

**NATO's Evolving Role in the Middle East:
The Gulf Dimension**
June 3, 2005

Keynote Address by Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Ellen Laipson: It's a great, great honor for us to welcome the NATO Secretary General, and I've invited my friend and former colleague, Dr. Steve Flanagan who is currently the Director of INSS and the Vice President for Research of the National Defense University to do the honors of introducing the Secretary General.

Steve Flanagan: Thank you all and good morning ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to join you in this important discussion at a time of NATO's expansion and expansion in another direction that is as a broader international instrument for helping many other countries and regions, and the Secretary General comes to us at an interesting time. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer assumed office as the NATO Secretary General in 2004 after a rather busy several years having served as Foreign Minister in both the first and second Balkan governments most immediately before that. And during that last year, 2003, he also dual-headed as the Chairman in Office of the OSCE, also during a very good time. But as you'll note in his bio he is an avid running and has other athletic background, so he was well prepared for the further run that he's been taking now in his role as Secretary General.

He was born in Amsterdam and completed his education in law at Leiden, and then preformed military service in the Royal Netherlands Air Force. From 1976 to '86, he was employed in the Foreign Service of Netherlands Government services in Ghana. He had earlier tours at NATO and the Dutch mission there and also in the Foreign Minister's cabinet. He then, after ten years in the Foreign Service embarked in a career in politics, he was elected to the House of Representatives of the States General for the CDA, Christian Democratic Alliance, in June of '86, and he became the parties spokes person for foreign policy, as well as, asylum and refugee policy in European and Justice matters.

So as you can see, all areas of his portfolio, that perhaps he thought he would never use as NATO's Secretary General, but indeed, all very relevant to some of NATO's current challenges. He then served as Deputy Leader of the CDA party from '95 to '97, and in 2001 he resigned from the CDA and then became then, let's put it this way, the leader of the CDA and the Chair of the House Committee, permanent committee of foreign affairs. He comes in the midst of a full agenda here in Washington. He met earlier in the week with the President, and with

Secretary Rice, and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the Director of Nation Intelligence Negroponte, he was giving a speech yesterday at (Inaudible) at the conference they were sponsoring. And as I said, he comes at a time of a very full NATO agenda as a wider instrument in including not just the Middle East. So, Secretary General, we welcome you to this conference.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Thank you very much indeed for this production. It is a pleasure for me as well to be in Washington again. This is unfortunately a brief stop. But let me start by extending a word of thanks to the Stimson Center for having organized this meeting together with NATO's public diplomacy division. I think you must have discussed this already that as we look at the last half year or so, we have seen some pointed and very constructed discussions in NATO on the Middle East, and on NATO as well in the Middle East. To me it shows two things: First of all, growing readiness among allies to engage in real political debates in the NATO context. As you might know, I very much applaud and support that development, and I will continue to promote that. Secondly, the realization...(changes microphones)...So the first argument was general political debate in NATO, but secondly, and as important, the realization that what goes on in the Middle East matters to NATO, and that's the alliance for its part is relevant to the Middle East.

And I also welcome that recognition. Ladies and gentlemen, I see three major developments that underline the need for the transatlantic community to focus on the Middle East, including through NATO. The first element I'd like to mention is the interplay between Middle Eastern and transatlantic security, which is becoming ever more powerful. I think demographic and economic trends create an ever closer interdependence between us. New threats, be it terrorism, be it weapons of mass destruction proliferation, be it organized crime, be it (inaudible) of failed states, affect us all and require a common response. Second, there is a new positive dynamic in many parts of the Middle East – of course, question marks still hang over countries such as Syria and Iran, but in others we see cautious openings towards greater freedom and democracy.

