

**“GREECE AND NATO: BUILDING SECURITY WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH”**

**NATO SECRETARY GENERAL’S SPEECH IN ATHENS, GREECE**

**16 FEBRUARY 2012**

**Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I have been looking forward to visiting Athens today, and sharing the podium with Minister Dimas. To be able to congratulate Greece on its sixty years in NATO. To discuss its future role in the Alliance. And to assure you all that you can continue to count on the support of your 27 NATO Allies.**

**It must seem to many people here in this country as though everything is changing -- and not for the better. The international economic crisis has hit Greece extremely hard. And the certainties of the past – jobs, salaries, pensions – now seem much less certain.**

**Against that background, I understand that the Greek Government needs to focus on getting finances back in order. And on re-shaping the economy. I also understand**

**that for many Greeks, social security is your main security concern right now.**

**Unfortunately, it is not only the global economic landscape that is changing. The international security landscape is changing too -- and fast.**

**Terrorism, proliferation, piracy, cyber warfare. These are just some of the new, complex challenges that affect all our nations. Challenges that won't wait until we have our economies back in order. Like the economic crisis, they require urgent attention, and the closest possible international cooperation.**

**Sixty years after it joined NATO, the North Atlantic Alliance continues to offer Greece a unique framework for that kind of close international cooperation. And this will ultimately help your economy too. Because by working with your Allies in NATO, Greece can strengthen the security that is a precondition for its long-term economic revival.**

**I want to illustrate that point by highlighting three key features of our Alliance: first, our shared security and common values; second, how we multiply each other's defence contributions, and; third, how we can spread stability well beyond our own borders.**

**So first – shared security and common values. This is really what NATO has been all about since it was created back in 1949. Allies standing together, and working together. To protect not only the security of our nations and populations, but also the values that we share.**

**Freedom, democracy, dialogue. These are all values that originated right here, the very heart of Europe in ancient Greece. And they are values that have been at the very heart of NATO for well over six decades.**

**During the Cold War, we successfully defended our security and our common values. We then engaged many of our former adversaries in dialogue and cooperation, making our entire continent more stable. And we have frequently**

**demonstrated our determination to safeguard our security and our values. Bringing an end to genocide in the Balkans was a very good illustration of this.**

**Greece continues to make welcome contributions to our operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan. And last year, you helped to ensure the success of our NATO-led effort to protect the people of Libya, by making available Souda Air Base in Crete. This was another strong demonstration of support, and solidarity with our Allies. Your active role in NATO gives me great confidence that we can continue to work together to meet new challenges.**

**Let me just give one example: maritime security. With its world-leading merchant navy, Greece has a big stake in the safety of global sea lines of communication. NATO is already conducting a maritime counter-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean, and a counter-piracy operation off the coast of Somalia. We are exploring how we can build upon that experience in the future. And I hope Greece will also play its full part of that effort.**

**A second, key characteristic of NATO is how it multiplies the individual defence efforts by its member nations. In essence, the Alliance offers its 28 member nations – including Greece -- far greater security, at a much lower cost, than they could ever achieve alone.**

**And of course, getting value for money is particularly important now. At a time when not only Greece, but many other NATO Allies too, are going through a difficult economic period. And when many Allies are cutting their defence spending to balance their budgets. This includes the United States, which has announced a significant change in its defence posture here in Europe.**

**All this requires a fresh approach. It requires all Allies to focus on the risks and threats of the future, rather than those of the past. It requires countries like Greece to use the current crisis as an opportunity to introduce significant defence reforms. To concentrate on deployable forces, rather than to waste scarce resources on static forces stuck**

**in barracks. To work together with other Allies to provide the high priority military capabilities we need in NATO – but that individual Allies cannot afford to provide on their own.**

**I have called this approach “Smart Defence”. It is my goal that, at our next NATO Summit meeting, in Chicago in May, all Allies will adopt “Smart Defence” as a guiding principle for the development of capabilities within our Alliance. And that all Allies, including Greece, will fully commit to it.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**A third characteristic of NATO is our capacity to spread stability well beyond our own borders. We all realise that our security as NATO Allies, cannot be seen in isolation from that of the countries around us. So we have engaged a wide range of partner countries in dialogue and cooperation. This helps them to feel more secure, and it helps us to feel more secure too.**

**For a long time, Greece and Turkey were the only two countries from this region who were members of the Alliance. Talking and working together in NATO provides a forum to defuse tensions. To discuss sensitivities together with the other Allies. And to arrive at pragmatic solutions.**

**Today, many of Greece's neighbours are firmly embedded in NATO, and also in the European Union. And several other countries in the Western Balkans are working hard to be able to join our Alliance in the future.**

**The steady Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans region has been an enormous boost for security and stability in this country, in this region, and in Europe more widely. But it is unfinished business. We need Greece's political support and its engagement with its Western Balkans neighbours to continue to advance the process.**

**Greece's continued engagement is also vital to bring NATO and the European Union closer together. The**

**integration of the Western Balkans region is just one of the many issues where our two organisations have shared concerns, and where we can complement each other. The current economic crisis, and the need to find pragmatic, cost-effective solutions to the many challenges before our nations, is an important additional argument for making the NATO-EU partnership work.**

**Finally, Greece is also well-placed to help build greater security across the southern Mediterranean region and into the Middle East. The Arab Spring last year has raised hopes of greater stability, prosperity and justice throughout this vast region. The extent to which those hopes can be fulfilled will have an important bearing on our security here in Europe.**

**There are important differences between the countries in the region. Change will need to come first of all from within. But outside assistance will be important. Although NATO cannot and will not play a leading role, it does have important expertise to share - especially in defence and**

**security sector reform. And as we make that expertise available to interested countries, I hope we can benefit from Greece's excellent relations throughout the region.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Anniversaries are often used to look back upon past achievements and successes – and to look forward to the future. I am sure that Greece's sixty years in NATO will also spark that kind of thinking, including at this conference.**

**My own conclusion is clear. Greece's membership of NATO gives you the ultimate security insurance policy.**

**Today, you live in an unprecedented period of peace. NATO provides you with greater security than you could ever achieve on your own. And through NATO, you are building important relations with other countries here in this region, and beyond.**

**All this will help create the right conditions for Greece's economic revival and its long-term prosperity. And that is what I, and all Allies, wish for your country and your people today.**

**Thank you.**