

CARNEGIE MOSCOW CENTER

**NATO-RUSSIA: PARTNERS FOR THE
FUTURE**

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INTRODUCTION:
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SPEAKER:
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ANATOLY TORKUNOV: Distinguished Mr. Rasmussen, your excellencies, ambassadors, ladies and gentleman, guests, dear students and all participants in today's meeting, today we have an exceptionally interesting event, which is a meeting with the new secretary-general of NATO and at the same time the chairman of the NATO-Russia Council meeting with the students, with the guests of the university which is happening in fact right at the end, as far as I understand, of Mr. Rasmussen's visit to Moscow, a very interesting and important visit for the present and for the future of our mutual relations between the Russian Federation and NATO.

We have been observing your visit with enormous interest and I must say that the media, the Russian media have given it prime importance. All the TV channels have been full of it so you could have seen and listened to his meeting with the president of the Russian Federation, the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs.

And all the messages were very numerous and we got the impression that your visit was extremely fruitful and that all the meetings were very constructive and any difficulties which might have existed in our relationship in the past, if they are not entirely open – overcome, then certainly they are mitigated. And you had talks, I think, about the most substantive and specific, concrete aspects of cooperation. And I think everybody really has pointed out the importance of this kind of cooperation.

There's a very good proverb actually in Russia. I remember the Danish – a Danish proverb that there is a proverb in all languages, it's always better to be friends than to be at war. I think that's probably not just a Danish proverb, but a proverb in most languages. It's always better to cooperate, of course, all the more so because today, the entire world, all of us and people of our generation and the growing youth seated here are facing new and very serious challenges which we can really tackle together.

So I think that by concerted efforts, NATO, Russia, efforts for example based on the Rome Declaration, I think that certainly that has shown its worth in terms of stabilizing peace and I hope it will continue to do so.

And so, I think that most of the people here now, your political career, your political substance and so perhaps I could say just a couple of words about that. You have before you a professional politician, I would say a unique political personality inasmuch as much as he began his work as a politician at the age of 25 and nearly after university and he was elected to the Danish parliament and played a very important part therein. And it is from that age that his public political career begins as a statesman and since the '80s, therefore, Mr. Rasmussen has been a minister, a leader of the opposition in parliament. And to my mind it is absolutely extraordinary that you, since 2005, have actually been heading the Danish government. And of course, we all know that he was appointed in Strasbourg at the summit the future leader of the alliance in spring.

We know about his trans-Atlantic links. We know also that you have been very much a robust advocate for better relations between NATO and Russia and you put forward a format of cooperation, and we also know, of course, that you have a big family. And in connection with

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that I'd just like to say that Mr. Rasmussen has a son and two daughters, but his son actually knows Russian, which of course is a cause for great rejoicing amongst us.

And I'd just like to ask Dmitri Trenin perhaps, who directs the Moscow Carnegie Fund, to say a couple of words because he's been very much involved in today's meeting. (Applause.)

DMITRI TRENIN: Thank you very much. Good morning. Good afternoon. I can see there are people in uniform here. I remember when I was also in uniform, but I could never get it through my head or I could never imagine that I would be here in Moscow sitting next to the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

This is a man who is really at the top of one of the most important hierarchies of power. And I'd like to draw your attention to two things. First of all, Mr. Rasmussen is a politician. That was already said. But he is a politician who is striving to address problems.

He has come to the post of secretary-general of NATO at a very, very complex I would say turning point really in the history of NATO. And this has to do with the fundamental problems of the strategy of NATO, of the operations that NATO is leading in Afghanistan, and of course relations with Russia.

This is a very complex agenda which he is heading and he has come striving to actually address all these problems, and I think this is very important to bear in mind for us and not only for the countries of the alliance. It is a man who knows how to listen and to hear.

Our branch – we have a branch in Washington, in Brussels, Beirut and so not only in Moscow. And we were the ones who took first contact with Mr. Rasmussen this year and we felt immediately that he was a very professional, very highly placed politician and yet he knew how to listen to us, how to interact with us as equals.

And I think it was also very important that his first major public speech when he became secretary-general in our branch in Brussels, it was very important – his first speech as secretary-general and it was dedicated to relations to Russia.