Iraq is slowly finding its feet; even huge challenges remain there, of course. We still have a window of opportunity, although I should add it would not last forever, to find a fair and sustainable solution for a resolution of the Israeli/Arab conflict. My third element why I am here, and while we are discussing this, and the third element is NATO's change, and it continues to change. Long gone are the days when we were, NATO was, a static, Euro-centric organization. Also, we in NATO realize that we must be proactive in dealing with challenges to our shared security and common values. And that is why we launched challenging missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

My mention of Afghanistan, if we were to appear, here in this room five years ago, who would have dared to predict that NATO was going to the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan to do what? To defend the very values NATO has defended over the

decades since its existence – in the Cold War and after the Cold War. We have set up a training mission in Iraq upon the specific request of the Iraqi government. Who would have imagined, what should we say, half a year ago, that NATO might support the African Union in its mission in Darfur? The African Union came to NATO, Alpha Oumar Konare, Commissioner of the African Union two weeks ago and said, “Could you please help us? We have 3,000 people there and we want to have 7,000, and later 12,000. We have almost 10,000 people who are dying in Darfur, and we have 2-million plus people in the camps.” NATO and the European Union...because they also went to the EU... “Could you help us logistically?”

We’re not going to put military combat forces on the ground – of course not! We’ll support the African Union logistically. I’m simply asking you rhetorically; who could have imagined that NATO would embark on the road? And that goes for NATO’s relationship with the broader Middle East, as well. It’s the same development. And it is why we are, also, in the political sense, intensifying our relationship with other nations, and this morning we discussed, of course, specifically the Mediterranean Dialogue of NATO, and the so called Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and organizations – NATO and other organizations...I’ll come back to that point a bit later. So this is the context that one must view the enhancement of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue, as you know, with seven countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East. And the invitation to the Gulf States to work with NATO under the so-called Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

It’s now almost a year ago that we embarked upon those two efforts at the NATO summit at the end of June in Istanbul in Turkey. And I can tell you from my personal experience, and the experience of my collaborators, that the response thus far has been very positive indeed...the response from the region, that is. I still have to visit, when I start with the Mediterranean Dialogue, Mauritania and Egypt. But I’ve been to Algeria, to Jordan, to Israel, to Tunisia, and to Morocco, and Mauritania and Egypt, as I said, are to follow in the coming months. But in each of the five I have already visited, I have seen considerable interests in working together with NATO, with the alliance. And that interest has already translated in enhanced political dialogue as well as greater practical cooperation, such as the fight against terrorism or the sense of reform.

Now when I go to the Gulf region, the ICI, has been a very positive response to our engagement...to NATO’s outreach, one could say. We have had very constructive exploratory talks with the countries of the region, including in their capitals and we have organized the high-level seminar on the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with full participation the NATO Defense College in Rome. And in the past few months, we’ve seen Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar formally joining the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and I’m sure that more countries will join later this year. So ladies and gentlemen, the interim report card for a more ambitious Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative is certainly positive. But the question, of course, is how do we sustain

this momentum? And in order to do so, I believe that we must keep three broad principles firmly in mind. The first principle I would like to mention is that we should continue to focus on practical cooperation; this is where NATO's comparative advantage lies, and it is where countries in the Middle East have clear requirements.

NATO is, after all, an alliance that acts, and therefore can offer, what I would call, a rich menu of practical cooperation for other nations to benefit from. We can build in this respect on ten years of cooperation with our Mediterranean Dialogue partners, as well as on the continuing success of NATO's so called Partnership for Peace. Launched over ten years ago, very much at the instigation of the United States, by the way, the Partnership for Peace, as you all know, has developed in a largely European context, and we do not want to simply transpose it to the Middle East, which of course has very much its own specifics. But PfP does embrace several areas of quite unique NATO expertise, which, I think, would be valuable also in the broader Middle East, such as cooperation on border security, joint training, and disaster preparedness. And I think we should build on those strengths. I can add, if I can give you these examples, that as you might know NATO has an anti-terrorist naval operation in the Mediterranean, Operation Active Endeavor, which is an Article 5 operation, by the way, which was launched after 9-11.

There is an increasing interest in some countries in Northern Africa to support this naval operation. You can do that in many ways – it doesn't mean that all the nations are immediately sending ships into the Mediterranean to sail with the NATO ships, but there is a keen interest in answering the question: How some of the nations can support that operation, because they also have, of course, a stake in what is, as I said, basically an anti-terrorist operation? So this, by way, of a few examples of the practical way in which NATO can operate together with the countries involved. The second important element I would like to mention, and which is basic, I think, is that we must continue to promote joint ownership...very important – joint ownership. I realize very well that you will do as well and certainly those of you who come from the region, that if NATO in some parts of Middle East, for sure, faces an image problem.

