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## Statement on the situation in the Balkans

Issued at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defence  
Ministers Session held in Brussels

7 June 2001

1. The past decade has been one of tragedy, missed opportunities and wasted resources for many of the people of the Balkans. But today there are opportunities for the countries in the region to grasp a better future, based on support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, democratic rights for all, and rejection of ethnic extremism and criminal activities.
2. We reaffirm NATO's strong commitment to security, stability, peace, democracy and respect for human rights. The Alliance will continue to pursue these objectives vigorously, primarily through the NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo but also through NATO's assistance and efforts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ([1](#)) and elsewhere. We emphasise our determination to achieve regional reconciliation through political engagement, partnership, confidence-building measures, a lasting resolution to the problem of refugees and displaced persons, and full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
3. We commend the women and men of SFOR and KFOR for their continued and unrelenting commitment to peace and stability. Often, their efforts are pursued in difficult and dangerous circumstances, resulting occasionally in serious injury or the loss of life. We express our deepest sympathies to the families of those killed in the service of peace. We are grateful to NATO's Partners and other nations and international organisations for the substantial contributions they are making to our common effort.
4. With respect to Kosovo, we reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of United Nations Security Council [Resolution 1244](#). KFOR remains fully committed to creating a safe and secure environment in which all people can live in peace and participate in democratic institutions, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. We strongly condemn ethnically, politically and criminally motivated violence and extremist activities from any quarter. We reaffirm KFOR's commitment to fully support the return of Kosovo Serbs and other minorities and commend the co-ordination efforts of the Joint Committee on Returns. Cooperation between KFOR and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

continues to be excellent, and we welcome the unswerving determination of the new Special Representative of the Secretary General to continue UNMIK's efforts to implement UNSCR 1244. We congratulate UNMIK on its success in implementing the results of the local elections held last year and in creating the framework for a functioning civil administration and welcome its issuing of the regulation concerning the constitutional framework for provisional self-government, on the basis of which elections will be held on November 17th. We reaffirm KFOR's commitment to support the organisation of the elections, notably by providing a secure environment. We urge all communities to participate in these elections and to take full part in the new political structures in Kosovo. We congratulate the UN Mine Action Co-ordination Centre (UNMACC) on the success of its programme to clear Kosovo of mines and other unexploded ordnance, which is expected to be concluded by December 2001, a year ahead of schedule.

5. We commend the courageous efforts of the UNMIK Police and the Kosovo Police Service for their conduct in pursuing public security in Kosovo. KFOR remains fully committed to supporting the UNMIK Police, who have now reached their full strength and have assumed primary responsibility for law and order. We welcome the establishment of Joint Operation Centres, which will provide valuable forums for co-ordinating the efforts of KFOR and UNMIK Police. We also commend the significant contribution being made by the multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service, whose officers will soon be patrolling independently. Nevertheless, the frequency of acts of criminal, political and inter-ethnic violence and intimidation in Kosovo remains unacceptably high. Organised crime continues to pose a significant challenge to the objectives of the international community and to the well-being of the citizens of Kosovo, a problem exacerbated by the still inadequate judicial and penal systems. We welcome the steps the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General is taking to enhance law and order.
6. We note the continuing progress being made to develop the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) as an effective civil organisation under the overall responsibility of UNMIK and day-to-day supervision of KFOR. We continue to attach the utmost importance to the strict enforcement of the KPC Code of Conduct and recognise that the KPC remains generally compliant in fulfilling its role. However, we have serious concerns about cases of non-compliance, involvement in illegal activity and support for extremist activities by individual members of the KPC in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region. We oppose these activities and urge the KPC leadership to continue to take the necessary steps to ensure that they cease and to publicly condemn all extremist activities.

7. We reviewed KFOR's overall force levels and structure and concluded that they should be maintained. We directed our Permanent Representatives to conduct a further review of KFOR's roles and missions in time for our meeting in December.
8. We remain firmly committed to the full implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the achievement of the goals identified by the Peace Implementation Council. We will continue, through SFOR, to support the efforts of the High Representative to counter the challenges posed by separatist activities and nationalist violence. We condemn the efforts of the Croat National Congress (HNS) to form an illegal self-governing "third entity". We call upon the countries neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina to give their full support to all aspects of the military and civil implementation process.
9. SFOR will continue to maintain a safe and secure environment in which civil implementation can proceed. We are deeply concerned at the recent events in Mostar perpetrated by Croat extremists and in Trebinje and Banja Luka perpetrated by Serb extremists. We strongly condemn such incidents and call upon all responsible authorities and political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina and throughout the region to strengthen their efforts towards full achievement of the goals identified by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC). SFOR remains fully committed to supporting public security and the return of refugees and will not tolerate violence by any group. We agreed on the need to accelerate the development of civil institutions and local police so they may be able to take more responsibility for local security and the maintenance of law and order.
10. We welcome recent progress towards strengthening state level institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular the Council of Ministers. We call upon the Council of Ministers to take all possible measures, working with Parliament and the Presidency, to continue this effort. We are particularly encouraged by the establishment and growth of the State Border Service, which should, when fully operational, assist in controlling smuggling and illegal human trafficking, and provide for enhanced revenue collection to support the state level government. We commend the endorsement of a common defence policy by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and call upon the Presidency to accelerate work on the restructuring of the Entity armed forces through the Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM). We commend SFOR's efforts in working with the SCMM to develop a unified command and control structure for armed forces capable of joint deployment and joint action under international and regional security organisations. NATO's Security Co-operation Programme with Bosnia and Herzegovina is making a significant contribution in this regard. We reaffirm SFOR's commitment to support the

Office of the High Representative and the other civil agencies working to foster central institutions. We also reaffirm our full commitment to support the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and in particular its actions to detain persons indicted for war crimes. We will continue our efforts to bring war criminals to justice.

