

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.

NOTE: The joint statement was issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, on April 23 and 24. It was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

## The Washington Declaration

*April 23, 1999*

1. We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance, declare for a new century our mutual commitment to defend our people, our territory and our liberty, founded on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The world has changed dramatically over the last half century, but our common values and security interests remain the same.

2. At this anniversary summit, we affirm our determination to continue advancing these goals, building on the habits of trust and co-operation we have developed over fifty years. Collective defence remains the core purpose of NATO. We affirm our commitment to promote peace, stability and freedom.

3. We pay tribute to the men and women who have served our Alliance and who have advanced the cause of freedom. To honour them and to build a better future, we will contribute to building a stronger and broader Euro-Atlantic

community of democracies—a community where human rights and fundamental freedoms are upheld; where borders are increasingly open to people, ideas and commerce; where war becomes unthinkable.

4. We reaffirm our faith, as stated in the North Atlantic Treaty, in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reiterate our desire to live in peace with all nations, and to settle any international dispute by peaceful means.

5. We must be as effective in the future in dealing with new challenges as we were in the past. We are charting NATO's course as we enter the 21st century: an Alliance committed to collective defence, capable of addressing current and future risks to our security, strengthened by and open to new members, and working together with other institutions, Partners and Mediterranean Dialogue countries in a mutually

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reinforcing way to enhance Euro-Atlantic security and stability.

6. NATO embodies the vital partnership between Europe and North America. We welcome the further impetus that has been given to the strengthening of European defence capabilities to enable the European Allies to act more effectively together, thus reinforcing the transatlantic partnership.

7. We remain determined to stand firm against those who violate human rights, wage war and conquer territory. We will maintain both the political solidarity and the military forces necessary to protect our nations and to meet the security challenges of the next century. We pledge to improve our defence capabilities to fulfill the full range of the Alliance's 21st century missions. We will continue to build confidence and security through arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation measures. We reiterate our condemnation of terrorism and our determination to protect ourselves against this scourge.

8. Our Alliance remains open to all European democracies, regardless of geography, willing and able to meet the responsibilities of membership, and whose inclusion would enhance overall

security and stability in Europe. NATO is an essential pillar of a wider community of shared values and shared responsibility. Working together, Allies and Partners, including Russia and Ukraine, are developing their cooperation and erasing the divisions imposed by the Cold War to help to build a Europe whole and free, where security and prosperity are shared and indivisible.

9. Fifty years after NATO's creation, the destinies of North America and Europe remain inseparable. When we act together, we safeguard our freedom and security and enhance stability more effectively than any of us could alone. Now, and for the century about to begin, we declare as the fundamental objectives of this Alliance enduring peace, security and liberty for all people of Europe and North America.

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## Statement on Congressional Inaction on Legislation To Strengthen Social Security

*April 23, 1999*

I am deeply disappointed by reports that the congressional Republican leadership has abandoned the effort to enact legislation this year to strengthen Social Security for the 21st century. We have an obligation to ensure that Social Security is safe and strong not only for today's seniors but for our children and future generations as well. The American people expect us to meet this fundamental challenge. Instead, just one week after passing a budget that promises a massive \$800 billion tax cut, the Republican leadership is sending a message that Congress is either unable or unwilling to face up to the challenge of strengthening Social Security.

That is not acceptable, and I urge the Republican leadership to reconsider its opposition to acting on Social Security this year. I have proposed concrete steps to bolster Social Security

and offered time and again to work with the Congress in a bipartisan way to make the tough choices needed to secure the Trust Fund over the long term. Republican leaders have yet to consider my proposals or advance any of their own.

Our economy is the strongest it has been in a generation. Now is the time to strengthen Social Security for the future. I remain committed to working with Members of Congress of both parties who are committed to enacting comprehensive Social Security legislation this year. We can and must accomplish this critical goal for the American people.