

Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council on building a European Security and Defence Identity (Berlin, 3 June 1996)

Caption: On 3 June 1996, at its Ministerial Meeting in Berlin, the North Atlantic Council decides to adapt the Alliance's structures so as to build a European Security and Defence Identity within NATO. In particular, the development of the concept of Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) should enable Europeans to make use of separable but not separate NATO military capabilities in Western European Union (WEU) operations.

Source: NATO Basic Documents. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: NATO, [25.03.2005]. M-NAC-1(96)63. Disponible sur <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1996/p96-063e.htm>.

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<t1> Final Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (Berlin, 3 June 1996)</t1>

1. We met today in Berlin, the capital of a united Germany and the city that stood for the success of Alliance policy and transatlantic cohesion for over four decades. Its unification is now a symbol of the new era of partnership and cooperation.

2. Here in Berlin, we have taken a major step forward in shaping the new NATO, a NATO taking on new missions such as IFOR. Today, we have taken decisions to carry further the ongoing adaptation of Alliance structures so that the Alliance can more effectively carry out the full range of its missions, based on a strong transatlantic partnership; build a European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance; continue the process of opening the Alliance to new members; and develop further strong ties of cooperation with all Partner countries, including the further enhancement of our strong relationship with Ukraine, and the development of a strong, stable and enduring partnership with Russia.

3. This new NATO has become an integral part of the emerging, broadly based, cooperative European security structure. We are in Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with many of our new Partners and other countries, contributing through the Implementation Force (IFOR) to bringing an end to war and conflict in that country and assisting the building of peace in the region. This joint endeavour, the largest military operation in the Alliance's history, points the way to our future security cooperation throughout the Euro-Atlantic area.

4. We have today given new impetus to the process of the Alliance's adaptation and reform, which began in 1990 at the NATO Summit meeting in London and was carried forward at the 1994 Brussels Summit. Taking into account the sweeping changes in the security environment in Europe as new democracies have taken root and following the adoption of our new Strategic Concept in 1991, we have reorganised and streamlined our political and military structures and procedures; reduced significantly our force and readiness levels; and reconfigured our forces to make them better able to carry out the new missions of crisis management, while preserving the capability for collective defence. In addition, we have been conducting an expanding array of outreach activities with our Partners. We want to make our adapted Alliance better able to fulfil its main purpose: peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

5. Much has been achieved, but now is the moment to take a decision

ve step forward in making the Alliance increasingly flexible and effective to meet new challenges. Therefore we are determined to: <par1>

- adapt Alliance structures. An essential part of this adaptation is to build a European Security and Defence Identity within NATO, which will enable all European Allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the Alliance as an expression of our shared responsibilities; to act themselves as required; and to reinforce the transatlantic partnership;

- develop further our ability to carry out new roles and missions relating to conflict prevention and crisis management and the Alliance's efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, while maintaining our capability for collective defence; and

- enhance our contribution to security and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area by broadening and deepening our dialogue and cooperation with Partners, notably through PfP and NACC, and by further developing our important relations with Russia and Ukraine, as we maintain our openness to new members through our established enlargement process and strengthen our links with other organisations which contribute to European security.

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6. Today we welcome the progress achieved in the internal adaptation of our Alliance, building on the decisions taken at the 1994 Brussels Summit, in particular:

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- the completion of the CJTF concept. By permitting a more flexible and mobile deployment of forces, including for new missions, this concept will facilitate the mounting of NATO contingency operations, the use of separable but not separate military capabilities in operations led by the WEU, and the participation of nations outside the Alliance in operations such as IFOR. We now request the Military Committee to make recommendations to the Council for the implementation of this concept to the satisfaction of all Allies, taking into account ongoing work to adapt military structures and procedures;

- the establishment of the Policy Coordination Group (PCG), which will meet the need, especially in NATO's new missions, for closer coordination of political and military viewpoints;

- the first results of the Military Committee's Long-Term Study, which will result in recommendations for a military command structure better suited to current and future Euro-Atlantic security. We task the Military Committee to continue its work on the Long-Term Study, consistent with the decisions we have taken today;

- completion of original work plans of the Senior Politico-Military Group on Proliferation (SGP) and the Senior Defence Group on Proliferation (DGP) to address the common security concern of proliferation;

- the meeting later this month of the North Atlantic Council (Defence Ministers), in which all 16 NATO countries will take part. </par >

7. In our adaptation efforts to improve the Alliance's capability to fulfil its roles and missions, with the participation of all Allies, we will be guided by three fundamental objectives.