There is nothing special, nothing specific, nothing to worry about, but NATO faces an image problem. There is a lot of public diplomacy to be done, personally diplomacy by myself, by the Deputy Secretary General, by the public diplomacy division of NATO to show that NATO is a different alliance than it was in the Cold War; that NATO is reaching out; that NATO is trying to build partnerships...including partnerships in this pivotal region, the broader Middle East. So we have to do a lot. We need to correct this perception. We might say that perception is wrong, but it doesn't help us much if we finish there... "perception is wrong, yes, okay." But then, okay, we should work on this perception even when we consider it wrong. That means that if we want to correct this perception, we can only do so if we are truly engaging rather than

imposing or overbearing. So let me stress the important point that when we discuss Mediterranean Dialogue, when we discuss the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative it is a two-way street. And if I say that there might be something in it for the countries in the region, there definitely is also something in it for NATO itself.

It's not an outreach; we're coming to you where we think we can cooperate, no it is coming to you, let's identify together in this two-way street where we can build up added value for and to each other. Very important. And that means, as I said, that the ownership is, in my opinion, a joint ownership. The countries in the region are the shareholders in the cooperative effort – they are two-way streets. And if they succeed over time, it might take some time, let's not be over optimistic on the other hand, but if they succeed in breaking down stereotypes, and even more important, building trust, then I think these initiatives have the potential to make a real contribution to our common security. My third and final principle, complementarity – engaging the Middle East must be a multi-institutional effort. All the different dimensions of cooperation, be it political, be it economic, be it security, must be addressed in comprehensive manner.

And that makes it paramount for all the major institutional players, not only NATO, but also the European Union, the OCE, which was mentioned in the introduction, the G8, and other international organizations must play their part and must do it in complementarity, and should not work at cross purposes. And in this context let me highlight the relationship between NATO and the European Union. For the time being this relationship is still very much focused on crisis management in the Balkans. You know the European Union took over the NATO peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Kosovo, and it was a very successful takeover, and it was a very successful episode in the practical cooperation between NATO and the European Union. But if we manage to turn this relationship between NATO and the European Union into a real strategic partnership, which I will continue to promote, it also will have considerable potential for engaging in the Middle East.

If policy consultation and coordination between NATO and the European Union are more firmly engrained, the more coherent approach to the Middle East will inevitably result, and this will be to everybody's benefit. And if you talking about the European Union and you think this man is reading a text, which has been written before the referendum in France on Sunday, and before the referendum in the Netherlands on Wednesday, you're right, the text was written before those two referenda, but it goes without saying that whatever, whatever the further cause of European integration will be, it is a fair amount of importance for NATO to see a strong European Union developed. I can tell you this was also an element of my discussion with President Bush, Secretary Rice, and it is crystal clear that not only NATO needs a strong European Union, but it also very much goes for the United States of America. Also the US has a great interest in a strong European partner, and I think I'm almost literally quoting comments made by Secretary Rice.

In other words, of course the referendum in France and the Netherlands will have consequences for European integration, but we in NATO...and here, of course, I'm speaking as NATO's Secretary General, and not as a Dutch citizen who voted in favor, by the way, of the European constitution, which given my past will not come as a surprise to you, so I mean there is no reason to secret about that, it is essential for NATO in its relationship in the strategic partnership, we are seeking in NATO, that the European Union will further integrate including a security and defense, including assuming and building on a security and defense identity, as it is called. Let me go back to the region in closing, ladies and gentlemen, and let me say a few words also about the Israeli/Arab conflict, which is of course a key or impediment to break the peace and prosperity in the entire Middle East region. Let me first of all say that clearly the responsibility for resolving the conflict rests first and foremost with the parties themselves...and they have taken some positive steps in recent months.

