

19. The situation in and around Kosovo
Statement by the North Atlantic Council
12 APRIL 1999

Statement Issued at the Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council held at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, on 12th April 1999

1. The crisis in Kosovo represents a fundamental challenge to the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, for which NATO has stood since its foundation. We are united in our determination to overcome this challenge.

2. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) has repeatedly violated United Nations Security Council resolutions. The unrestrained assault by Yugoslav military, police and paramilitary forces, under the direction of President Milosevic, on Kosovar civilians has created a massive humanitarian catastrophe which also threatens to destabilise the surrounding region. Hundreds of thousands of people have been expelled ruthlessly from Kosovo by the FRY authorities. We condemn these appalling violations of human rights and the indiscriminate use of force by the Yugoslav government. These extreme and criminally irresponsible policies, which cannot be defended on any grounds, have made necessary and justify the military action by NATO.

3. NATO's military action against the FRY supports the political aims of the international community: a peaceful, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo in which all its people can live in security and enjoy universal human rights and freedoms on an equal basis. In this context, we welcome the statement of the UN Secretary-General of 9th April and the EU Council Conclusions of 8th April.

4. NATO's air strikes will be pursued until President Milosevic accedes to the demands of the international community. President Milosevic knows what he has to do. He must:

- ensure a verifiable stop to all military action and the immediate ending of violence and repression;
- ensure the withdrawal from Kosovo of the military, police and paramilitary forces;
- agree to the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence;
- agree to the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organisations;

- provide credible assurance of his willingness to work on the basis of the Rambouillet Accords in the establishment of a political framework agreement for Kosovo in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.
5. Responsibility for the present crisis lies with President Milosevic. He has the power to bring a halt to NATO's military action by accepting and implementing irrevocably the legitimate demands of the international community.
 6. We underline that NATO is not waging war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We have no quarrel with the people of the FRY who for too long have been isolated in Europe because of the policies of their government.
 7. We are grateful for the strong and material support we have received from our Partners in the region and more widely in the international community in responding to the crisis.
 8. The Alliance shares a common interest with Russia in reaching a political solution to the crisis in Kosovo and wants to work constructively with Russia, in the spirit of the Founding Act, to this end.
 9. As a result of President Milosevic's sustained policy of ethnic cleansing, hundreds of thousands of Kosovar people are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly in Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Others remain in Kosovo, destitute and beyond the reach of international relief. These people in Kosovo are struggling to survive under conditions of exhaustion, hunger and desperation. We will hold President Milosevic and the Belgrade leadership responsible for the well-being of all civilians in Kosovo.
 10. NATO and its members have responded promptly to this emergency. We have activated with our Partners the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre. NATO forces in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have constructed emergency accommodation for refugees and have cared for them. NATO troops are also being deployed to Albania to support the humanitarian efforts there and to assist the Albanian authorities in providing a secure environment for them. We will sustain and intensify our refugee and humanitarian relief operations in cooperation with the UNHCR, the lead agency in this field. NATO-led refugee and humanitarian aid airlift operations for both Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are already under way and they will increase. The steps being taken by NATO and the efforts of other international organisations and agencies, including the European Union, are complementary and mutually reinforcing.
 11. We pay tribute to NATO's servicemen and women whose commitment and skill are ensuring the success of NATO's military and humanitarian operations.
 12. Atrocities against the people of Kosovo by FRY military, police and paramilitary forces violate international law. Those who are responsible for the systematic campaign of violence and destruction against innocent Kosovar civilians and for the forced deportation of hundreds of thousands of refugees will be held accountable for their actions. Those indicted must be brought before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. Allies reaffirm there can be no lasting peace without justice.

13. NATO has repeatedly stated that it would be unacceptable if the FRY were to threaten the territorial integrity, political independence and security of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We have consulted closely and at a high level with both countries on their specific concerns. We will respond to any challenges by the FRY to the security of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia stemming from the presence of NATO forces and their activities on their territory.

14. We are concerned over the situation in the Republic of Montenegro. We reaffirm our support for the democratically elected government of President Milo Djukanovic which has accepted tens of thousands of displaced persons from Kosovo. President Milosevic should be in no doubt that any move against President Djukanovic and his government will have grave consequences.

15. The Kosovo crisis underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to the stabilisation of the crisis region in south-eastern Europe and to the integration of the countries of the region into the Euro-Atlantic community. We welcome the EU initiative for a Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe under the auspices of the OSCE, as well as other regional efforts including the South Eastern Europe Co-operation initiative. We are strengthening the security dialogue between NATO and countries of the region with a view to building a dynamic partnership with them and have tasked the Council in Permanent Session to develop measures to this end. We look forward to a time when the people of Serbia can re-establish normal relations with all the peoples of the Balkans. We want all the countries of south-eastern Europe to enjoy peace and security.