The first objective is to ensure the Alliance's military effectiveness so that it is able, in the changing security environment facing Europe, to perform its traditional mission of collective defence and through flexible and agreed procedures to undertake new roles in changing circumstances, based on: <par1 >

- situation in Europe and enables all Allies to participate fully and which is able to undertake all missions through procedures to be defined in accordance with decisions by the Council;

- HQ structures which are more deployable and forces which are more mobile, both capable of being sustained for extended periods;

- the ability to provide for increased participation of Partner countries and to integrate new members into the Alliance's military structure;

- the ability to mount NATO non-Article 5 operations, guided by the concept of one system capable of performing multiple functions. We will further develop flexible arrangements capable of undertaking a variety of missions and taking into account national decisions on participation in each operation, building upon the strength of NATO's existing arrangements. These operations may differ from one another in contributions by Allies and, as a result of Council decision on a case-by-case basis, aspects of military command and control. The CJTF concept is central to our approach for assembling forces for contingency operations and organising their command within the Alliance. Consistent with the goal of building the European Security and Defence Identity within NATO, these arrangements should permit all European Allies to play a larger role in NATO's military and command structures and, as appropriate, in contingency operations undertaken by the Alliance;

- increased political-military cooperation in particular through the PCG, and effective exercise of political control by the North Atlantic Council through the Military Committee;

- the need for cost-effectiveness. </par>

The second objective is to preserve the transatlantic link, based on :

o maintenance of the Alliance as the essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of Allies under the Washington Treaty; <par1>

- further development of the strong partnership between North American and European Allies, both politically and militarily, and including a continued involvement of the North American Allies across the command and force structure;

- readiness to pursue common security objectives through the Alliance, wherever possible;

- full transparency between NATO and WEU in crisis management, including as necessary through joint consultations on how to address contingencies. </par>

The third objective is the development of the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance. Taking full advantage of the approved CJTF concept, this identity will be grounded on sound military principles and supported by appropriate military planning and permit the creation of militarily coherent and effective forces capable of operating under the political control and strategic direction of the WEU.

As an essential element of the development of this identity, we will prepare, with the involvement of NATO and the WEU, for WEU-led operations (including planning and exercising of command elements and forces). Such preparations within the Alliance should take into account the participation, including in European command arrangements, of all European Allies if they were so to choose. It will be based on: <par1>

- identification, within the Alliance, of the types of separable but not separate capabilities, assets and support assets, as well as, in order to prepare for WEU-led operations, separable but not separate HQs, HQ elements and command positions, that would be required to command and conduct WEU-led operations and which could be made available, subject to decision by the NAC;

- elaboration of appropriate multinational European command arrangements within NATO, consistent with and taking full advantage of the CJTF concept, able to prepare, support, command and conduct the WEU-led operations. This implies double-hatting appropriate personnel within the NATO command structure to perform these functions. Such European command arrangements should be identifiable and the arrangements should be sufficiently well articulated to permit the rapid constitution of a militarily coherent and effective operational force. </par>

Further, the Alliance will support the development of the ESDI within NATO by conducting at the request of and in coordination with the WEU, military planning and exercises for illustrative WEU missions identified by the WEU. On the basis of political guidance to be provided by the WEU Council and the NAC, such planning would, at a minimum: <par1>

- prepare relevant information on objectives, scope and participation for illustrative WEU missions;

- identify requirements for planning and exercising of command elements and forces for illustrative WEU-led operations;

- develop appropriate plans for submission through the MC and NAC to the WEU for review and approval. </par>

NATO and the WEU should agree on arrangements for implementing such plans. The NAC will approve the release of NATO assets and capabilities for WEU-led operations, keep itself informed on their use through monitoring with the advice of the NATO Military Authorities and through regular consultations with the WEU Council, and keep their use under review.

