



PRESS COMMUNIQUE S-1 (99)62

For immediate release  
23<sup>rd</sup> April 1999

STATEMENT ON KOSOVO

Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting  
of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C.  
on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April 1999

1. The crisis in Kosovo represents a fundamental challenge to the values for which NATO has stood since its foundation: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It is the culmination of a deliberate policy of oppression, ethnic cleansing and violence pursued by the Belgrade regime under the direction of President Milosevic. We will not allow this campaign of terror to succeed. NATO is determined to prevail.

2. NATO's military action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) supports the political aims of the international community, which were reaffirmed in recent statements by the UN Secretary-General and the European Union: a peaceful, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo where all its people can live in security and enjoy universal human rights and freedoms on an equal basis.

3. Our military actions are directed not at the Serb people but at the policies of the regime in Belgrade, which has repeatedly rejected all efforts to solve the crisis peacefully. President Milosevic must:

- Ensure a verifiable stop to all military action and the immediate ending of violence and repression in Kosovo;
- Withdraw from Kosovo his military, police and para-military 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; and
- Provide credible assurance of his willingness to work for the establishment of a political framework agreement based on the Rambouillet accords.

4. There can be no compromise on these conditions. As long as Belgrade fails to meet the legitimate demands of the international community and continues to inflict immense human suffering, Alliance air operations against the Yugoslav war machine will continue. We hold President Milosevic and the Belgrade leadership responsible for the safety of all Kosovar citizens. We will fulfill our promise to the Kosovar people that they can return to their homes and live in peace and security.

5. We are intensifying NATO's military actions to increase the pressure on Belgrade. Allied governments are putting in place additional measures to tighten the constraints on the Belgrade regime. These include intensified implementation of economic sanctions, and an embargo on petroleum products on which we welcome the EU lead. We have directed our Defence Ministers to determine ways that NATO can contribute to halting the delivery of war material including by launching maritime operations, taking into account the possible consequences on Montenegro.

6. NATO is prepared to suspend its air strikes once Belgrade has unequivocally accepted the above mentioned conditions and demonstrably begun to withdraw its forces from Kosovo according to a precise and rapid timetable. This could follow the passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution, which we will seek, requiring the withdrawal of Serb forces and the demilitarisation of Kosovo and encompassing the deployment of an international military force to safeguard the swift return of all refugees and displaced persons as well as the establishment of an international provisional administration of Kosovo under which its people can enjoy substantial autonomy within the FRY. NATO remains ready to form the core of such an international military force. It would be multinational in character with contributions from non-NATO countries.

7. Russia has a particular responsibility in the United Nations and an important role to play in the search for a solution to the conflict in Kosovo. Such a solution must be based on the conditions of the international community as laid out above. President Milosevic's offers to date do not meet this test. We want to work constructively with Russia, in the spirit of the Founding Act.

8. The long-planned, unrestrained and continuing assault by Yugoslav military, police and paramilitary forces on Kosovars and the repression directed against other minorities of the FRY are aggravating the already massive humanitarian catastrophe. This threatens to destabilise the surrounding region.

9. NATO, its members and its Partners have responded to the humanitarian emergency and are intensifying their refugee and humanitarian relief operations in close cooperation with the UNHCR, the lead agency in this field, and with other relevant organisations. We will continue our assistance as long as necessary. NATO forces are making a major contribution to this task.

10. We pay tribute to the servicemen and women of NATO whose courage and dedication are ensuring the success of our military and humanitarian operations.

11. Atrocities against the people of Kosovo by FRY military, police and paramilitary forces represent a flagrant violation of international law. Our governments will co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to support investigation of all those, including at the highest levels, responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. NATO will support the ICTY in its efforts to secure relevant information. There can be no lasting peace without justice.

12. We acknowledge and welcome the courageous support that states in the region are providing to our efforts in Kosovo. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania have played a particularly important role, not least in accepting hundreds of thousands of refugees from Kosovo. The states in the region are bearing substantial economic and social burdens stemming from the current conflict.

13. We will not tolerate threats by the Belgrade regime to the security of its neighbours. We will respond to such challenges by Belgrade to its neighbours resulting from the presence of NATO forces or their activities on their territory during this crisis.

14. We reaffirm our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries in the region.

15. We reaffirm our strong support for the democratically elected government of Montenegro. Any move by Belgrade to undermine the government of President Djukanovic will have grave consequences. FRY forces should leave the demilitarised zone of Prevlaka immediately.

16. The objective of a free, prosperous, open and economically integrated Southeast Europe cannot be fully assured until the FRY embarks upon the transition to democracy. Accordingly, we express our support for the objective of a democratic FRY which protects the rights of all minorities, including those in Vojvodina and Sandjak, and promise to work for such change through and beyond the current conflict.

17. It is our aim to make stability in Southeast Europe a priority of our transatlantic agenda. Our governments will co-operate urgently through NATO as well as through the OSCE, and for those of us which are members, the European Union, to support the nations of Southeast Europe in forging a better future for their region - one based upon democracy, justice, economic integration, and security co-operation.

---

1 Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.