Today Mr. Rasmussen will continue this theme, the subject addressing the younger generation of Russia and it will be very much directed towards the future in general. I am looking forward, like you, to his lecture, but he is very interested in what your reaction, your questions are as he said to me in the car on the way here today.

So ladies and gentlemen, I will encourage you to welcome the secretary-general of NATO Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen. (Applause.)

SEC.-GEN. ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN: Professor Torkunov, Mr. Trenin, Deputy Minister Grushko, Ambassador Rogozin, the Russian ambassador to NATO, other ambassadors, Duma members, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, thank you very much for your kind words of introduction.

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And next, let me say it's a very great pleasure to be here. And let me start by thanking the Moscow Institute of Foreign Affairs for the invitation. This institute is well-known in international circles and I have been looking very much forward to meeting not least you, the students, the future leaders of Russia and elsewhere in the world, and I am indeed pleased to make my first speech as NATO secretary-general in Russia, right here. And let me also thank Carnegie for their role in organizing this event.

I'm pleased to be in Moscow for another important reason, of course. The discussions I'm having over these two days are helping to meet one of the priorities I set out on my very first day on the job: to work towards transforming NATO-Russia relations into a true strategic partnership. I have already discussed this at length with President Medvedev, Prime Minister Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov, as well as other Russian leaders. And it's what I'd like to discuss with you today.

Now, you may not be aware of this, but I actually have two jobs. One is, of course, secretary-general of NATO. The other is chairman of the NATO-Russia Council – the body where the 28 NATO countries and Russia sit together as 29 equal states to discuss common security challenges, and to see what we can do together to solve them.

I can tell you that when I was considering taking up the post as NATO secretary-general, I was also very much looking forward to the other job as well. Because I believe that the blueprints are already in place for a true security partnership between NATO and Russia. And because I think that a trusting relationship between these 29 countries has enormous potential to make Russia safer, to make the NATO allies safer, and to make a real contribution to global security as well.

I know that when foreigners come to Russia to give a speech, they are often tempted to quote from one of the great, classic Russian writers, such as Tolstoy, Pushkin, or Dostoyevsky. But instead, I'd like to take a page from the famous science fiction writers, the Strugatsky brothers, and think about what the future could look like. And then we'll discuss what we need to do to get there.

So what could the NATO-Russia relationship look like in, say, the year 2020? In my vision, NATO-Russia security cooperation will at that time be an established feature of the international security landscape. We will share intelligence and work together in combating terrorism and drug-trafficking. Our navies will cooperate closely in fighting piracy at sea. And Russian soldiers will be deployed alongside NATO soldiers in U.N.-mandated peacekeeping operations.

I also believe that by 2020 cooperation between NATO and Russia on missile defense will have advanced to the point where we are able to link our systems to create a genuine missile shield in the Euro-Atlantic area which will not only protect us all against proliferation, but bind us together politically as well.

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Finally, I believe that the NATO-Russia Council will be a key forum for discussing matters of European and international security, a place for frank and open discussion, focused debate, and pragmatic decisions.

Now some people say that when you have visions, you should go and see a doctor. And I realize that, to some, my vision for NATO and Russia in 2020 may seem as fantastic as the work of the Strugatsky brothers. But although what I just said may be ambitious, I believe that it is both achievable and desirable.

And when I say it is desirable, I am speaking not only as NATO secretary-general, but also as chairman of the NATO-Russia Council. Because I am convinced that a better NATO-Russia relationship is in Russia's direct security interest as much as it is for the other 28 countries in the NATO-Russia Council.

And let me make a very clear statement as secretary-general of NATO: NATO will never attack Russia – never. And we do not think Russia will attack us. (Laughter.) We have stopped worrying about this and Russia should stop worrying about us as well. (Applause.)

If we can build real trust and confidence in the relationship between Russia and her partners in the NATO-Russia Council, then Russia can stop worrying about a menace from the West that simply doesn't exist. She can put her resources into defending against the real threats this country faces – like terrorism, extremism, proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction or drug trafficking.

And because the NATO countries face exactly the same risks, Russia can count on the other countries in the NATO-Russia Council as true partners. Together, we can make a real, substantial contribution to protecting our citizens against the things that really threaten them today, rather than fighting the ghosts of the past.

But to get there, we have to look at our relations in a different way. Let me give you an example: NATO's Open Door policy. And it is an important example because I know that it is something which many in Russia see as a deliberate strategy to encircle this country.

