concern in Russia should not mean compromising another nation's aspiration to associate with an alliance of shared values that promotes stability and security throughout Europe. It would be a mistake to allow Russia a veto over the extension of MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia. To do so would be to accept a new dividing line between Europe and the former Soviet space. It would deny the opportunity to tens of millions to become full members of the Euro-Atlantic community. And it would encourage those in Russia who wish to reassert a Russian-led post-Soviet bloc rather than develop a relationship of cooperation and full partnership with Europe and the West. These effects would not be in the interest of the United States, of the Alliance or, ultimately, of Russia.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission,

NATO enlargement has been profoundly successful in achieving its goal of shaping a broader, more stable and secure Europe. The Alliance since 1997 has extended ten invitations to join, all of which have been accepted, and there is no reason to regret any of those decisions. The enlargement process has underpinned the dramatic political and economic transformations that have swept NATO's eastern flank over the past 20 years and strengthened the Alliance's ability to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Consistent with the logic of enlargement and the MAP process, NATO leaders should set in motion membership action plans for Ukraine and Georgia, to create the preconditions for consideration of membership for those countries at a later point.

Thank you.

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HON. JOHN S. TANNER (D-8), MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE AND CHAIRMAN, U.S. DELEGATION TO THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Chairman Hasting, Co-Chairman Cardin and members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you here today. I recently led a bipartisan House delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Brussels and Paris, and to additional meetings in Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia (or Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM), and Albania from February 16–24.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NPA) consists of members of parliament from the 26 NATO states, as well as members of parliament from associated states such as Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia. During NPA meetings delegates discuss and debate a range of issues of current importance to the alliance. At the February meetings enlargement of the alliance along with Afghanistan and developments in Kosovo dominated the discussions. Delegates have the opportunity to listen to presentations by specialists from NATO and on NATO affairs, and to engage in discussion of the issues raised.

Enlargement is one of the key issues before the alliance today. NATO will hold a summit in Bucharest April 2–4. Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia are candidate states, and each must receive unanimous support from all 26 allied governments in order for it to receive an invitation to join. From that point, each member state will follow its own constitutional processes to amend NATO's founding Washington Treaty to admit new states and to make a commitment to defend additional territory. There must again be unanimous support in this process for a candidate if it is to be admitted to membership. The alliance is still at an early stage, therefore, in considering the applications for membership of these three countries. Congress will hold hearings on the qualifications of the three states, and the United States and other allies will expect them to continue to work to meet NATO requirements under their Membership Action Plans (MAP).

After time in Brussels and Paris, our delegation traveled to Zagreb, Croatia, for the beginning of meetings with candidate state governments for membership in the alliance. Serbian reactions to Kosovo's independence and recognition by many governments had set the region on edge. The U.S. embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, was attacked on February 21, as were the Slovenian and Croatian embassies there. U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Robert Bradtke accompanied us during much of our stay in Croatia and kept us up to date on developments in Belgrade and on the safety of U.S. personnel at our embassy there. He also briefed us on Croatia's efforts to qualify for NATO membership.

While in Zagreb we met with Prime Minister Sanader, President Mesie, and other senior officials. We were interested in discovering the progress that Croatia has made in military modernization and in other aspects of the program outlined for the country in the MAP. That evening Ambassador Bradtke arranged for us to meet with members of the Croatian parliament, including opposition figures and key members of the foreign policy and defense commit-

tees, as well as independent voices in Croatia. This meeting allowed us to hear a wide range of views beyond those in the government, and added to our ability to evaluate Croatia's progress in the MAP. There is a consensus that significant progress has been made over the past several years. A key issue was the relatively low level of public support—somewhat over 50%—in the population for NATO membership, a figure that appears to be climbing. There must also continue to be progress made in the fight against corruption.

The following day we flew first to the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), then to Albania. In Macedonia, our ambassador gave us a briefing that touched on several issues of relevance. The delegation then proceeded to meetings with Macedonian President Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Gruevski, and other senior officials, including General Stojanovski the chief of defense forces. The internal political situation in the country remains complicated and unsettled, and issues range well beyond ethnic divisions in the country. Macedonian troops serve in NATO operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and we met several soldiers who had returned from assignments there. A key issue in NATO is the formal name of the country, and there are continuing discussions with Green to attempt to reach a compromise under U.N.-sponsored talks. We are hopeful that Skopje and Athens can reach a settlement of this issue, and that Macedonia's candidacy for NATO can be judged solely on its qualifications under the MAP.

In Albania we met with President Topi and with Prime Minister Berisha. We also met with members of parliament from both the governing parties and the opposition. We were accompanied throughout our meetings by U.S. Ambassador Withers, who provided an overview of developments in Albania. There are conflicting views on the depth of the problem caused by organized crime and corruption in Albania, and this was one issue raised in our discussions with government officials. While laws have been passed to fight crime and corruption, it may be useful for Congress in the coming months to examine the degree to which such legislation has been implemented. It should be said that Albania, although a poor country, by all accounts has made progress in downsizing and modernizing its military.