9. On the basis of the guidelines agreed today, we have tasked the Council in Permanent Session, with the advice of NATO's Military Authorities: <par1>

- to provide guidance and develop specific proposals for further adapting the Alliance's structures and procedures;

- to develop, with regard to the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance, appropriate measures and arrangements for implementing the provisions of paragraph 7. Among the arrangements which require detailed elaboration will be provisions for the identification and release for use by the WEU of NATO capabilities, assets, and HQs and HQ elements for missions to be performed by the WEU; any necessary supplement to existing information-sharing arrangements for the conduct of WEU operations; and how consultations will be conducted with the NAC on the use of NATO assets and capabilities, including the NATO monitoring of the use of these assets; </par>

and to report to our December meeting with recommendations for decisions.

9. As part of this work, we have tasked the Council in Permanent Session to review the ongoing work on NATO's military command structure and to report to us at our next meeting with recommendation

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10. The second aspect of the Alliance's adaptation is to develop our ability to carry out new roles and missions such as Operation Joint Endeavour. The NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) is successfully implementing the military aspects of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an agreement of historic importance for the development of peace, security and reconciliation in the region. The IFOR operation has brought together NATO with 16 non-NATO countries from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia in a unified and effective coalition for peace. This includes 12 of our NACC and PfP Partners, which emphasises our joint commitment to new forms of cooperative security in Europe. Russia's contribution underscores both the ability of the Alliance to build practical new partnerships and Russia's essential role in the new international security environment.

In the six months of its deployment, IFOR has helped to re-establish the belief among the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina that peace is possible. A secure environment is becoming a reality. The forces of the former warring factions have been separated and are in the process of demobilising and moving to cantonments. IFOR will not tolerate threats to peace or impediments to freedom of movement. It will continue to fulfil its mandate in an even-handed and fair manner.

IFOR is providing increased support to the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Peace Agreement within its existing mandate, so long as this does not detract from its primary military mission. The success of the civilian mission is key to lasting peace and rehabilitation, in particular through economic and social reconstruction, the conduct of free and fair elections, the return of refugees and displaced persons, and the maintenance of law and order. The apprehending of war criminals and the investigation of war crimes are essential to bring justice and durable peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We pay tribute to the work of the High Representative and will continue to support him in his difficult coordination task. We note with approval IFOR's effective cooperation with his Office. IFOR is also actively working with other civilian organisations, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in its planning for the return of refugees and displaced persons; the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in investigating war crimes and bringing war criminals to justice; with the International Police Task Force in its task of rebuilding law and order; with the International Committee of the Red Cross in respe

ct of humanitarian issues; and with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in respect of its responsibilities for the preparation and conduct of elections and for arms control and confidence-building measures. In this connection, we call on the Parties to conclude a sub-regional arms control agreement by 11th June, as foreseen in the Peace Agreement.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been ended, but the peace remains fragile. The period between now and September will be crucial for preparing the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina - a significant milestone along the path to democracy and reconstruction. Given the magnitude and complexity of this task, IFOR will be maintained at approximately its current force levels until after the elections which will have to take place in September at the latest under the Peace Agreement, and will retain its overall capability until December, when IFOR's mandate comes to an end.

IFOR also stands ready to provide emergency support, as agreed, to UNTAES in Eastern Slavonia as peace there is realised.

We commend the professionalism, dedication to duty, and bravery of all IFOR participants, jointly and individually, and express deep sympathy to the families of those who have given their lives or been injured in the cause of peace.

NATO has helped provide a vision of peace through cooperative efforts, even among former adversaries. All our countries are deeply engaged, directly and through international cooperation, in establishing the conditions for enduring peace and reconstruction by promoting mutual confidence, justice, reconciliation and military stability. The international community can provide assistance and advice, but the people and leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region must assume their own responsibilities for building peace. We call on all parties to devote renewed energies to these goals and to honour fully their commitment to implement the Peace Agreement.

11. A key part of Alliance adaptation is action stemming from the decision taken at the 1994 Brussels Summit to intensify and expand the Alliance's political and defence efforts against the risks posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons continues to be a matter of serious concern to NATO as it can pose a direct threat to international security. We remain committed to our aim to prevent proliferation in the first place, or, if it occurs, to reverse it through diplomatic means. NATO as a defen

sive alliance must bear the responsibility to ensure means to protect its members against the risks resulting from proliferation.

