

# Opening remarks

## by NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, at the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission

Bonjour, Mesdames, bonjour, Messieurs.

Je voudrais souhaiter cordialement la bienvenue au président Iouchtchenko à cette réunion de la Commission OTAN-Ukraine au niveau des chefs d'État et de gouvernement.

La Commission OTAN-Ukraine a célébré l'an dernier son dixième anniversaire, et la réunion que nous tenons aujourd'hui à Bucarest est la quatrième au niveau des chefs d'État et de gouvernement. Elle constitue pour nous une occasion très importante de faire le point sur l'état actuel et, surtout, sur les perspectives d'avenir de la relation OTAN-Ukraine.

Aujourd'hui s'ouvrira une nouvelle phase de cette relation. Les chefs d'État et de gouvernement des pays de l'OTAN ont décidé hier et je peux vous citer en Anglais,

- that NATO welcomes Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations;
- that NATO agrees that these countries, Ukraine and Georgia, will become members of NATO;
- that NATO recognizes that Ukraine has made valuable contributions to Alliance operations; I can add to all Alliance operations Ukraine is making very valuable contributions.

There was a clear signal and a decision yesterday that the aspirations for Membership Action Plan are supported. It was stated that a period of intensive engagement will now begin at a high political level to address the questions still outstanding pertaining to the application of the Membership Action Plan.

And, Mr. President, as you know, Foreign Ministers will make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. I think, Mr. President, that this is a very clear signal from the side of the NATO Allies that they value this relationship, that they value the cooperation with you and that they want to go further.

So it is for that reason that I say that yesterday's decision was an important one, that I can state that Ukraine has already made remarkable progress in aligning its defence and security sector to NATO standards and that the Alliance will continue to provide you with guidance and support that you asked for and need in this very important reform process.

This forum has become an essential forum for frank, open political dialogue; it also embodies what has today become a strong and enduring NATO-Ukraine partnership.

With that conclusion, I would like to give the floor to President Yushchenko to make an introductory statement.