The Serbian reaction to Kosovo's independence time and again surfaced during our meetings. In the coming months, we are likely to see a range of ideas raised for and against the possible membership of the "Adriatic 3" in the alliance. These are small countries with correspondingly small militaries; they must concentrate on niche capabilities to make a contribution to allied security, and each is making progress along this road. Given the continuing tensions in the region in part brought on by Serbia's reaction to Kosovo's independence, proponents of the three governments' candidacies are likely to argue that their developing democracies and contributions to multinational, cooperative efforts to bring stability are factors in their favor. These are issues that my delegation and other Members of Congress will be considering in the coming months.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony here today.

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY H.E.
ALEKSANDER SALLABANDA, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC
OF ALBANIA TO THE UNITED STATES**

Chairman Rep. Hastings, Co-Chairman Sen. Cardin, distinguished Members of the Commission, and U.S. experts. Thank you for the invitation to submit written testimony to address Albania's readiness for accession to NATO and its willingness and efforts to strengthen democratic principles, meet obligations and advance human rights.

It has been over a decade since Albania expressed its desire to join NATO, and, not long after that, the country was offered a Membership Action Plan. Even though the road towards NATO membership has had its ups and downs, Albania has made considerable progress and the GOA and all Albanian institutions are working hard to fulfill all obligations and requirements in order to deserve an invitation to join the Alliance, at the Bucharest Summit. I am happy to tell you that significant progress has been made in recent years, and even though challenges remain, the Albanian state and all Albanian political forces are fully committed and have clearly demonstrated their willingness to meet all NATO membership obligations in the very near future.

I avail of the occasion to express my country's gratitude to the US and NATO for the continuous support they have given Albania and reassure you that the Riga and Reykjavik Assembly declarations have been taken seriously and that we are well aware that the invitation to become a member depends, first and foremost, on our performance.

In the last years Albania has undertaken a series of reforms to meet NATO Membership Action Plan obligations and strengthen democracy and rule of law in the country. My testimony today will focus on the recent achievements of Albania and the reasons we believe that these reforms are sustainable and irreversible. I will focus on the following areas:

1. Governance
2. Economy
3. Security

Albania has made significant progress in enhancing democratic governance, reforming its judicial and electoral system, fighting corruption, curtailing informal economy, combating crime and expanding minority rights. During recent years Albania held parliamentary elections that produced a democratic rotation of power, local elections that were deemed free and fair by political parties of the opposition and the government, and the election of the President in full compliance with the constitution. The Central Electoral Commission adequately prepared voter lists, which ensured transparency and gave international and domestic election observers access to election proceedings. Electoral reform is ongoing. By the end of the year, a new electronic civil register will be completed and Albanian citizens will be issued new digital identification cards and biometric passports.

An excellent political climate exists now in Albania regarding cooperation on the major reforms needed for the country's integration. This is reflected in the resolution adopted by parliament expressing the commitment of all political parties to cooperate for

these reforms and the subsequent approval with full consensus of the new Law on the Organization of the Judiciary System. The Government of Albania (GOA) has increased popular confidence in the judiciary by adopting legislation promoting an independent judiciary and strengthening checks and balances. Court decisions are now published to enhance accountability. Working conditions for judges have been upgraded and recruitment is based on merit. Based on this cooperative climate, parliament has established an ad-hoc committee with the participation of major political parties aiming to prepare and present before the Law Committee and parliamentary plenary session a National Pact on justice reform. The National Pact will be drafted based on material presented by both political groupings and contributions of other actors in the justice system. The Pact will include short and long term measures, with specific deadlines.

To combat corruption the government has downsized public administration and other bloated services, established an interagency force to combat financial crime, implemented e-procurement and e-tax procedures, adopted new legislation to protect whistle-blowers, new regulations on conflict of interests and a legal and institutional framework aimed at reducing informality. Albania has also taken significant steps to combat crime. During 2007, 202 organized crime groups were dismantled, 850 of their members arrested and 191 criminal gang ringleaders extradited from other countries in the region, the EU or the USA.

A legislative and institutional framework has been established to prevent trafficking in humans, narcotics, and other forms of smuggling. The State, Border and Migration Police have all been restructured to focus on dismantling these phenomena. Speedboats and other small private vessels were banned from coastal waters for 3 years, and a maritime radar-surveillance system is being implemented.

Although Albania has traditionally been a country noted for its inter ethnic and inter religious tolerance par excellence, following the collapse of communism, Albania has taken several steps to further expand minority rights. Albania does not have any restrictions for languages and religions of minorities, and minorities are free to form associations and engage in the political and social life of the country. A political party representing mainly the interests of minorities has been part of the ruling government of both, the center left and the center right coalition governments throughout the last decade.

Albania's economic stability is demonstrated by its high economic growth, stable low rate of inflation, stable currency and constant increase in FDI. Albania's economic growth has been around 6% during the last years, inflation has held steady within the target range of 2-4%, the domestic budget deficit during 2007 was 2.6% and exports increased by 28%. The number of people living in poverty has fallen from 25% in 2002 to less than 18 percent today, and the unemployment rate has decreased significantly during the last years.

