

Keynote speech

by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Panel intervention at the Bucharest Conference (GMF)

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the second time in just a matter of days that I am delivering a speech at a major conference organised by the German Marshall Fund, but there are certain experiences in life that one is happy to repeat. Indeed a GMF conference at a NATO Summit is now a tradition that no Secretary General of NATO would ever want – or dare – to miss.

So I welcome the opportunity to be here this afternoon to help to frame your debate and give you my assessment of what Bucharest is all about.

But, first, let me thank Craig, Ron and the GMF for all the hard work they have put into organising this conference and for once again attracting such an impressive group of Summit participants and well known policy experts.

In strictly bureaucratic terms, the rationale of a NATO Summit is clear: it provides highest-level political guidance for the further development of our Alliance, and it also creates public visibility for our many activities. But how do we measure whether the Summit was a success? By the size of our meetings? By the amount of paper we produce? By the number of photo ops? Certainly not. The Bucharest Summit will have been successful if it provides us with concrete answers to the key security challenges of today and tomorrow.

So let me give you my reasons why the Bucharest scorecard will be a positive one.

First and foremost, Afghanistan, which is NATO's key operational priority. Bucharest will not only allow us to reaffirm our long term commitment to this essential mission, but even more importantly allow us to resource ISAF better and pull all our efforts together more effectively. We must demonstrate to our publics that helping Afghanistan is not only for the benefit of Afghans but also for their security benefit as well; and that is a mission that is successful –

with the right strategy and the right level of effort by all of us.

Tomorrow, for the first time ever, the leaders of the 39 nations in the NATO-led force in Afghanistan will meet with President Karzai, the Secretary General of the United Nations and top officials from the European Union and other major international organisations. This meeting will not just emphasise the need for a Comprehensive Approach by the entire International Community – it will also show that this Comprehensive Approach is finally moving from theory to practice.

But this meeting will do even more. It will set out the path to a new phase in our Afghanistan engagement – what used to be a predominantly military effort will begin to shift towards a more balanced approach, with a stronger emphasis on civilian efforts and on Afghan ownership. The task of providing security, which up to now had to be performed largely by international forces, will shift more and more to the Afghans

themselves. The Afghan National Army in particular has demonstrated convincingly that it can take on greater responsibilities.

And this will allow ISAF to gradually move into a supporting and mentoring role.

I am not suggesting that this shift will happen overnight. For the foreseeable future, ISAF will remain indispensable. Nor does it change the need for Allies to do more. For example, we can and will do better to lift the remaining national caveats and fill the shortfalls, so that ISAF can operate at maximum effectiveness. But the new approach will put increasing emphasis on where it belongs: on the civilian efforts on the one hand, and on a growing Afghan responsibility on the other.

To lay out the way ahead we have been working with those other countries that contribute to our ISAF mission on a “vision statement” that sets out the progress that we have already made, but also defines the challenges that NATO, the International Community, and the Afghans themselves will need to overcome, and how we intend to meet those challenges. We are also finalising a comprehensive political military plan that we have also developed with our partners in ISAF.

It will provide clear and realistic benchmarks to help us focus on the priorities – such as training and equipping the Afghan National Army – as well as to measure our progress objectively. And we will reiterate our resolve to continue our security assistance to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. I look forward to discussing Afghanistan in more depth with President Karzai and Prime Minister Harper during our panel in just a few moments.

The international meeting on Afghanistan tomorrow afternoon is arguably the major innovation of this Summit.

It reflects the centrality of Afghanistan on NATO’s current agenda. But Bucharest will be more, much more than a Summit on Afghanistan. NATO has to deal with a number of other critical challenges, which may not claim so much daily media attention, but which will nonetheless be important in determining the shape of security in the 21st century.

One key security challenge is Euro-Atlantic integration.

As much as we need to focus on Kosovo during this critical phase, it is equally important that we maintain the momentum of the entire Balkans region towards Euro-Atlantic integration. That is why I expect that tomorrow Allies will open NATO’s door to new members from the Western Balkans. I am hopeful that this will be a significant enlargement – significant enough to give the Balkans region the boost of stability and confidence that it needs.

I also expect this Summit to reach out to new Partners, such as Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina, who have made it clear that they, too, do not want to be left behind. NATO will also do its part to engage Serbia, and make it not only a partner in theory, but in practice as well. Our message to Serbia will be that it too has its place in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration if it resolves to turn its back on a sullen nationalism which has brought it no benefits [over the past two decades,] and is willing to fully take up the offer of cooperation that we will put on the table here in Bucharest tomorrow.

So tomorrow's decisions will clearly advance Euro-Atlantic integration, and Europe will be a safer place as a result. But let me be clear: NATO's enlargement dossier will not be closed after Bucharest. Ukraine and Georgia have both expressed their aspiration to be part of Euro-Atlantic integration, and part of NATO. Whatever decision we take tomorrow on their request to be granted the Membership Action Plan, our message will be positive and unambiguous. Yes, both countries have their place in Euro-Atlantic integration.

Our door is open and, provided they meet our standards, one day they will pass through it. If they so wish. Another question that the Summit needs to answer is whether, after a difficult period, NATO and Russia are toning down the level of rhetoric in our relationship and engaging each other in a more business-like and constructive way. The NATO-Russia Council meeting on Friday will provide us with the answer. Obviously, much will depend on President Putin's stance at the Summit.

I don't expect him to stay silent on those issues on which we disagree, such as Kosovo, CFE, or missile defence. But if he comes to Bucharest with an open mind, it should be possible for us to advance the broader NATO-Russia relationship.

The stage for such progress is set. With respect to Afghanistan, Russia and NATO are discussing how Russia can support ISAF through transit and transport arrangements which would facilitate NATO's lines of communication. Moreover, we already conduct joint training of Afghan and Central Asian counter-narcotics officers.