But it is also clear that the international community and especially America and Europe must be involved, and this regards the renewed commitment by the United States is very welcome indeed. I'm saying this because I think, as I said, it's first and foremost up to the parties concerned. And then after the portent, the European Union and the United Nations and the United States of America, and Russia, to see, to build, to bring this process forward, and in this respect there is no direct role for NATO in this process. Let me make that clear. And let us, in other words, focus on what achievable in the region in the near term...having said about the conflict, what I have said. I believe that the growing interaction between NATO and the Middle East will, itself, be beneficial for peace in the region. Why? Because I think that the most (inaudible) role for NATO in the Middle East will force the allies, Europe and America, to develop coherence long-term policies for the region.

If there is anyone lesson that NATO embodies, it is, I think, that transatlantic unity is essential for making progress. And when Europe and American work at cross purposes, they will both fail. If they stick together, they can move mountains, as has been proved in the past. With regards to the Middle East peace process, both sides of the Atlantic have long realized that they need each other to contribute to a lasting solution. We now, I think, have the opportunity to make decisive progress in that direction, and NATO has a role to play. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your attention, and I'm opening to listening to your comments and answering your possible questions. So thank you very much indeed.

R: (Applause.)

M: Thank you very much Mr. Secretary General, the Secretary General has very graciously agreed to take questions for about twenty minutes or so. And I just wanted to clarify for the journalist in the room this session is on the record, and if

you could please identify yourself as I recognize you...I'm not sure I recognize you. Yes, madam?

Haleh Esfandiari: Thank you, I'm (Inaudible) from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars – can you elaborate a little bit about the problems that you sense NATO has with Iran, because you said that you sense an opening in the region except in Syria and Iran, and Iran being part of the other side of the Persian Gulf...it's excluded from being reached out and you have reached out only to the GCC countries...if you could just talk a little bit about that?

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: When I was referring to Iran, I was of course, referring to the negotiations going on between the EU3 and Iran; I was referring to Iran and its perceived nuclear ambition. NATO doesn't have and does not play a direct role, as you know, and NATO should not play a direct role. But I'll not surprise my audience this morning, when I say that there are (inaudible) worries and I would sincerely hope the EU3 and the United States and Iran can come to a solution for these problems. But it will not come as a surprise to you that at this moment Iran is not engaged in or going to be engaged in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. I mean lots of things I'm afraid will have to happen there before that happens. But to quote you, NATO has no dialogue for it. The NATO allies are as worried as anybody for might become a nuclear Iran in the region – that's crystal clear. But I hope that that problem can be solved by negotiations through the EU3 and backed by the United States and of course in the frame of IAA.

Fran Burwell: Fran Burwell from the Atlantic Council. I wish you would enlarge on your remarks about NATO/EU cooperation, and particularly I know there have been difficulties advancing that cooperation because of issues involving Turkey and Cyprus. And you said the excellent point that particularly the Barcelona process and cooperation with NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, and ICI cooperation initiative that does require a foundation of NATO/EU cooperation, so if you could enlarge on that and say what the prospects are. And if following the referenda, if perhaps Turkey faces less incentive to bring this difficult issue to a close. Thank you.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Well your last remark is tempting, very tempting indeed, but the question is if NATO's Secretary General has an opinion on that...he has, but my personal opinion is not so relevant. I'll answer your question on this seriously. First of all, and I hear that you support that, I made a strong plea that when NATO engages in the region, it does so in complementarity with other organizations, first and foremost the EU. There is no reason to duplicate the Barcelona process; there is no reason to duplicate Euromat, duplicate what the EU was doing in the region. And let's face the facts, the EU has a wider variety of instruments than NATO, and NATO should not over step, I think, the boundaries of its mandates. I mean, we're good in defense reform, and we're good at disaster relief, and we're good at training, and we're good at

discussing with countries the democratic control of the armed forces in defense reform, as I mentioned already.

So it is certainly also, in our relationship with this pivotal region, that NATO and EU should work together. You're right in saying...I'll not become too technical here, that there is at the moment indeed a problem in the NATO/EU formal relationship because of the participation problem of Cyprus and Malta. I hope that that's...you mentioned Turkey, and I always say when I'm asked about this – it takes two to tango. I mean you can't single out Turkey as a country that is the blocking factor. There's more to it. It takes two to tango and that means that a certain tango will have to be done in Cyprus as well before we can solve this problem.