Trade volumes have been on the rise, assisted by transportation and other infrastructure developments, and the recent fiscal reform has boosted economic development. Albania is now one of the coun-

tries with the lowest fiscal burden in Europe, having implemented a flat income tax of 10%, decreased social security contributions by 30% and the price of energy for businesses by 33%. The establishment of a one-stop shop for the registration of business has reduced registration time from 42 days to 24 hours and significantly lowered the number of informal business. All the above have increased the rate of tax collection and have made it possible for the government to approve extra budgets, in spite of lower taxes. Moreover, in the last three years, revenues have increased from 22 to 27% of the GDP. As a result of these reforms, on June 12, 2006, the EU signed the Association and Stabilization Agreement, which until now is ratified by 17 EU countries and a Visa Facilitation Agreement in 2007.

Regarding security, Albania, in cooperation with western allies and international organizations has undertaken several reforms to enhance and modernize its military and flow of classified information. Albania raised its defense budget to 2.01% of the GDP in 2008 and is working to achieve the goal of a fully professional, well trained force by the end of 2010. Albania cooperates extensively on security matters with NATO members and has signed a number of important international treaties. Recently, Albania became the first country in the world to eliminate all known chemical weapons stock.

Albanian armed forces serve alongside NATO forces in Afghanistan, Albania's special forces participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Albania has a peacekeeping contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also participates in NATO's naval counter-terrorist Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to this, the Albanian government has expressed its readiness to contribute troops to other troubled areas such as Darfur.

Albania has always been a supporter of good neighborly relations and factor of stability in the region. It maintains excellent relations with its neighbors: Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosova, Croatia and Greece, and has played a significant role in encouraging moderation by Kosova's political leaders. In addition to the above, cooperation within the framework of the US sponsored Adriatic Charter has fostered cooperation between Albania, Croatia and Macedonia and enhanced security in the region. Albania strongly supports independent, democratic and multiethnic Kosova, fully implementing the Ahtisaari plan and firmly oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration convinced that this guarantees long lasting peace and stability in Kosova and the region.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for the opportunity you gave me to provide this testimony and for the continuous support your country has given Albania and the Albanians during the last two decades. In closing, I would like to assure you of our continued commitment to maintain the pace of these reforms, which will be guaranteed by the broad support integration enjoys with the Albanian population (more than 94%) and all political forces, and the next goal of my country, integration in the EU.

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY MARIJAN
GUBIC, CHARGÉS D'AFFAIRES A.I. REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA TO
THE UNITED STATES**

CROATIA AND NATO

The North Atlantic Alliance has provided security for the democratic countries of Western Europe and North America during the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War era, NATO continues to expand the zone of security and stability to Central and Eastern Europe by successfully integrating new countries into the Alliance, which was subsequently followed by their membership in the European Union. The United States has played a decisive role in the process of enlargement by providing leadership in this crucially important process for the future of Europe. NATO and EU enlargement have been two of the most successful projects of Europe in the post-Cold War era.

The process of enlargement is yet to be completed. It is of crucial importance that NATO remains open to any European country committed the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty and which is ready and willing to contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. South East Europe went through a period of turmoil and war during the last decade of the twentieth century. This came to an end as a result of the active engagement, and again, the leading role of the United States and NATO, which provided a heavy footprint on the ground and enabled the peace process in that volatile part of Europe to succeed. South East Europe has not yet reached the desired level of stability. This is demonstrated by recent developments. Although we have come a long way to achieve a sustainable peace and stability, more can and needs to be done. Countries in the region need a strong signal that their future lays within the Euro-Atlantic community. An invitation at the Bucharest Summit for candidate countries to join the Alliance will have an enormously positive impact on stabilization efforts within and beyond the region.

NATO is a central pillar of Croatia's foreign and security policy. Today in NATO we recognize a unique efficacious political and defense alliance which links both sides of the Atlantic into a powerful community of shared values and common interests—an alliance able to face new challenges and threats while fostering partnerships in its efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability. The Croatian government is fully committed to ensuring the country's rapid accession to the North Atlantic Alliance, just as it is committed to its values and interests which we profoundly share with NATO member countries.

At this crucial point in our history, as Croatia is on the verge of NATO membership, we are completing a wide range of comprehensive reforms. Croatia is on a fast track to become an EU member, which is clear recognition of Croatia's reform achievements. It is important to stress that Croatia has fully co-operated with the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague. We have been successfully also in dealing with the legacy of the past, while setting an important example for others in the region.

Regional cooperation is another strategic cornerstone of Croatia's foreign policy. Croatia will continue to contribute to the strategic

interests of the North Atlantic Alliance in South East Europe. In a short period of time, Croatia has transformed itself from a consumer to a provider of security in the region and beyond. Our Euro-Atlantic integration process sets a good example and gives hope to all the countries in the region. In that sense, Croatia highly values the successful cooperation between the US-Adriatic Charter countries. The Charter has provided a framework for the regular exchange of experience and cooperation with our counterparts Albania and Macedonia, as well as other neighboring countries in the region. One of the main results of the cooperation within the US-Adriatic Charter framework is the deployment of a Combined Medical Team to Afghanistan in August 2005. The fifth rotation of the Medical Team was deployed in September 2007.

