

Opening remarks

by NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, at the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, good morning, dobriy dyen', bonjour. Welcome to the NATO-Russia Council Summit, the first such event since we established the NRC in 2002 near Rome. There are three "fathers" of the NRC seated here today. Presidents Bush and Putin and Prime Minister Rasmussen were among the co-signatories of the Rome Declaration six years ago.

Our decision to meet at the highest level today is a strong signal of our continued commitment to the spirit of the Rome Declaration.

Today our relations are truly multi-faceted, influenced both by political realities and issues on which we differ, as well as by practical and very pragmatic common interests.

At our meeting this morning we will take stock of our commonalities, but also seek ways to intensify the process of finding political common denominators on the issues on which we do not agree.

I am confident that we will approach this complex process in a responsible, constructive, and pragmatic spirit.

There is much for us to discuss here today, so let me now ask the members of the press to leave the room, so that we can begin our closed session.