I don't know how good that Cyprus is at present is in dancing the tango. But anyway, it takes two to tango. In the mean time, there is progress in the sense that we might see in the not too distant future, informal gatherings of a NATO and EU foreign ministers. That was informally decided in Vilnius two months ago when the NATO foreign ministers met to see if we could bring the dialogue forward on an informal basis. Of course there are very intensive contacts in our daily business – I have an open line with (Inaudible), and my people have an open line with his staff. So on the whole, I am positive about the NATO/EU relationship. But you're right in saying that there is sort of formal block at the moment in contacts between the North Atlantic Council on the one hand, and the Political and Security Committee of the EU on the other hand.

But that should not refrain us from, let's say, fostering the cooperation, including, the reason why I'm here tonight, including in the different things we do together with the nations in what we call the (inaudible). And on Turkey, Turkey is for decades a strong ally in the NATO alliance. The European Union has taken a decision on starting negotiations with Turkey, and I am watching the process, of course, with a greatest of interests, which should not surprise you given my present thinking on that nation and my (inaudible).

Ron Baygents: Ron Baygents, Kuwait News Agency. I would also like if you could expand on the method on which you could promote this concept of the joint ownership and making the countries feel as they are shareholders; breaking down the stereotypes among the civil society. Could you be a little more specific as to how you might hope to achieve this? This seems to be a monumental problem that the United States has been talking about this a lot since 9-11 and its poll numbers show that this is not very successful so far.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Let me answer you that this is of course, first of all a basic question that can only be sought if you start building trust and confidence. That's the reason I'm traveling the region. I'm speaking not only with governments, by the way, but everywhere I go in the region, I have done the dialogue I will do the Gulf States at the later stage. I always try to make public

appearances to make a speech...at the university to talk to (Inaudible) for the reasons you are giving. We have to develop a layer of objectivities. What NATO can do...NATO can go to a certain nation and say, "Listen, we have a menu. Look at that menu. What is it you think is feasible? What do you think is not feasible at the moment?" Then my question is to my interlocutors in those nations, "How can we build up added for NATO?" NATO can learn a lot.

I am learning a lot from traveling the region. I have traveled there before, but I'm no expert. I'm learning a lot. It is very interesting, and that is another vital element in this relationship; recognizing the specificity of each individual nation. I didn't mention that specifically in my speech. But you'll agree with me that Kuwait is not Bahrain, and that Morocco is not Israel, and Jordan is not Mauritania. In other words, in every country I come I have to recognize the specificity and try to see that we work out the menu on the basis of specificity. And we're in, as far as the ICI is concerned, of course, we're in the early stages. I mean it was launched a year ago, my deputy has traveled there, and I'm going to travel there. So I mean we need time to build this up. But there is a very keen political interest in the region. I mentioned the countries already having exceeded to the ICI and I'm more will follow. But there is a clear desire in the region to have a political dialogue with NATO. And there is a clear desire on the part of the NATO to do exactly the same. But let's also be practical. The political dialogue is essential for building trust, but if you want to give the nations the impression that we're getting somewhere, you should also be very practical, and I've given you a few examples, which we might be able to work out...including using NATO facilities, NATO schools to bring the people out there.

I mentioned the seminar we had in Rome with the Crown Prince of Bahrain playing a very important role in that seminar; making a very interesting keynote speech and presenting us a mirror from his thinking about NATO in the region. What I can do, I can present him a mirror of NATO looks at Bahrain. It is a long time process; it is not you can realize within a few years. But still, it has to be done because what's happening in that region is pivotal to NATO. And I think NATO can play a role and will play a role, as soon as we have build up a sufficient amount of trust on the basis of which we can work. And when I explain in the region that NATO is in Afghanistan defending values under the mandate of the United Nations; that NATO is possible under UN mandate to see that that province can find its feet, and at a certain stage political discussions on the future can be held.