11. We reviewed SFOR's overall force levels and structure and concluded that it is not advisable at this time to consider major restructuring or reductions of SFOR, particularly in light of the current developments, but that, under certain circumstances as set out by the NATO Military Authorities, a moderate reduction in overall troop levels could be undertaken within the current force structure. We noted the particular contribution made by the Multinational Specialised Units (MSU) and the need for nations to fulfil COMSFOR's requirements. We directed our Permanent Representatives to prepare a Medium-Term Strategy for SFOR, including a review of its missions and task, in time for our next informal meeting in September, and in the light of this to conduct a further review of SFOR in time for our next formal meeting in December.
12. We welcome the steady improvement in our relations with the democratic government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the progress made by the FRY in cooperating towards full implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNSCR 1244 on Kosovo. We welcome the FRY's more cooperative stance towards the ICTY and the positive measures already taken, and expect it to continue on the path towards full cooperation with the Tribunal in its work in The Hague, including through the adoption of an appropriate legal framework. All indictees must be held accountable for their acts in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 827 on the establishment of the ICTY. In this regard, we welcome the arrest of former President Milosevic. We urge Belgrade and Podgorica to seek a mutually acceptable solution to the question of their future constitutional relationship within a democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
13. We continue to support the efforts being made to find a peaceful resolution to the problems in Southern Serbia. We commend the efforts led by the Secretary General's Personal Representative in facilitating this process in close cooperation with the EU. We note with satisfaction that, following our decision to authorise the controlled return of FRY forces into the Ground Safety Zone with a view to abolishing it ultimately, the FRY has remained compliant with COMKFOR's Notice of Intent on the return of their forces, in particular to Sector Bravo. We welcome the fact that this return took place without serious violence and that many members of armed groups have laid down their arms voluntarily. We call upon all ethnic Albanians to continue to turn away from violence. We

urge all those living in the area to support a multi-ethnic police force and to participate in local administrative and political structures. FRY authorities should continue to implement the confidence-building measures contained in their plan for a peaceful settlement of the problem.

14. We reaffirm our full commitment to the security, stability and territorial integrity of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1). We recall the valuable support provided by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) to the Alliance, particularly since 1999, its continuing support to KFOR and its lines of communication, and its contribution to Partnership for Peace. We strongly condemn the recent acts of violence by extremist Albanian groups which not only threaten the stability of that country but undermine the efforts of all those ethnic Albanians who are working together with the international community to bring peace, democracy and stability to the Balkan region. The armed extremists must lay down their arms and withdraw immediately. Their violent agenda has no support and is in direct opposition to the efforts and goals of the international community. We welcome the establishment of a broad coalition government and urge the parties to take quick concrete steps in the inter-ethnic dialogue covering all legitimate parties in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) under the auspices of President Trajkovski. In this context, we welcome the statement issued by the political leaders on 29 May. We support the authorities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) in their efforts to isolate the extremist elements in a manner which promotes a peaceful solution. We look to the authorities to avoid the excessive use of force and expect them to take every precaution to avoid civilian casualties.
15. We welcome the robust measures taken by KFOR to enhance security on the Kosovo side of the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and note the intensified border operations now taking place. We are grateful to those Allies and Partners who provided the additional forces and flexibility required to increase patrolling and improve KFOR's ability to deter, detect and disrupt the flow of men and materiel between Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1).
16. We welcome the improved military coordination between KFOR and the Ministries of Defence and Interior in Skopje, as well as the conclusion of a Status of Forces Agreement between NATO and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and the establishment of a NATO Cooperation and Coordination Centre which will facilitate the timely exchange of military information. We also note with appreciation the efforts by Allies to step up bilateral assistance to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1). The Alliance will continue to look for practical ways to enhance assistance in all these areas. We particularly welcome the

constructive engagement between NATO and the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and the close cooperation between NATO and the EU as exemplified by the joint missions to Skopje by the NATO Secretary General and the EU High Representative.

17. We received today the Consolidated Progress Report on the Development of the South East Europe Initiative (SEEI) and Contributions of the Alliance to the Objectives of the Stability Pact and noted with satisfaction the progress that has been achieved through the Initiative. The development of the Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (SEECAP) can make a lasting contribution to the evolution of regional cooperation and promote reform of the security sector. We also welcome the continued efforts of the SEEGROUP to further strengthen regional cooperation. The work to strengthen border security in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and Albania has contributed to security and stability in the region. We welcome the extension to Croatia of NATO-World Bank cooperation to retrain and reintegrate former military personnel into the civilian economy. We are encouraged by the progress made by South-East European countries in developing their own regional peacekeeping force and note that the Multinational Peace Force South-East Europe declared its operational readiness on 1 May.

1. Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