But let me tell you: That is simply not the case. I know that I won't be able to convince everyone in this room. But let me make the case for why I think Russia should look at NATO's Open Door in a different way.

There is a longstanding principle in international affairs – endorsed repeatedly also by Russia – which says that every sovereign state has the right to decide its own security policy, and choose its own allies. This is the very essence of sovereignty – and it is a principle that has to be upheld, which is why when countries ask to join NATO, the alliance has an obligation at least to consider their membership.

Does this mean NATO is actively going out to look for new members? We do not. But if a European democracy wants to join, they have a right to apply – even if, to get in, they have to meet the standards, the standards NATO insists on, just like the EU.

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Then the next question is this: Today, more than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is Russia less secure because democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe have joined the alliance?

I believe that the opposite is true. When Russia's neighbors joined NATO in 1999 and 2004, Russia benefited from a stable western border. And that stability, of course along with EU membership, led to increased investor confidence, economic growth and prosperity.

And what is the result? Exports from Russia to NATO's new member countries have increased 11 times – have increased 11 times. Imports to Russia from the new member states increased five times. So it's a substantial increase in our mutual trade. Last year, Poland was not only Russia's second largest import partner, but it was also its sixth largest export partner. Foreign direct investments by Russia in the new member states of NATO almost doubled between 2007 and 2008. And cultural and education exchanges and other kinds of cross-border cooperation have increased significantly as well.

To me, all this is no accident. Once a country feels secure, once it has a home, it finds greater political and economic stability, and the confidence to reach out constructively to all its neighbors. That is why I firmly believe that the admission of new members into NATO – alongside the enlargement of the European Union – has been, and will continue to be, a net benefit to European security. And that includes for Russia.

NATO's Open Door policy is one example where outdated perceptions are distracting us from tackling the real problems. There are others. To my mind, we need to focus less on our suspicions about each other and more on what we can do together because we face real common threats, urgent ones. And the most obvious example is Afghanistan.

NATO soldiers are fighting and dying in Afghanistan to counter the extremism, terrorism and drugs that would, if left unchecked, spread into Central Asia and then into Russia too. We would all pay the price if we don't succeed. We know it. Russia knows it too.

I warmly welcome the cooperation we have had until now. We need to step it up further. I believe that Afghanistan must be a centerpiece of our partnership in 2010. We need to look at what more we can do together to train the Afghans to secure their own country; to provide them the equipment they need to fight; to stem the flow of drugs into our schools and back-alleys; and to support the U.N. mandated, NATO-led mission. This is a shared fight and we need to step it up.

I have made three specific proposals to my Russian interlocutors during my visit here. First, could Russia take a leadership role when it comes to helicopters for the Afghan forces from providing helicopters themselves to training the pilots to supplying spare parts to providing fuel? That is a package of support that would give the Afghans a concrete capability they need.

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Second, NATO is now going to train not only the Afghan Army but also the police. Perhaps Russia could support us, and the Afghans, by training Afghan police here in Russia as well.

And third, I think we could also step up further our training of counter-narcotics officials. Afghan narcotics kill 100,000 people a year, including many here in Russia. For all our countries, this is a tragedy. We have a clear shared interest in doing more together to fight this scourge.

Well, some might think it's a bit ironic that Afghanistan could become the flagship of cooperation between the West and Russia, and it is. But this is a new world. We need new ways of doing business together if we're to shape it for the better.

What does that mean in practical terms? Let me make three suggestions.

First, we need to agree, together, a list of the threats we actually face in the 21st century – a fresh list, which I can guarantee will not include each other. Two weeks ago, we agreed to launch a joint review of 21st century common security challenges that NATO and Russia face together. We agreed to focus on fighting terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, and the threats from Afghanistan. We need to get that work going.

Second, we should aim for the greatest possible transparency in our strategies and doctrines. As you may know, NATO is currently developing a new Strategic Concept. I have asked a group of international experts, led by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to come up with recommendations. The group of experts is scheduled to visit Moscow early next year to discuss their ideas. And I encourage all of you to make your views known through our Web site.