The work of the Senior Politico-Military Group on Proliferation (SGP) and the Senior Defence Group on Proliferation (DGP) - both established following the 1994 Brussels Summit - is an essential element of maintaining Alliance security and an integral aspect of NATO's adaptation to the new security environment facing Europe. We are satisfied with the progress of the work of the SGP and have endorsed the recommendations of the DGP for improvements to Alliance military capabilities to address the risks posed by the proliferation of NBC weapons and their delivery means.

12. As part of its overall adaptation, the Alliance has continued to adapt to the new security situation facing Europe by strengthening its relations with the Partner countries and with other international organisations playing important roles in enhancing security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. This pattern of growing, open and transparent cooperation has become a central feature of the Alliance's concept of cooperative security.

13. We reaffirm our commitment to open the Alliance to new members. The process of enlargement is on track and we are convinced that the overall adaptation of the Alliance will facilitate this process. As decided last December, we have a three-fold process for advancing our preparations this year: we are conducting an intensified dialogue with interested countries; working on a further enhancement of PfP both to help possible new members to join and to provide a strong long-term partnership with NATO for others; and considering the necessary internal adaptations for enlargement. We have today reviewed progress in each of these areas and are pleased at the steady advances being made. We have received a report on the ongoing consultations in the individual, intensified dialogue with, so far, fifteen interested countries. It provides them with an opportunity to improve their understanding of the Alliance and to address implications of NATO enlargement, and provides those who aim for membership with specific and practical details of Alliance membership. The dialogue will continue actively over the coming months. We are pleased to note the national efforts of Partners complementing our work. We will ensure that considerations about enlargement are factored into our deliberations and decisions on the internal adaptation process of the Alliance. We look forward to a report by the Secretary General at our next meeting in December, at which time we will assess progress and consider the way forward.

We reaffirm our determination that the process of opening the Alliance to new members should not create dividing lines in Europe or

isolate any country. Our goal remains ever-closer and deeper cooperative ties with all NACC and PfP Partners who wish to build such relations with us. The enlargement of the Alliance is consistent with a wider process of cooperation and integration already underway in today's Europe involving the EU and the WEU as well as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other European institutions. Our strategy is to help build a broad European security architecture based on true cooperation throughout the whole of Europe.

14. Partnership for Peace has become a permanent element of European security cooperation and has demonstrated its value in the current IFOR operation. We are particularly pleased that 12 Partners have joined us in this endeavour, which has benefited from the experience and interoperability gained in the last two years from the participation of Partner troop contributors in joint PfP exercises and other PfP activities. This first common experience in IFOR charts the course for future security cooperation. We hope to ensure that cooperative relationships developed during the IFOR operation between Allies and Partners continue in the future to enhance the Partnership. We intend to take further measures to increase Partners' involvement in our efforts to promote security through regional cooperation, including through facilitating participation in CJTF at an early stage. This will be particularly important as the Alliance adapts to meet its new missions.

We are pleased that the Allies and Partners together have made significant progress in achieving the goals set for PfP by the NAC Communiqué of December 1995. The wide interest and active participation by Partner countries have significantly carried forward the Partnership for Peace in a short time.

We seek constantly to enhance the scope and substance of our PfP cooperation. We therefore welcome the report from the Council in Permanent Session on the extra steps which can be taken in the short term, in particular the broadening and deepening of the PfP Planning and Review Process which will accelerate progress towards interoperability, and the intensification of work on civil-military relations and defence policy and planning.

The Council in Permanent Session should also examine ideas outlined in general terms in the report for longer-term strengthening of PfP. Specifically, we should increase opportunities for Partners to assume a more consultative and deliberative role in shaping PfP programmes, including in evaluating and upgrading PfP interoperability objectives and the PfP exercise programme. Partners should also be involved in the PfP exercise and other military planning activities at different levels through the Coordination Cell, and with the

MNCs and subordinate commands for detailed operational planning. In addition, we should ensure that the cooperative relationships Partners and Allies are developing in IFOR continue in the future as part of PfP regional cooperative programmes.