Croatia has successfully completed the sixth cycle of the Membership Action Plan for NATO. Allies welcomed a successful implementation of the reform processes and shared a common view that Croatia's reforms are irreversible. Croatia's political, economic and social reforms, relevant for the accession to the Alliance, have also during the last few years complemented and supported our efforts for EU integration. As a result, this process has been substantially accelerated, engaging the entire institutions of state and public administration.

Reform of the judiciary is particularly intensive and ongoing in Croatia. Our goal is to establish a transparent and expedient process at all levels within the judicial system, while enhancing the rule of law and judicial independence. The Government is particularly committed to combating corruption and to this end, international and regional co-operation have been enhanced. A National Anti-Corruption Program was adopted by the Government, and a National Council has also been established to monitor its implementation.

We have a democratic political system based on a fully functioning, competitive market economy. We respect minority communities in accordance with OSCE guidelines; and we do not have any major outstanding disputes with our neighbors. Furthermore, we are deeply committed to the peaceful settlement of international disputes and we are continuously sharing our experiences in adopting NATO and EU standards with other countries. In this regard, after eleven years of fruitful cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Croatia, the decision to close mission in 2008 upon fulfillment of its mandate has already been made. This can serve as an example of the positive role and effect of the OSCE's endeavors in general. The successful fulfillment of the OSCE Mission mandate should also be viewed within the context of a positive contribution of Croatia, as a strong and stable democracy, to the permanent stabilization of our part of Europe. We will continue with our contribution to regional stability in cooperation with the OSCE, especially in key areas like the prosecution of war crimes and the return of refugees.

Croatia realized early the imperative of taking its share of the international burden in Afghanistan at a very early stage, in particular in the ISAF operation, and it became a part of it prior to NATO taking the lead. As a country without extensive experience in peace-keeping, we joined ISAF in February 2003 with a military police platoon. As a result, as we have gained invaluable experience

and enduring confidence in our capabilities and competence; we have progressively also increased our contribution.

Croatia's participation in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan is our largest commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance and international security. We will continue to give development assistance to Afghanistan

During the five years of engagement in ISAF, Croatia's contingent has gradually been assuming more diversified and complex tasks (military police, intelligence, logistics, medical, headquarters elements and now infantry, training personnel, civil-military liaison). The size of Croatia's contingent has been increased to 200 troops and will increase further to 300 during 2008, and with a level of ambition to have 700 in the operations continually by 2011. Croatian diplomats and police officers also participate in the mission.

Croatian troops have also been expanding geographically and are present throughout different regions of Afghanistan (in Kabul, North and West), and they are operating without caveats. Half of the Croatian OMLT (Operational Mentoring Liaison Team) members were temporarily deployed to Kandahar (South) as well, with a possibility of redeployment in the future.

Aware of the fact that building a capable Afghan Security Forces is a key condition for a self-sustainable Afghan state and a cornerstone of the International Community's exit strategy, Croatia is also actively participating in the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and we have also donated needed military materiel.

In the meantime, we are trying to support Afghan governance and capacity building by inviting Afghan diplomats to attend courses at the Diplomatic Academy in Zagreb. We have also hosted a delegation of women from the Afghan Women's Ministry for a study mission to Croatia in order to acquaint them with our achievements and experiences in the area of human rights, gender issues and women's empowerment.

On the other hand, gaining experience in international peace operations is valuable for further development of the Croatian Armed Forces. The main goal of the reform of the Croatian military is to develop a modern, effective, well trained, equipped and more expeditionary Armed Forces, capable of executing a broad spectrum of missions, nationally and internationally. As of January 1, 2008, the Croatian Armed Forces to be all volunteer forces.

The Croatian annual defense budgets are developed in accordance with the Long-Term Development Plan of the Armed Forces, making the budget an important tool for defense reforms. In this regard, we aim to reach a defense budget of 2 percent of GDP by 2010.

Together with the reform processes and our international efforts, the Croatian Government, being fully committed to the values of democracy, gives utmost importance to an open dialogue with the Croatian public.

Particular importance has been given to the efforts of increasing public support for Croatia's membership in NATO. There have been so far numerous activities across the country to inform and educate the public, reaching out to all groups within the Croatian society. Consequently public support has grown steadily and an absolute

majority support NATO membership for Croatia. The most recent polls register 67 percent support for Croatia's membership in NATO.