But, having said that, I also believe that transparency should work both ways – Russia's new military doctrine would benefit from a NATO perspective. What is actually the basis for portraying NATO in key Russian documents as a major threat to Russia's security? Is Russia fully aware of the message sent by military exercises that rehearse the invasion of a smaller NATO member? I can assure you that our process will be transparent as we develop our strategy and I hope that Russia will show the same openness to NATO.

Third, and finally, we need to ensure that the NATO-Russia Council works smoothly and effectively. We recently agreed some improvements. I will spare you the intricacies of our bureaucratic streamlining, but there was one important point. We reaffirmed the importance of using the NATO-Russia Council to address any legitimate concerns that any of our countries may have. Because it is important that the NATO-Russia Council is a place where all the 29 countries can feel they have a place and a voice.

To my mind, we haven't yet explored the potential of the NATO-Russia Council to meet the requirements of all its members, including Russia. I am convinced that the blueprints are there: in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which first formalized our relationship, and the Rome Declaration of 2002, which took it to a new level of cooperation as equal partners.

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For example, we have agreed that, in case one of our nations perceives a threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security, we will promptly consult in the NATO-Russia Council. We have agreed that the security of all states in the Euro-Atlantic area is indivisible. We have agreed that we will observe in good faith our obligations under international law. We have all signed up to the principle that free democracies can choose their own futures. And we have agreed, many times, to respect the territorial integrity of states.

These are important examples and principles. And there is plenty more in these documents. Together they form a package of political commitments that I believe has great potential to deepen trust and cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council. And in so doing, we can make the NATO-Russia Council an essential part of the 21st century Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

President Medvedev has proposed a new European Security Treaty. And of course, we can discuss it also in the NATO-Russia Council. But the primary and natural venue for discussing these proposals is the OSCE, which brings together all the nations that have an interest in discussing President Medvedev's ideas. That is why I support the decision taken at this month's OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Athens to continue work on these proposals.

Ladies and gentlemen, I started out by sharing with you my vision of how our relationship could look in 10 years' time. I am fully aware that turning that vision into reality requires a big change in the way we think and the way we act. But the fact is that the key to the NATO-Russia relationship does not lie in the past. If we are to be safer; if we are to be more secure; if we are to put our resources where they do the most good, we must set our sights on the future.

In the early 20th century, an American inventor was asked why he was so interested in the future. I think his answer was to the point: I am interested in the future, he said, because this is where I will spend the rest of my life. That should also be our motto. We must think about what it takes to build a better, a safer future – and then we must start to build it starting now.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. TORKUNOV: Thank you, distinguished Director General, for an interesting speech. I think you touched on a lot of the problems, particularly with regard to the future of NATO-Russia relations, and you also raised a whole number of other questions too, of course. So I should like now to request of the audience that they ask questions of Mr. Rasmussen. You have the floor. Who's going to bring the microphone?

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. Rasmussen, I'm a fourth year student here at the university, majoring in international relations. My name is Olga Sherbakova (ph) and that is my question to you. The first secretary-general of NATO, Hastings Ismay, famous for his phrase, "NATO is created to keep Russia out, Germany down and Americans in." I'm wondering if you can state the contemporary goal of NATO. Thank you very much. In the same – in a likewise catchy phrase. (Applause.)

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SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Well, actually I think the world has changed, so that we could say now our goal is to keep everybody in. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

Q: Good afternoon, Secretary Rasmussen. I'll ask my question in Russian. What kind of prospects do you think are there for cooperation between NATO and the CSTO, particularly in terms of combating international terrorism? Thank you.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: I can assure you that NATO is prepared to cooperate with all international actors with the aim to combat terrorism and also to counter narcotics, to fight drugs trafficking, be it individual states, be it organizations. I think the primary goal is to fight the threats against our security and then we will join efforts with those partners who are interested in doing the same.

Q: How do you see – sorry, I can't hear it – how do you see the relations in NATO and the military aspect of the EU policy in the foreseeable future.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: If I understand you correctly, it was the question about the relationship between NATO and the EU. Yes, okay, good. I would – yes, the military aspect of our cooperation. I would very much like to see a strengthened relationship between NATO and the EU. The EU has approved the so-called Lisbon Treaty recently.

One of the elements in the Lisbon Treaty is to strengthen the European defense and security policy. I welcome that. I think we need a strengthened European pillar within NATO. And I think the EU's defense and security policy could contribute to that. So this is a reason why I would very much – I welcome a further development of the defense and security policy within the EU and within NATO. I would very much like to see an increased cooperation. We have already initiated such cooperation.