Other positive elements of our cooperation are Russia's support to Operation Active Endeavour; our cooperation in the fight against terrorism; on theatre missile defence; and search and rescue at sea. What has been missing is a political push to give this cooperation a much-needed strategic quality again. I would hope at the very least that Bucharest can demonstrate two things: that NATO and Russia are able to discuss difficult issues in an open, constructive manner, that is concerned to identify real solutions rather than simply score points; and that notwithstanding those difficult issues,

we are able to move our practical cooperation forward in areas such as Afghanistan where we really have identified common interests.

Yet another question to be answered by the Summit is whether the Alliance is really shaping up as an institution that can handle the 21st century security challenges. Concretely, how can NATO contribute to our defence against cyber attacks, proliferation, and the protection of our critical energy infrastructure?

Again, I am confident that Bucharest will mark a much needed step forward. The Summit will provide at least some initial answers to these emerging security threats. Let me be clear: we are not focussing on these issues out of a false belief that NATO could handle everything. In a sense, these issues have chosen us. The cyber attack on Estonia last year was real. The proliferation of ballistic missiles is real. Al Qaeda's threat to oil refineries is real.

And where we can identify a common security interest and NATO's ability to add value to other international efforts, it would be to my mind not acceptable for NATO not to develop joint approaches. Because NATO cannot provide everything does not mean

that it has nothing to contribute. So I hope that this discussion will be based on pragmatism and practicality rather than on pre-conceived notions about what NATO's role should be. Fortunately we have made progress since Riga in putting the flesh on the bones. We have a good package ready for agreement here in Bucharest, and we can build on it.

All in all, I believe that the stage is now set for a truly successful Summit. But even a Summit as far-reaching as Bucharest cannot tackle all the issues. There are two in particular that are close to my heart and where we may well need the impetus of the next Summit to come up with satisfactory answers.

The first issue is about the relationship between the European integration process and the Atlantic Alliance. In essence, the question is this: what must an effective NATO-EU relationship look like?

Admittedly, it is an old question. I am raising it here because we still haven't answered it. In the Balkans and Afghanistan, NATO and the EU have a clear stake in each others' success. And yet our institutional relationship remains nervous and hesitant.

I am not suggesting that we could fundamentally change this relationship overnight; and certainly my purpose here today is not to name and shame anybody who participates in this debate in good faith but also has national positions to defend.

What I do suggest is that both institutions will suffer if we cannot bring them closer together. I would like to see the North Atlantic Council and the Political Security Committee of the EU meet far more often to share analyses and perspectives on the world's crisis areas. I would also like to see NATO and the EU support each other's operations much more substantially. I would like to see much more pooling of our capabilities, especially in areas such as transport and helicopters, or in research and development, or in harmonising our force structures and training methods.

That is why we must use every opportunity to make the two institutions more at ease with each other. President Sarkozy of France has made it clear on many occasions, and most recently in London a few days ago, that he sees the NATO-EU relationship as a complementary one in which both institutions have an interest to work together and, therefore, a pragmatic interest in removing obstacles to greater cooperation. This should be our central focus as the EU develops its ESDP and NATO also has to look ahead to its 60th Anniversary Summit next year (2009) and beyond.

The second big picture issue we need to look at is the debate about global partnerships. This debate is necessary, because it is an illusion to believe that, in an age of global challenges, NATO could succeed entirely on its own. Just as we need the support of other institutions, we need the support of likeminded countries.

However, the debate has been overburdened with unrealistic expectations – and with unwarranted anxieties.

Some have championed global partnerships as a means to build a global NATO, and have suggested adding Israel, Australia and Japan as full members. I have even seen other countries which have not been on NATO's radar screen in the past – such as

Columbia or India – brought into this discussion. Indeed some think tankers would like to bring into NATO pretty much every country with democratic credentials. Take your pick!

But does NATO's future really lie in becoming an organisation that spans half the globe?

Is this the “finalité politique” of NATO – to become the institutional core of a worldwide community of democracies?

Frankly, I find that hard to imagine. The transatlantic relationship remains unique. It simply cannot be projected wholesale to other regions. Equally importantly, none of the countries that are sometimes mentioned as future members have even asked for membership. What these countries seek is a different relationship with NATO: strong and trustful enough to allow them to participate fully in common operations –

but pragmatic and low-key enough to not raise eyebrows at home or in their respective regions.

It is this kind of partnership that we need to work towards. We must build security relationships that are more structured and less ad hoc. Make no mistake: global partnerships are going to be a permanent feature of the new security environment. That's why NATO must nourish them – not through grandiose rhetoric, but pragmatically, as befits a pragmatic Alliance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For me, and I hope for all of you, the task for NATO's leaders here in Bucharest and over the next two days is clear. I very much want this Summit in Bucharest to give answers to the most pressing issues on our transatlantic security agenda. I very much want it to show the Allies firmly united not just in rhetoric, but in action.

This said, I also want this Summit to look ahead. Just two weeks ago, at the GMF Brussels Forum, I called for an Atlantic Charter to be drawn up as the centrepiece of our 60th anniversary Summit next year. I believe that our nations now prefer to call this an Atlantic Declaration but the name is less important than the substance that such a document must contain in providing the beginning of the conceptual clarity we need on the challenges that are confronting NATO today and tomorrow.

I am pleased to see that my idea has gained support; but there is no time to lose. The end of one Summit is but the beginning of the next. We will have to get down to some serious work, and this will not only mean those of us working inside NATO Headquarters but also you, the strategic community. We will need your constructive criticisms and imaginative proposals. The Alliance is worth the effort, and will be even stronger for it.

Thank you.

Sursa: NATO