Euro-Atlanticism continues to be the fundamental framework for the realization of Croatia's national interests. We consider that our country belongs to this community. Continued reforms in the political, economic, judicial, administrative and defense sectors, dealing with the legacy of the past decade, as well as activity in numerous regional initiatives whose objective is to facilitate the creation of a secure and prosperous neighborhood, prove our full determination to adapt ourselves to be a member of the Euro-Atlantic family. In that regard, Croatia is and will remain a responsible and credible partner. We have great expectations from the upcoming Summit Meeting in Bucharest, where enlargement will be a prominent issue. To conclude, Croatia believes it is ready to join the Alliance.

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY H.E. VASIL SIKHARULIDZE, AMBASSADOR OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED STATES

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for your gracious invitation to submit written testimony for inclusion into the official record for your hearing on NATO Enlargement and the Bucharest Summit organized by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission).

As you are well aware, Georgia is firmly committed to integrating herself into Euro-Atlantic institutions. This is demonstrated by the overwhelming support shown in the plebiscite held in parallel with the snap presidential election on January 5, 2008 where there was overwhelming support for joining NATO. We anticipate that Georgia is on the brink of a major step towards this goal as we hope the alliance will offer my country admittance into the Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Bucharest Summit in April

You rightfully underlined that NATO is a values-based organization. It encompasses the full range of military and political issues necessary for ensuring the security of its member states, including the promotion of democracy throughout Europe and beyond Europe's traditional borders. The Alliance's enlargement, under a values-based system, promotes peace, stability and security. In short, democracies are disinclined to wage war or violate human rights either internally or externally. As more nations achieve NATO political, social and military standards and gain entrance to the organization, the sphere of peace and security is expanded.

When it comes to Georgia, I would like to underline the progress made by my country in an amazingly short period of time when we have faced monumental challenges difficult for the most developed of nations. Georgia has demonstrated a long list of political, economic and security reforms since our Rose Revolution in 2003. I am proud to say that this has taken place under democratic governance—at times we have stumble, but we have always caught ourselves and through political dialogue, elections and most important the rule of law, Georgia continues to strengthen its democratic institutions.

I would like first to draw the Committee's attention to the military and security aspect of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and our achievements in those areas. Georgia-NATO cooperation has led to important achievements. Georgia has been supporting NATO in its efforts to provide security and stability by contributing its troops to KFOR and ISAF. The Government of Georgia has decided to commit significant resources to ISAF. Moreover, Georgia stands ready to provide support to NATO's operation "Active Endeavour". Also, our contributions to building peace and security in Iraq have provided valuable experience to our forces. As you are well aware, Georgian ranks the third in Iraq with troops' level at 2000 militaries. This is a significant pool with which Georgia will proudly meet future commitments to its international obligations.

Georgia has been effectively using IPAP, PARP and other partnership mechanisms in support of a comprehensive reform processes within our military and civil-military (oversight) structures. Intensified Dialog (ID) on membership issues strengthened Geor-

gia-NATO cooperation and was a gateway for close dialogue and consultations on many issues. We were given a high assessment in the ID process, which has served to flesh out a plan for addressing the next steps as we stand on the doorstep of MAP.

Since the launch of ID in September 2006, NATO and Georgia have conducted all necessary rounds of consultations with NATO's International Staff (IS) on military, political, economic, legal, security, resource, and science issues. Moreover, Georgia and NATO Allies have held a number of 26+1 meetings at different levels on a variety of issues based on our common interests.

In parallel to the ID process, Georgia has been implementing steps outlined in the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) during the past four years. IPAP is a document that clearly outlines objectives and relevant actions to meet these objectives in different spheres, such as defense, security and military issues, public information, science and environment, civil emergency planning, and administrative, protective security. IPAP implementation is subject to annual and interim assessments from the NATO International staff experts. Hence, we have already had four regular assessments (plus one unofficial) demonstrating strong performance from the Georgian side in meeting its IPAP objectives. The last IPAP assessment by the NATO IS was conducted 26–31 January 2008. The IS emphasized strong Georgian performance. This provides additional credibility for the arguments in support of Georgia's admittance into MAP.

The latest new elements recommended in our advance towards MAP have been the adoption by President Saakashvili in November 2007 of a Strategic Defense Review (SDR)—the cornerstone of any defense reform process. Georgia now has a clear vision on the structure of the Georgian Armed Forces that highlight short, middle and long term goals critical to placing well-trained troops in conflict areas where they can integrate smoothly with NATO forces. One of the elements of these reforms is the professionalization of the Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) by the year 2009, along with establishing modern management (Planning, Programming, and Budgeting) and human resources systems, restructuring Land, Air, Naval Forces and National Guard, modernizing logistics and infrastructure to meet NATO standards, and enhancing interoperability with the Alliance. In this regard, I would like to point to one important achievement—our Air Operation Center has been fully modernized and is prepared to join NATO's Air Situation Data Exchange system.

Mr. Chairman, along with significant transformation of the military, Georgia has carried out a number of vital reforms aimed at strengthening state institutions in order to ensure the irreversibility of democratic development. Georgia has also achieved significant progress integrating into Euro-Atlantic institutions. However, we fully recognize that as a developing democracy many challenges and, therefore, areas of improvement still exist.