When I explain that we're running a training mission on Iraq on the UN mandate, that while we are in the Mediterranean close to the dialogue partners, I think when you have a serious discussion on these kinds of subject, they realize that this is what NATO also is all about, and that NATO is a political military organization, and that NATO is not anymore the organization which was preventing the Soviet Union from invading Europe through the (inaudible) gap in Germany, that NATO is still an organization based on collective defense and collective security – that's

its core function, and we'll never forget that. But on the other hand, NATO is engaging and trying to get engaged in more reasons than just being Eurocentric. Excuse me...that was a bit of a long answer, but...

Abdullah Shayji: (Inaudible). I just have three short questions. The issue of...you spoke about the image problem. How much do you think the image problem is related to the US image problem...US being the largest or the biggest member of NATO, and we all know that the US has been suffering from an image problem because of some of their own policies. How much do you see a connection there? The other question is, how much of a linkage do you see between the ICI and President Bush's vision of the greater Middle East initiative? Do you see any linkage between the greater Middle East initiative and the ICI? And the last question is, do you think the last changes in Lebanon that NATO could (inaudible) them as part of the Mediterranean group? Thank you.

R: (Voice from audience.)

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: I hear your answer, as an addition coming from Kuwait, I think. I think in my experience up until now, it is not my impression that it is because the United States is member of NATO that NATO has...let's say the perception of NATO, let me phrase it like this, it is not the perception we would like to see in the region. It is more; let's say a general distance in the idea that NATO is completely different animal than an animal that might have a role in the region in the sense that it is engaging in a political debate. Of course I'll discuss the Israeli/Palestinian problem when I come to the region. Of course I hear criticism from some circles that some NATO allies take positions they would not like see; that goes without saying. But then my answer is: listen, I'm not NATO's Secretary General to say anything about a NATO role in that process, because there is none. And NATO should not run that role. It is more...it's new, it is a new type of engagement in the region, and it is an alliance which is not Eurocentric anymore, which is engaging with more areas in the world, and certainly not, I would say, focused on a perceived image of the United States in the region.

Of course it is true, that the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative that was originally in NATO US-UK initiative supported whole heartedly by all 26 NATO allies has its political link with the greater Middle East. That goes without saying. There are no formal links because the ICI is a NATO program and not a US program, but let's say the basics of engaging in the wider region are, of course, the same as far as the ICI is concerned. (Inaudible) as I said in my speech that the ICI, we tried to direct it on very specific areas of cooperation. On Lebanon, I do definitely not exclude that Lebanon at a certain state might come on the NATO radar screen, if I might use that expression. It isn't yet, but I certainly would not exclude it. I may add here, in mentioning the region that I have established an information channel with the Palestinian authorities. I met Mohammad (Inaudible) and (Inaudible) in Madrid not so long ago, and they had seen my visit to Israel and to Jordan with all

the publicity it involved and Israel being so very ambitious and quite rightly so in the frame of the Mediterranean Dialogue. And they asked me “What is this all about, Mr. Secretary General? Well what is this, the Mediterranean Dialogue? We don’t know about this?” And I brought this message back to the allies and not before long I’ll send an envoy to (Inaudible) to discuss with the Palestinian Authorities to inform them about the Mediterranean Dialogue. In other words, things are happening in the Middle East and that might at a certain stage...that could at a certain stage include Lebanon as well.

R: (Inaudible).

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Pardon?

R: (Inaudible).

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Well if I look at Syria and Tehran, I don’t see in the present circumstances Syria getting engaged in the Mediterranean Dialogue...no, I do not see it.

