

**Speech to the NATO Summit of
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by

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Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, distinguished Heads of State and Government

It is an honour to address the leaders of the Alliance at this historic event.

As the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I would like to highlight three points which Assembly members believe are critical; the mission in Afghanistan, NATO enlargement, and the need for a new Strategic Concept.

We believe that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly can play a role in each of these.

The most serious challenge for the Alliance is our mission in Afghanistan.

The problems in Afghanistan need more than just military solutions. But there can be no solution without a stronger military presence.

Together we decided to become involved in Afghanistan. Together we made the commitment to provide the forces needed to make state-building and development possible. Together we decided to expand the NATO mission to cover the whole country. And together we must all now share the burden of those decisions.

In the past, many Allies have spoken out against “coalitions of the willing” because it is the Alliance which should deal with collective security challenges. But all the Allies must live up to their commitments. If they don't, the Alliance, in fact, becomes a coalition of the willing.

Surely, we can explain to our publics the need to stop Afghanistan from falling back into the hands of the Taliban? And surely, everyone understands the price of failure. And that this would be failure not just for NATO, but for the entire international community, including the United Nations and the European Union.

The Assembly can help to explain this message and so build support for NATO's mission.

Let me now turn to the enlargement of the Alliance.

Parliaments ratify the accession of new members, and our Assembly helps to prepare the parliaments of aspiring members for their role in overseeing the security sector.

Our Assembly has consistently supported the enlargement of the Alliance. But this must be based on performance. Alliance members must be providers of security, rather than consumers. The “open door” must remain open, but we want to welcome new members as equal partners when they are ready. And I mean “when”, not “if”.

And let me stress that no-one has anything to fear from NATO enlargement. NATO members are good neighbours.

Finally, let me turn to the Strategic Concept.

NATO's conceptual approach, its public rationale, must reflect the dramatic changes since the last Strategic Concept appeared. But this will take time to develop, so perhaps we should begin with something more fundamental, as you Mr Secretary General, have suggested; an "Atlantic Declaration" stating our shared values, beliefs, and goals.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly is ready to support this. And we can help to prepare a new Strategic Concept, and an Atlantic Declaration that will pave the way.

Distinguished leaders, the Alliance faces huge challenges. I am confident that we can meet those challenges, and that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly will play its role promoting the values upon which our Alliance is based, by building a larger community of democracies, and helping you to continue to adapt the Alliance to the demands of the 21st century.

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