Georgia has begun implementing a number of political reforms with regards to our electoral process. Comprehensive consultations between the ruling party and opposition are serving to strengthen these critical areas. The ultimate aim of these reforms are: to eliminate predictable sources of procedural difficulties in the elec-

tions; to further improve a campaign environment that allows voters to make their choice without any interference from the state or political party; to ensure that the public perceives the environment surrounding any political campaign as fair by placing clear red-line restrictions on the campaigning activities of civil servants; to further strengthen media freedom and openness for all competing parties, including by monitoring compliance with free airtime legislation; and improving the administration of elections by allocating more resources to the Central Electoral Commission. Georgia stands ready to take all necessary measures to ensure the successful conduct of free and fair parliamentary elections scheduled for this coming May.

Georgia has been implementing a wide-ranging set of judicial reforms under the Criminal Law Reform Strategy and Action Plan, which was developed in cooperation with the European Union (EU) program EUJUST THEMIS—that has been underway for several years. It will be fully implemented by 2009. In line with this reform package, constitutional amendments have limited Presidential authority over the judicial system, including eliminating the President's right to appoint or dismiss judges thereby providing greater judicial independence. The courts have also been restructured in line with European standards, and salaries have been raised significantly to reduce incentives for corruption. These reforms have significantly changed the nature of the judicial system in Georgia by transforming it from a tool of the state to a legitimate and independent branch of the government. Proof of judicial independence can be found in some interesting statistics. For example, the courts have ruled in favor of the government in only 40% of all cases. Specifically, the constitution was modified to reintroduce jury trials in 2004; the average trial period for civil and administrative hearings has been significantly reduced, 37% and 40% respectively, placing Georgia well above the European average; the court of appeals has institutionalized a clear separation between first and second instances reflecting strict adherence to European standards; the Supreme Court has been established purely as the court of cassation, thus enabling the Court to create common judicial practices based on legal argumentation and judicial norms. Furthermore, the government increased judicial assistance in 2006 to cover all criminal and administrative proceedings, to provide free legal consultations and drafting of legal documents, and hired new defense lawyers.

Another area of judicial reforms centers on the issue of appointing, disciplining and educating our judges. The High Council of Justices, which is responsible for appointing and disciplining judges, is now a completely independent institution and in line with the European Charter on the Status for Judges. The Parliament adopted a new Law on Independence of the Judiciary and Communication with Justices, which prohibits *ex parte* communication with judges by or on behalf of interested parties. Justices are currently selected through an examination process and are required to hold a high degree in law and have at least five years' work experience in their specialization. The government is developing a High School of Justice to select, train and appoint future judges. This school will also provide regular on-the-job and in-service training courses for current judges. In parallel, the Office of the

Prosecutor General has introduced training and education courses for prosecutors throughout Georgia.

Most significantly, the political leadership, starting at the top with President Saakashvili, has made the fight against corruption a key focus of its reform efforts. The results of this fight have been one of the Government's biggest achievements. Georgia has made significant strides in reducing corruption at all levels through effective implementation of its Anti-Corruption and Strategy Plan. The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) report gave the government a positive evaluation and 14 new recommendations on follow-on steps to help ensure the integrity of the public sector. These were approved well ahead of the June 2008 deadline. The government's vigorous anti-corruption drive has led to the sentencing of 1,225 high- and mid-level ranking officials ranging from ministers to police officers—in short, no one guilty of abusing the public trust has been spared. The government has established a Code of Ethics for officials of the prosecutor's office. Investigations into violations of this Code have led to 330 officials being disciplined since 2004. The public has acknowledged the success of the program, with 97% of respondents in a recent Gallup poll citing zero encounters with corruption in the past year. We fully realize that corruption can never be stamped out, but with many levels of oversight and transparency coupled with hard-hitting laws as a disincentive to abuse a government position at any level, we will always be aggressively working to ensure the integrity of government.

Another core priority area discussed in the framework of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration is a conflict resolution processes to peacefully address the issues surrounding the two areas not under Georgian government control. Georgia is fully committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts on its territory. We strongly believe that our peace process is results oriented. The Government of Georgia's top priority is the safe and dignified return of all IDP's/refugees as prescribed by numerous ceasefire agreements, UN Security Council resolutions and other international documents, with the final goal being to confer on the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia the full rights and protections guaranteed under the Georgian constitution and allow them to exercise their will in free and democratic elections—something they are not allowed to do now.

The reforms listed above need a substantial resource base. Much of this comes from Georgia's own coffers. The fight against corruption, downsizing bureaucracy and making it responsive to the public has served to spur economic growth and tax remittances to the government. The economic reforms undertaken by the Government of Georgia are targeted at liberalization of the economy, deregulation and economic growth based on private sector development. The pro-growth economic policy introduced by the Government in 2004 coupled with cleaning up the bureaucracy yielded impressive results expressed in high economic growth, increased Foreign Direct Investment and trade turnover, moderate inflation, reduced poverty and a trend towards lower unemployment.