15. We are looking forward to our 6th meeting with Partners tomorrow in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. The Council provides us with a forum for regular, multilateral consultations on political and security issues. Together with the Partnership for Peace, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, especially through broad participation by Partner countries in numerous NATO-based committees, contributes increasingly to European security and stability by deepening interaction and developing common approaches. We are pleased with the results of the NACC's more focussed discussions, especially in the field of promoting good-neighbourly relations and developing civil-military relations. We look forward to deepening this process. When we next meet in December, we will review the progress made in strengthening NACC's role and further developing cooperation between Allies and Partners, on the basis of a report by the Council in Permanent Session.

16. We reaffirm our strong support for the ongoing political and economic reforms in Russia. In a few days the Russian Federation will hold national presidential elections. We hope that these elections will mark a further consolidation of Russia's reform process.

We remain convinced that the development of a strong, stable and enduring partnership between NATO and Russia is an essential element of security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We all want to have solid and constructive bilateral relations with Russia and close, cooperative, far-reaching relations between NATO and Russia. We have initiated a considerable number of contacts, consultations and programmes to strengthen our partnership. Here in Berlin, we extend again our hand of friendship, partnership and cooperation to Russia.

We welcome Russia's substantive contribution to IFOR in implementing the military aspects of the Paris Peace Agreement. We are pleased with the prevailing spirit of cooperation, shared objectives, and joint efforts to ensure operational military effectiveness. We hope that this experience of working closely together will have a lasting positive impact on our relationship. It demonstrates that we can collaborate effectively on issues of European peace and stability. It points the way towards the construction of cooperative security structures in Europe with the active participation of NATO and Russia.

We are pleased that important consultations have taken place in a 16+1 format on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the safe and secure dismantlement of nuclear weapons, and the CFE Treaty, among others, and that cooperation in different fields of NATO's activities is ongoing. We are pleased with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Civil Emergency Planning and Disaster Preparedness between the Alliance and the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters. We want to widen the scope and deepen the intensity of relations with Russia, on both the political and the military levels, in line with the approach set out in the document on "Areas for Pursuance of a Broad, Enhanced NATO/Russia Dialogue and Cooperation" which we agreed in June 1995. We reiterate our proposal to achieve a political framework for NATO- Russia relations elaborating basic principles for security cooperation as well as for the development of permanent mechanisms for political consultations.

17. We remain convinced that an independent, democratic and stable Ukraine is one of the key factors of stability and security in Europe. We are pleased with Ukraine's active participation in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and the Partnership for Peace. Since our last meeting, NATO-Ukraine relations have deepened through the implementation of the document on enhanced NATO-Ukraine relations agreed in September 1995 and through Ukraine's active participation in IFOR. We welcome the deepening of our dialogue and cooperation in such diverse fields as civil emergency planning, scientific affairs and information activities. In this context, we note with appreciation Ukraine's offer to provide support for enhanced NATO information efforts in that country. We wish to develop our cooperative activities further, through concrete work in the areas set out in the September 1995 document, and take further opportunities to enhance the substance of the relationship. We welcome the recent announcement that all nuclear weapons have been transferred from the territory of Ukraine for dismantlement, in accordance with the US-Russia-Ukraine trilateral statement signed in Moscow in January 1994.

18. We are determined to enhance NATO's information efforts in Russia and Ukraine in consultation with their governments. We have tasked the Council in Permanent Session to take concrete steps to this end.

19. We will also continue to develop our cooperative relationships, bilaterally and through the Alliance's initiatives, with all newly independent states. Their democratic and economic development, continued independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are essential factors for stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

20. We are satisfied with the growing ties between NATO and the WEU, and are determined to broaden and deepen our cooperation with the WEU, on the basis of the agreed principles of complementarity and transparency. We welcome the conclusion of a security agreement between our organisations, and the framework it provides for the exchange of information critical to the pursuit of our common security objectives. We hope that this will open the way for more intensive cooperation. We are pleased that, in response to our mandate to the Council in Permanent Session, additional areas of focussed NATO-WEU cooperation (joint meetings on their respective Mediterranean dialogues and exchanges of information in the field of relations with Russia and Ukraine) have been identified. We will explore possibilities for enhanced cooperation in other areas as well. We attach importance to our consultations, including in joint NATO-WEU Council meetings, on issues of common concern. We welcome the resumption of meetings of the WEU Permanent Council with SACUR.

We continue to support the WEU in its efforts to enhance the development of its operational capabilities and welcome the decisions taken in this regard last month at the WEU Ministerial Council in Birmingham.

21. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has an essential role to play in European security and stability. We reaffirm our commitment to support the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and the ongoing process of developing a security model for the 21st Century. We value the OSCE's effectiveness in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and the work of the High Commissioner for National Minorities. These are important contributions to regional stability which we will continue to support and work to strengthen.

The OSCE is playing a vitally important role in Bosnia and Herzegovina contributing to implementing civil aspects of the Peace Agreement, particularly in supervising the preparation and conduct of the first elections, in promoting and monitoring human rights, and in overseeing implementation of confidence- and security-building measures and negotiation of arms limitations. These tasks are a major contribution to building a just and stable peace in the region. IFOR is supporting the OSCE's tasks, and in particular the preparation of the elections, by helping to create a secure environment and promoting freedom of movement. We are also pleased with the practical support that NATO has been able to provide through its Verification Coordination Section to the OSCE in helping establish measures to verify the arms control elements of the Peace Agreement. We sup

port the continued development of such pragmatic cooperation between NATO and the OSCE.

We remain deeply concerned about developments in Chechnya which have caused so much suffering and so many casualties. We welcome the announcement of a ceasefire in Chechnya and look forward to its full and effective implementation. We call for continued meaningful negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement of the dispute, using the continuing good offices of the OSCE. We support the efforts of the Minsk Group to achieve a political settlement of the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

We welcome the established contacts between the North Atlantic Council and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. We will continue our efforts to strengthen dialogue between NATO and the OSCE on issues of common concern, including through senior representation at Ministerial meetings and, on a more routine basis, through the International Staff.

22. We support the ongoing Middle East peace process, and urge all participants to remain committed to it. We reiterate our conviction that security in Europe is greatly affected by security and stability in the Mediterranean. We attach particular importance to the progress of our Mediterranean dialogue with non-NATO countries. Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia are participating today in the political dialogue underway. We are pleased with the interest shown by the dialogue countries and with the talks already held. We are convinced that this dialogue is a contribution to a better mutual understanding with a view to contributing to stability in the region. We direct the Council in Permanent Session to report at our meeting in December on the activities undertaken on the basis of the dialogue.

23. We strongly support the work of the Conference on Disarmament in achieving a truly comprehensive and sufficiently verifiable global ban on all nuclear testing by September this year at the latest and in initiating negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty on the basis of the already-existing mandate.

We emphasise the importance of the START Treaties for international stability and security, and commend the United States and Russia for implementation of their START I obligations. We welcome ratification of START II by the United States Senate last January and urge its early ratification by the Russian Federation.

We look forward to the early entry into force and full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and strongly endorse efforts underway to negotiate a compliance regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We urge the early ratification of the Treaty on Open Skies by those states which have not already ratified.

24. We welcome the successful outcome of the CFE Treaty Review Conference in Vienna. The Final Document agreed by the 30 States Parties reaffirms their common commitment to preserve the integrity of the Treaty and achieve its full implementation. The success of the Conference confirms that the CFE Treaty is and will remain for the future a cornerstone of European security and stability. We call upon those States Parties which have not yet fully completed their reductions obligations to do so as soon as possible.

We note with satisfaction the achievement of a cooperative solution to the flank issue. This is an important step in ensuring the full implementation of the Treaty and the preservation of its integrity. In this context, we underscore the importance of full respect for the sovereignty of the States Parties involved. It provides a reaffirmation of the continuing relevance of the basic structures of the Treaty, including the principle of zonal limitations. We look forward to its full and timely implementation.

The Allies welcome agreement by the States Parties to the Treaty to begin discussions aimed at defining the scope and parameters of a process aimed at improving the operation of the Treaty in a changing environment. They look forward to participating actively in this work together with the other States Parties, with a view to reporting initial progress at the time of the OSCE Summit in Lisbon in December 1996 including recommendations on the way ahead.

25. We support all efforts to combat terrorism, a universal scourge which remains a source of concern to all of us. We welcome the growing international awareness and cooperation as regards terrorism since our last meeting, and note with satisfaction the conclusions of the Sharm-el Sheikh Summit, as well as the work advanced by the international community in the relevant fora.

26. We express our deep appreciation to the Government of Germany for hosting this meeting.