

## **NATO-EU Ministerial Meeting**

(Madrid, Spain, 3 June 2003)

### *Joint Press Statement by the NATO Secretary General and the EU Presidency*

The Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and of the European Union met in Madrid today to take stock of NATO-EU relations.

Since the joint NATO-EU Declaration of 16 December 2002, we have made unprecedented progress in developing our strategic partnership as agreed between the two organisations. Most importantly, in March we concluded the full set of agreements providing for ready access by the EU to NATO's collective capabilities and assets for EU-led operations. These « Berlin-Plus » arrangements are essential to effective partnership and will enable the strengthening of the European Security and Defence Policy.

Berlin Plus and the NATO-EU Agreement on the Security of Information, which allows for the exchange of classified documents, together paved the way for the EU's first operational military deployment. On 31 March, the EU-led Operation Concordia took over from NATO's Operation Allied Harmony. This EU commitment, undertaken in agreement with the host country's Government, and with recourse to NATO capabilities and assets, puts Berlin Plus into practice in a manner which benefits everyone concerned with security and stability in the Western Balkans.

NATO and the EU share common objectives for the future of the Western Balkans region. We both want to prevent conflict, consolidate stability and assist the countries concerned towards further integration into EU and NATO structures. Against that background, Foreign Ministers today discussed a concerted NATO-EU approach on security and stability in the Western Balkans.

More generally, Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their willingness to develop closer cooperation between the two organisations in the fight against terrorism. NATO and the EU have exchanged information on their activities in the field of protection of civil populations against CBRN terrorist attacks, and are now exploring possibilities for cooperation on other specific areas related to the fight against terrorism.

Effective modern military capabilities are central to the credibility of both NATO and the EU. By working together, we can maximise our outputs in the interests of all NATO and EU member countries. Ministers welcomed the establishment and first meeting of the NATO-EU Capability Group, and expressed their determination to ensure that the

efforts of both NATO and the EU to improve their capabilities are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

The discussions of NATO and EU Foreign Ministers on wider security issues during their informal working luncheon on 3 April 2003 demonstrated that a coherent and transparent NATO-EU relationship contributes to the vitality of the transatlantic link. Ministers today underlined their willingness to further develop the strategic partnership, as agreed between the two organisations, in a spirit of transparency and in full respect of both organisations' autonomy.