

## **Opening remarks**

**by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**

**at the Meeting on Afghanistan**

Good afternoon and welcome both Allies and our ISAF partner nations to this special meeting on Afghanistan.

Let me also extend a very warm welcome to President Karzai of Afghanistan, the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, the EU Secretary General and High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana; and representatives of the World Bank and Japan, who have gathered here with us today.

Our collective presence here today signals that we are committed to Afghanistan for the long term, and that this is a comprehensive effort, civilian and military and more and more Afghan-led.

Over the last seven years, Afghanistan has made impressive progress. All organisations and individual nations gathered around this table have played an important part.

Together with you, President Karzai, your Government, and the Afghan nation as a whole, we have set in train a remarkable process of reconstruction and development, enhancing security, and building institutions. We also have had to make painful sacrifices in this process, including many lives lost.

But through these efforts, we are helping to bring the prospect of a brighter future to the people of Afghanistan, and greater security for us all.

We thus have every reason to take pride in the progress achieved to date. And here in Bucharest, we will set out how we will build on that success, and bring forward the day when Afghanistan will stand on its own feet, as a safe, secure and prospering nation.