R: (Inaudible) Foundation. Mr. Secretary General, my question would be, what your thoughts are beyond various forms of cooperation, dialogue, engagement, ICI...do you see anymore formal role for NATO down the line in the future in the area where I’m talking about is a form or association, if you want to...membership...did that ever come up in your talks with Israel, with other countries – what are your thoughts about that beyond these loose forms of cooperation and dialogue for NATO? Thank you.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Membership does not come up; membership most certainly does not come up. What does come up as I tried to say in my introductory remarks, what does come up is how we can build the relationship we are establishing, or we have established, into some form of partnership. As I said, not for partnership at (inaudible), but a form of partnership. Membership is in what I think, yes, Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, membership is linked to European democracies and so I do not discuss membership of NATO. But what I do discuss partnership. But to establish a partnership, you need to find the road to that partnership because let’s be open and frank. The Mediterranean Dialogue existed for ten years last year, and if we look back at those ten years, that is not to criticize predecessors or NATO in forming or anything, I think the result of the Mediterranean Dialogue was not what the allies and the Mediterranean Dialogue partners had expected. And that is the reason that in Istanbul last year the government said, “Let’s reinvigorate this partnership because things are happening; there’s a lot going on in the region, and let’s outreach into the broader Middle East in the frame of the ICI.” And as I said, it takes time. But last December in Brussels it was the very first time that all the Mediterranean Dialogue partners at the dinner were represented at the political level; almost all of them on the level of foreign ministers. That was a break

through because that was sort of recognition that spiked perceptions and images, and that was sort of recognition that NATO matters to them – they were all there at the political level! So that for me was very important incentive to conclude that the road we have embarked upon is the right road to go. They are keen; they are interested; we are interested.

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...difficult to say my opinion would be, "Let's build a partnership," but I do not see partnership

M: Mr. Secretary General, can I interject a question on that? Have you or the international staff looked at the lessons of the Partnership for Peace in this balance between practical cooperation and political dialogue? And as to how, in many ways, the practical cooperation PFP actually built the trust as well, and whether or not that may have some lessons for the Mediterranean Dialogue? And in particular I'm looking at the question of terrorism...it does seem to me that that is an area that with Active Endeavor and other activities that NATO is engaged in, whether there is some scope...Arab countries that are very concerned terrorism and the Algerian Deputy Foreign Minister was just in town just recently talking about this. I was wondering if you see any interest in that specific question of cooperation in terrorism...but also, the practical versus the political dialogue.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: On terrorism, the answer is definitely yes, very much so. I mean you quote the Deputy Algerian Foreign Minister, and this is theme that comes back all the time. It is, of course, in the Mediterranean Dialogue, the basis for the interests they have in the operation Active Endeavor in Mediterranean as you mentioned. I think, yes indeed, if you look at the Partnership for Peace program, there are elements in the PFP that can certainly be incorporated in further developing the partnership with countries concerned. If we very much keep underlining the specificity, Partnership for Peace, of course, was developed in the frame of what one could call NATO Eastern dimension. And the Eastern dimension is not the same as this dimension.

I mean Central Asia, the focus in not the same as the lower Middle East or as the Middle East in general. So I think there are lessons to be learned, certainly, and you mentioned terrorism – I do not know at this moment how exactly the process will further develop. You know that within the frame of our Partnership for Peace we have IPAP: Individual Partnership Action Plan. And we call it IPAP in the frame of IPAP. I was talking about the menu a moment ago specifically focused on what the individual nations might consider relevant or what they may want. In other words, I can't give you, at this very moment, any specific answer, but it's definitely the case, as I think I said in my speech, that what we have seen in the elements in the Partnership for Peace are transposable...that's an English word to the (inaudible).

M: Do you have time for one more question?

Lincoln Bloomfield: Thanks Mr. Secretary General, I'm Lincoln Bloomfield. Here in Washington there is a lot of looking forward as to what the US military will have to do five years from now. And as the American side looks around the world through the eyes of the lens of its principle alliance and other obligations in the Pacific Rim and the Middle East and elsewhere in our own hemisphere, the question arises: Where do we expect NATO to be, and how would you describe its military role? When we look at the UN, our hope is that the UN member states will be able to arrive quickly in areas of crisis; a little bit more quickly, perhaps, than they did in Liberia and Haiti in the last few years.

When we think of contingences that arise outside of Europe that go beyond aggression against the NATO member's state, we think of coalitions, hopefully, endorsed by international organizations. When we look at European Constitutions at the national level, the authority to use force is often predicated on a UN mandate and EU mandate or a NATO contingency, and lacking one of the three the question arises: Will NATO forces play a role? So might I ask you, at a time when the defense budget is strained in Washington quite heavily with current endeavors stretching, possibly, well into the decade, the question is: How would you describe NATO's military in specifically war fighting identity in the future? And if you could give us some sense of...if you could wrap it into the geographical political context you've been discussing today, please?