It is possible for EU countries to use NATO assets when the EU conducts military operations. And I think we should further develop that aspect. Having said that, we also have to realize that there are some, I would say, internal institutional problems that have to be solved before it can reach its full potential, but basically I'm in favor of such development.

Q: Mr. Secretary-general, thank you very much for your lecture. Okay, yes, I'll ask in English, if I may. Thank you, Secretary-General, for your remarks. My name is Mikhail – (inaudible). I'm teaching here at this institute and I've spent some time researching NATO politics and NATO strategy. So my question concerns the interpretation of what is actually considered an attack against NATO; that is, an attack against one of its members.

Is there any evolution that is going on with regard to the concepts of an attack on one of NATO members in the contemporary world, when threats materialize in hours, if not minutes? Are you going to stick to the older perception of what an attack is? That is what is inscribed in the Washington Treaty. Or are you going to include something else in what could constitute an attack? That is a deployment of a missile which is targeted at a NATO country and is about to be launched, for example, or anything like that.

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Thanks very much.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Thank you. I think you refer to the ongoing process in NATO in the preparation of a new strategic concept. I would expect NATO to approve a new strategic concept in one year's time, in November next year at a NATO summit in Lisbon.

I will not prejudge the outcome of this strategic concept exercise, but I do believe that Article 5 in the NATO Treaty will remain unchanged, also after the elaboration of a new strategic concept because there is a broad consensus within our alliance that the core function of NATO is the territorial defense of NATO member states. It was the foundation of the establishment of NATO 60 years ago. It is still the core function and I do believe it will remain the core function.

Then, the next part of the question is what will be the character of an Article 5 attack on NATO members? Do I envisage a change? I think the article as such will remain unchanged, but of course we have to realize that in today's world the defense of our borders very often starts far away from our borders. And Afghanistan is an example. And it's not by accident that I mention Afghanistan because the fact is that the first time the Article 5 commitment was invoked in the history of the alliance was the day after the terrorist attacks on America on 9/11, 2001. And on the 12th of September, 2001, the NATO countries decided with unanimity that the attack on America should be considered an attack on all allies. And this initiated the operation in Afghanistan. So it's an example that in today's world defense of our borders may start far away from our borders.

Another example – we have seen that allied countries have been victims of cyber attacks. So without one single soldier crossing the border, you can really cause a lot of damage of a country. So we have to address this. So it's an example that even in cyberspace you might be met by security challenges.

So my answer is Article 5 will remain unchanged, but we have to take into account that territorial defense in today's world is somewhat different from what it was 60 years ago when the alliance was established.

Q: Good afternoon, Mr. Rasmussen. And would you be so kind to answer such kind of question? On your opinion, in what way can NATO's further enlargement can affect the military efficacy of the organization? Thank you.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: The basic principle on which the Open Door policy is founded is that all sovereign states have the right to decide their alliance affiliation themselves. So if a European country applies for membership of NATO, then we will consider this. And then the applicant country must fulfill certain criteria. So we have to make sure that all members of NATO can contribute positively to the security in the Euro-Atlantic area and can contribute to furthering the principles of the NATO treaty.

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So membership of NATO is not a gift. You must fulfill a number of criteria and among them the capability to contribute to security and also military effectiveness.

Q: Mr. Rasmussen, in your speech you said that Russia would gain from acceding new members to NATO, but if we refer to the last year's conflict in the Caucasus when there was a conflict between Russia and Georgia, do you think that if countries with unpredictable regimes like Georgia join the NATO, do you think that in this case Russia would really feel more secure?

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: The fact is that in order to become a member of NATO, you have to reform your societies, you have to reform your defense, and you have to find peaceful solutions to possible border disputes. So the fact is that in order to become a member of NATO, you must be able to contribute in a positive way to the overall security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We do not import problems into the NATO alliance.

Having said that, I also have to stress that NATO made a clear decision at the summit in Bucharest in 2008, we decided that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO. And this decision still stands.

Of course, it's also important to add that it is provided that they fulfill the necessary criteria. And this is – and they don't – they don't yet. And this is the reason why we have initiated the cooperation with the two countries with the aim to reform their societies, so that they eventually can fulfill the necessary criteria.