In terms of figures, real GDP growth in the first three quarters of 2007 constituted 12.7%; the average annual inflation rate in 2007 is 9.2%; while FDI in Georgia four years ago was just a few

hundred million dollars, today it is up to \$2 billion. I take great pride that the World Bank places Georgia ahead of developed countries like the Netherlands and Germany in anti-corruption efforts and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) ranks Georgia as a global leader among transitional countries; the share of population living below the poverty line has decreased from 52% to 24%. Now that serious achievements have been registered in fighting corruption and laying the ground for economic development, the Government is turning to address important social issues such as poverty alleviation and unemployment.

Mr. Chairman, in the view of the strong support extended by the Georgian people to integrate with the North Atlantic Alliance, the strength of the democratic processes in my country, and our demonstrated ability to be a contributor to Euro-Atlantic security makes Georgia ready to step forward on the way of NATO integration and receive MAP. Furthermore, we—The Georgian people—are confident that we can help NATO expand the sphere of freedom, democracy and security that I spoke of earlier. We are hopeful that NATO will understand that it will benefit from further strengthening their relations with Georgia by offering my country MAP. This step will help consolidate the tremendous gains that have been made while accelerating a reform process already well underway. I would like you, and NATO, to look at Georgia as a catalyst for facilitating democratic reforms in the easternmost part of Europe and into Central Asia. We hope that the NATO Summit represents a historic moment for Georgia. Admittance in MAP will serve to validate international recognition for all we have accomplished and set us on our unalterable course for joining the greatest alliance in world history—an alliance that is dedicated to promoting and most of all protecting, the values we both hold so dear: Freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to present our case for MAP. I also want to thank your staff for all their efforts on behalf of Georgia would also like to include for the record a letter by President Saakashvili addressed to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on 13 February, 2008.

**STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY H.E. ZORAN
JOLEVSKI, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
TO THE UNITED STATES**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on the Republic of Macedonia's preparations and readiness to accept an invitation to join the NATO alliance.

In my country, I am proud to say that across a broad political and social spectrum, there is widespread support—make that enthusiasm—for joining NATO. Macedonia's odyssey to join NATO can be traced back to December 23, 1993. On that day, the Macedonian Assembly unanimously adopted a Declaration for accession of the Republic of Macedonia to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In June 2007, the Assembly reaffirmed the decision taken in 1993, and expressing the unanimous determination of all political entities in the country to fulfill all requirements for NATO membership as well as seek consent from our citizens to see the Republic of Macedonia become a NATO member. In short, our efforts to join NATO go back nearly 15 years and I have to say that some of those years—especially in the late 1990's and early 2000's proved to be very trying times for Macedonia.

It is a horrible irony that the last century began and ended with a war in the Balkans. We are still living with the aftermath of the last conflict. The recent decision by Kosovars to declare independence is just one of the legacies of that war.

It is a fair question to ask: "Why does Macedonia desire membership in NATO? On behalf of Macedonian citizens (who according to recent polls 90% of the country support joining the alliance) I would respond that we want to be part of the solution to peace, freedom and stability. Not just in our region, but wherever there is a threat to the Euro-Atlantic alliance. What binds the alliance together is not the concept of common defense. The glue that has made this the most successful instrument for peace the world has ever known is that each of the member states shares the same values. NATO membership is about shared values: Democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, religious and ethnic tolerance, and the rule of law. Why is this important? Because democracies do not resort to war or oppression and abuse when having to deal with internal or external problems. Freedom and democracy is a great buffer that allows for conflict to be resolved through peace rather than violence.

As NATO has expanded eastward it has served to broaden the sphere of peace because NATO cultivates democracies. Since 1999, 10 states have been admitted to the alliance. In April, all of Macedonia hopes that we will receive an invitation to join NATO.

Where we are now is a far cry from where we were just seven years ago. As ethnic tensions threatened to spill across our borders, Macedonians had a choice: We could either engage in a senseless civil war or join together and build a democracy. I am proud to say that Macedonians understood the terrible costs of conflict and instead dedicated themselves to building an ethnically diverse democracy.

With help from our European and U.S. colleagues and friends, the Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed that set us on our

course for expanding minority rights, devolving political power from the capital to the local levels, and providing even more openings to the government and our military and security forces to ethnic minorities, though they have always been open. The Ohrid Agreement stands to this day as a model for fostering ethnic integration and strengthening democratic institutions through greater public participation.

The Republic of Macedonia has been a de facto part of the Alliance since 2002. Almost 4% of Macedonia's armed forces participate in NATO-led and other missions, such as ISAF, Iraqi Freedom, Althea and UNIFIL. This participation has had two great benefits: The first being Macedonia demonstrating its ability to be a contributor to security, and secondly our forces are able to train and prove their ability to integrate with NATO units.

Macedonia has just completed its ninth MAP cycle and fulfilled the vast majority of the requirements arising from this process. Those remaining are technical in nature and we are committed to have those completed very soon. Militarily and from a security standpoint, you will find our forces very capable and have received extremely high marks from NATO for military restructuring. This has also been augmented by the Adriatic Charter that serves as a mechanism for Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to exchange experiences, reforms and identify priorities and resources for regional security cooperation.