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: I have to come back to that one because this is quite something. Let me first of all say that NATO needs...I mean I went a bit far to put that all into the speech this morning, but NATO also needs more structural forms of cooperation in relationships with the UN. I mentioned the UN mandate and you know them and it is necessary, I think, that not only in telephone conversations between Kofi Annan and myself and others, but also the most structural basis we developed a relationship with the UN. Having said that, NATO is not going to develop and should not develop into a second UN. NATO needs to keep the war fight capability, and NATO is not only a peace keeping organization, but NATO has the NATO response forces, which is, let's say the transformation to "barracks the launch,"(? French) as the French say, and the NATO response force should be able, when the need arises, also to fight.

Now I know and you know, and I know from having been in the Dutch Parliament for sixteen years, that it is not so easy for nations to permit their forces specific when they have heavy parliamentary procedures to engage them. Apart from Article 5 operations in NATO, of course, that is the difference. But usually it will not directly be Article 5. But as a role of NATO has this war fighting capability and NATO will have to keep this war fighting capability. Second notion is that NATO is not the Eurocentric organization anymore, as I said in my speech. On the other hand, I think, I should underline that NATO does not have the ambition, or the financial means, or the capabilities to be the world's policeman. As the

French so nicely say, (Inaudible in French), and I think NATO should not have that ambition. Having said that and referring to my earlier remarks about who would have dared to have predicted that Afghanistan or Darfur, I mean the (inaudible) is changing rather rapidly. But I will answer you in saying that NATO definitely needs to have this war fighting capability.

Let me give you an example – NATO is going to support the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan on the 18th of September, interesting day...the elections are Germany and Afghanistan, we do that by flying in extra forces. If things go wrong, what I do not hope and do not expect, but NATO, of course, should be able to support the Afghanistan National Army in this respect. In other words, it is important to note this role and the military role of NATO, as you say. I also see, and I'm not happy about that at all, when I look at the NATO allies, with a few good exceptions I should add, that the defense budget is going down. And that any defense minister in any government has an optimal battle with his colleague of social affairs, of education, of welfare, and what have you. I have some of these experiences myself in the Netherlands. But I'll keep saying that if you want to keep this alliance to be able to do what it should do, and that is Afghanistan, but it also is if the need arises to fight for the values, if they can't be kept, like in Afghanistan or Kosovo, and you have to restructure your forces for that because of the military transformation...I mean it is beyond the scope of this morning.

I spoke about this yesterday (inaudible) is also a very important element. Then we need defense budgets matching those efforts in restructuring the armed forces, because if you're going to restructure your armed forces you might save money at the end of the day, but you start by spending money, as you know and I know. So I'm in a good mood this morning, but if you ask me about defense budgeting with the alliance, I mean I have something to wish I could be happier as a NATO Secretary General. But on the whole, I must say, let me not leave you to say that this man is loony, on the whole NATO is very successful. NATO is very successful indeed by taking on the engagements NATO has taken on over the past years, and NATO will be successful if we are asked to airlift African Union forces into Darfur.

As we will stay the course in Kosovo, which is entering a critical period, we will stay the course in Afghanistan, and we will stay the course in Iraq. It is not always easy, it is a proactive organization, which is a running operation, but it is very worthwhile, and let me finish by saying it will always keep one unique element and one unique characteristic, which I also tell my European audiences, and that is that NATO has the United States of America and Canada as a member. And I do not see, if I look around in the world, I look at the threat and challenges, I do not see how we can come closer to answering those unpleasant challenges without the active full participation by the United States...and they are at the NATO table, and we can consult with them every single day we want...may I finish on that note.

M: Thank you so much Secretary General for taking the time and for your candor and clear responses to these questions. We wish you all the best, as you run back to Brussels and back to business. And so thank you very much for joining us.

Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer: Thank you very much.

R: (Applause.)

Ellen Laipson: We'll move onto the regional panel directly, okay? Thanks.