Q: (In Danish language.) I would like to welcome you, Secretary-General – (inaudible) – Russian, especially as much as our institute has a long history of speaking Danish. And I would like to put a question to you now in Russian to the previous Danish prime minister. What's type of the areas do you think Russia-Danish relations will work in?

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Thank you very much and thank you for asking in Danish. I can testify – (laughter) – that it was excellent Danish. So you teach Danish here at a very high level.

Q: Thank you.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: And I think you also understood the questions in Russian. (Laughter.) And – well, first of all, in one way, of course, these questions go beyond by current capacity as secretary-general of NATO, but I'm still a Danish citizen so I will answer your question. I think the biggest challenge for the Danish society in the 21st century will be the one I formulated in my previous capacity as prime minister of Denmark: to make sure that Denmark will keep her position as one of the most competitive countries in the world. Depending on who carries out the analysis, Denmark usually ranges among the top five competitive societies in the world. But it's a very strong competition. So I think this is the most important challenge for Denmark in the 21st century and it takes reforms to keep that position. And I feel pretty sure that my successor will continue the work we started when I took over the post as prime minister of Denmark.

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And your second question concerns the Danish-Russian relationship and I'm very pleased to see that this relationship has gradually improved and it has now been decided that the Russian president will pay a state visit to Denmark, which testifies to a significant improvement of the relationship and I welcome that. (Applause.)

Q: Mr. Secretary-General, thank you very much for visiting our university. And my question is how do you estimate the prospects of the ratification of the adapted Conventional Arms in Europe Treaty by NATO members? Thank you.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Very good question. I raised it in my meetings with the Russian leaders. I would very much like to see an implementation of the CFE treaty, including of course the adapted treaty because I consider the CFE treaty a cornerstone in European security. And within the framework of the CFE treaty we have really succeeded in reducing arms – the amount of weapons in Europe. So we are in a very unfortunate situation right now because the adapted treaty has not been ratified by all countries and Russia has suspended its obligations within the CFE treaty.

So how could we proceed from here? Russia has ratified the adapted treaty, while NATO countries didn't. The reason why NATO countries haven't ratified the adapted treaty is that Russia, according to the NATO countries, has not fulfilled her commitments – her so-called Istanbul commitments that are parts of the adapted treaty. It's an ongoing discussion. Russia insists that Russia has fulfilled all obligations. I think I give a fair description now of the Russian position. But the fact is that we are now in a stalemate and how could we proceed from here?

We have proposed a pragmatic way ahead, a so-called parallel actions package, a parallel actions package, which would allow a gradual ratification process among those countries that have not yet ratified while we, at the same time, negotiate with Russia as to how Russia could fulfill her commitments within the adapted treaty.

So I'm not able to give you an answer, unfortunately, as to when we can see a ratification and entering into force of the adapted treaty, but I think it takes some fresh thinking and pragmatic approach to reach that goal and I would very much like to see progress because the CFE treaty is a valuable framework for disarmament in Europe.

Q: Good day, Mr. Secretary-General. My question deals again with the issue of NATO enlargement. Now, despite the rhetoric of the states' sovereign right to choose the allies, there was a shared opinion here in Russia that if in the foreseeable future Ukraine and Georgia join this organization; this will almost inevitably jeopardize and deteriorate the Russia-NATO relations.

Now, what concrete steps can you propose to somewhat reconcile the aspirations for NATO enlargement with the desire to step up strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation? Thank you.

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SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Well, I'm very much aware of the Russian concerns and this is also a reason why I have devoted quite some time today to address this issue because I don't think it is justified to consider our Open Door policy a threat to Russian interests. Having said that, I think the best way forward is to create an overall, positive spirit, atmosphere, and a reliable security environment in Europe, so that the Open Door policy can continue in a way in which Russia feels that her security concerns are taken seriously.

But I have to stress that our Open Door policy will continue because it is founded on basic principles to which we all have subscribed, including Russia. Also Russia has signed documents that clearly state that each and every state has a right to decide its alliance affiliation freely.

We all subscribed to that. And it is a foundation for our Open Door policy. But I have already described the current situation. Georgia and Ukraine do not fulfill the criteria at this moment, so therefore we have initiated cooperation with the two countries with the aim to reform their societies.