Macedonia is a religious mix of primarily the Macedonian Orthodox faith along with the Muslim faith as well as others. Our constitution guarantees religious freedom and people of all faiths live side-by-side. In September 2007, the Law on the Legal Status of Church, Religious Community and a Religious Group was adopted that brings us squarely in line with international standards. The Law incorporates the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief, especially with respect to the registration of churches, religious communities and/or religious groups.

A significant amount of budget resources have been allocated for the renovation of mosques, religious facilities and cultural monuments of non-majority communities. The government has also recognized several religious and community holidays important to our Albanian, Turkish, Serb, Bosnian, Roma, Vlach, and Jewish communities.

Our political reforms have been extensive and have built and expanded upon the Ohrid Agreement. One of the most important legislative accomplishments has been the Strategy on Equitable Representation. In 2007, the budget fund for this purpose was three and a half times higher than in 2006. Over 2500 ethnic Albanians and other non-majority group members were employed in public institutions in 2007.

Our electoral process has been transparent, free and fair. There is more to demonstrating freedom than just elections, and Macedonia enjoys a liberal media environment where freedom of speech is guaranteed, individual rights are respected and our judiciary is independent and dedicated to upholding justice and the rule of law.

My country is a signatory to all major human rights instruments in the UN and Council of Europe framework, including the Cov-

enant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against All form of Discrimination of Women, the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention against Racial Discrimination, the European Convention on Human Rights and all of its Protocols, the European Convention against Torture and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

A hallmark of any democratic state is the strength of its non-government organization (NGO) sector. Last year, the government adopted the Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Sector that is a four-year program designed to provide an institutional framework for NGO cooperation between each other and helping link their efforts into government channels. As you know, NGOs can be excellent partners with government and also careful watchdogs protecting democratic rights and promoting institutional reforms.

Macedonia pays particular attention to the situation of Roma in our country. The legislators have adopted and implemented the Strategy and Action Plans the aim of which is to promote empowerment and integration of Roma to a greater extent into our society. Towards this end the government supports a number of projects on inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education and has opened eight Roma information centers throughout the country.

Macedonia continues to build its institutional capacity in the area of human rights. In this context it is worthwhile mentioning that in addition to the Permanent Parliamentary Survey Commission for the Protection of Freedoms and Rights of Citizens, the Committee for Inter-Community Relations and the Ombudsman, the commissions have been established to monitor human rights that include:

- The National Commission for Children;
- The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Human Rights; and
- The National Commission against Trafficking in Human

Beings.

The substantial reforms within the judiciary have brought greater transparency, professionalism and efficiency to the judicial process. Enforcement records have also been improved. With the adoption of the Law on Public Prosecution and the Law on the Council of Public Prosecutors passed in December 2007, this package of laws, prepared in consultation with the EU bodies, has strengthened the independence of the judiciary and placed greater safeguards against any attempts at corrupting the judicial process. The establishment of the Judicial Council ensures complete independence in the selection and dismissal of judges, thereby insulating them from any political manipulation.

New amendments to the Criminal Code are incorporated in accordance with international conventions in the areas of terrorism, intellectual property, child pornography, cyber crime and trafficking in persons and minors. There is an ongoing implementation of the Strategy for Reforms of the Penal Law that will contribute to modernization of the system of criminal prosecution in accordance with European standards.

The Government is continuing its uncompromising fight against crime, with absolutely zero tolerance for corruption. The Government Program to Fight Against Corruption strengthened law en-

forcement and judicial capacity for fighting crime and corruption and raised public awareness. In the last Transparency International report, the Republic of Macedonia improved its standing in this regard by 21 places. We realize that our work in this area is far from finished. Corruption is an insidious disease that can cripple and destroy a democracy. We will continue to push for greater transparency and accountability in our civil service.

Macedonia's economy continues to gain strength. Last year saw GDP growth of more than 5% while the average inflation rate is 2.3%. We are striving to develop a robust economy built on a free-market system that takes advantage of the Macedonian peoples' tremendous creativity and provides opportunity to any person that wants to start a business. This is reflected in recognition by the World Bank that in 2007 ranked Macedonia 4th out of 178 countries for reforms in the business sector, important for improving the country's business climate. We are dedicated to continuing to this effort.

As the NATO Summit in Bucharest approaches, I hope, and my country hopes, that our dream for NATO membership will be realized. I think you will agree that we have made tremendous strides in reforming our military, economic and political sectors. Today, Macedonia stands ready to join the alliance as a fully integrated society in a region where we can serve as an example to others. We have met all the requirements for NATO membership and stand ready to join. NATO can take a historic decision and by admitting Macedonia and the other candidate states cement democratic reforms, expand the sphere of peace and strengthen further Euro-Atlantic security in what history has shown to be a volatile region of the world.

Thank You.

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY H.E. OLEH SHAMSHUR, AMBASSADOR OF UKRAINE TO THE UNITED STATES

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.



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