Q: As you see well, this hall could not accommodate everybody who wanted to attend this meeting and we received a lot of questions through Internet. And I have two questions which I want to ask you. One is very, very short, in English. Would NATO be willing to cooperate with China in Afghanistan?

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: We will cooperate with all countries, with all partners, with all organizations that will contribute in a positive way to stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan. And actually, I do believe that countries in the region, the neighbors and countries in the region could contribute in a positive way to solving the problems in Afghanistan. And we do have a shared interest in that respect.

Q: And another question is not just a question but a remark and a question at the same time from Lani Trebikhin (ph). It's in Russian, so please – I don't dare to translate it. (Laughter.) Only agenda of the NATO-Russia cooperation deal – that is the whole question of military cooperation, what about missile cooperation? At the same time, a new approach to evolution of threats was taken, especially when the decision was made by President Bush to deploy anti-missile missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland, which was reversed by President Obama. Do you think such assessments could be revised in particular with the involvement of independent technical experts like it was done in the first time when Russian and U.S. experts approach the assessment of the Iranian nuclear potential? Do you think it makes sense to approach such threats in Europe, like it was done with relation to North Korea? And will it be applied to the deployment of the anti-missile defense facilities in Europe?

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Missile defense, I would very much like to see cooperation between Russia and NATO in that area. And actually I think we should explore the possibilities to integrate the U.S., Russian, and NATO missile defense systems with the aim to create a (genuine ?) missile shield.

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As you may know, Russia – the U.S. has recently revised its missile defense plans. I welcome the new American approach because it's a flexible approach, it includes all allies. It can protect all allies. It allows deployment of a missile defense system sooner than the previous plans allowed. And as I consider the missile threat a real threat, I'm in favor of a faster deployment of the system.

But as I also consider the missile threat a common threat to Russia and NATO, I think it's evident that we should cooperate in this area. And I think the basis should be a joint review of the threats, that we agree that it is a common threat, and look closer into how we could address this threat in common.

So basically, yes, I am – I have a positive attitude to NATO-Russia cooperation also as far as missile defense is concerned.

MR. TORKUNOV: The last question from the audience because of the time.

Q: Thank you very much. My question is about the Russia-NATO Council. When the Russia-NATO Council was first created, it was believed to become a real efficient mechanism of cooperation between Russian Federation and the alliance. But the situation around the conflict in the Caucasus in August, 2008, clearly showed us that this cooperation and all probably consultations between countries can be easily blocked by the West. So could you please comment on the future prospects of cooperation of consultation within the framework of the Russia-NATO Council? Will it be functioning only when the situation on international arena is stable and blocked when there are some difficulties? Thank you very much.

SEC.-GEN. RASMUSSEN: Also a good question. Let me make it completely clear. I want a forum for consultation and discussion, whether we agree or disagree. We need the NATO-Russia Council to be the place where we can exchange views also when we do not agree. I think it's of utmost importance and it's my intention as chairman of the NATO-Russia Council to make sure that it is what we now call an all-weather forum.

So I look forward to quite some tough discussions in the NATO-Russia Council. But I was among what I would call the founding fathers, back in 2002, when we approved the Rome Declaration and the status of the NATO-Russian Council. And the spirit of that was to create a forum for a frank and open discussion and consultation, whether we agree or disagree. I don't think the NATO-Russia Council has reached its full potential yet. And it's my ambition as chairman of the NATO-Russia Council to reach this full potential and ensure a frank and open, and sometimes tough discussion.

Mr. Rector, I have to say that you teach at this university at a very high level. Students have asked very, very qualified and very relevant questions and I appreciate that very much and once again thank you very much for inviting me to come today. (Applause.)

MR. TORKUNOV: I'll thank once again Secretary-General of NATO that he came here in the first place, but of course as hosts we would like traditionally to give him a small present. So we have a multivolume work here, which is called distinguished to outstanding diplomats of

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Russia. It's written in Russian. But that is an extremely good preface written in English. But even if it's written in Russian, I decided to give you this because your daughter, of course, Maria, actually does study Russian or speak Russian, so perhaps she can translate it for you.

So I wish you every success in your job, but also in implementing, realizing all these plans for the development of our cooperation and the addressing and solution of all the problems which stand before NATO and Russia.

Thank you very much and bon voyage. (Applause.)

(END)