



Keynote address by Prime Minister Călin POPESCU-TĂRICEANU
The Bucharest Conference, April 2, 2008
NATO: The Responsibility to Transform

Your excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you here today, together with our partners from Chatham House and the German Marshall Fund.

I have heard Romanians saying these days that for one week our country will be the center of the world.

If they believe so, it is because they understand that, by having joined NATO and the EU, Romania has finally regained its rightful place in a community of nations built on the enduring universal values that are central to what humanity means.

This gathering today is the culmination of decades of hard work, of doing the right thing. Romania today is a thriving economy, a country on the move, a country proud of its culture and heritage yet committed to its future.

We now rightfully take our place on the world stage as an equal with our allies in the Euro-Atlantic family.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Supporting democracy as universal value remains a keystone of NATO's presence and action in today's world.

Let us not forget the enormous accomplishments from the Cold War to this stage of the Enlarged Alliance.

Many in the new generation are fortunate to have grown up only in this world of great opportunity. They have no history of struggle.

They cannot possibly understand why many in this country wept at our inclusion in Euro-Atlantic institutions or why we can feel such pride in hosting this NATO Summit.

But we must never forget our history. We can never forget where we came from. It only makes us stronger.

It only makes us more reliable.

It only reinforces the importance of the values we share in this great Alliance.

Yesterday I met the group of young Atlanticists from different countries and I was impressed by their commitment to these values.

I trust they will be able to carry these values forward.

I am confident that supporting democracy as universal value remains a keystone of NATO's presence and action in today's world.

From this perspective I trust we can confirm President Franklin Roosevelt's urge: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future".

I have encouraged our young Atlanticists that, everywhere in this world, to be the generation prepared to speak up in upholding democracy as the most precious asset of our Euro-Atlantic family.

Dear friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The strategic setting of NATO's immediate neighborhoods is very different now from that of the early or mid 90s.

However, if NATO and EU are to safeguard their credibility, they must abide by their expressed vision.

They must take the lead in anchoring the countries of the Balkans and Black Sea region to the Euro-Atlantic space of security and values.

There is a clear expectation, even a sense of emergency among the people in the region, for this to happen.

NATO accession is a confirmation of successful embracement of the values our Alliance stands for, including successful progress in the democratic, economic and social reforms. This process strengthens the bases for a successful accession to the European Union.

We have successfully experienced this when the previous waves of enlargements have included the Central and Eastern European countries.

We all recognize that extending the NATO security umbrella over the countries in the Balkans and the Wider Black Sea region is paramount to fostering domestic reforms, building economic and social stability, as well as strengthening the democratic choices.

The Bucharest NATO Summit provides us with a unique window of opportunity to substantiate both our security interests and the strong political commitments we have made.

NATO's open door policy might come to an end in the future. But as long as this policy remains valid, NATO has to stay the course by accommodating the free choice of sovereign nations to enter organizations that enhance their security.

In that spirit, Romania supports the decision for extending invitations for accession into NATO for the three partners from Western Balkans, Croatia, Albania and the Republic of Macedonia.

We also hope that Ukraine and Georgia will be offered a strengthened, increasingly closer relation with NATO.

A clear signal towards closer ties with NATO should also be given to Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and, of course, Serbia.

A developed cooperation with Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan and Central Asia states.

And a reconfirmation of the continued importance of the Black Sea region has for Euro-Atlantic security.

Hereby, NATO could prove that it is able to translate the critical energies of the region into projects aimed at closing the development gap, overcoming separatism and nationalistic obsessions.

Let us not forget some of the vital ingredients to our region stability: connecting instead of isolating, acting in solidarity instead of excluding, expanding infrastructure links.

But we cannot build a sustainable stability without social cohesion, functional institutions and the rule of law.

It is a lesson we have all drawn from our accession into NATO and the European Union.

It is a lesson broadened during a decade of regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe.

It is an experience that could be beneficial to Europe's immediate neighborhood.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in a world of "open security", where geographical borders are losing their relevance.

No one among us here would doubt that credible threats to energy security or critical infrastructure are indeed a threat to the way our societies function.

Since the 2006 Summit in Riga, NATO experts are searching for concrete ways in which NATO can add value in the realm of energy security.

At the Bucharest summit, we should all expect to see some of the results of this work. They could form a strong basis for a more comprehensive strategic concept to energy security including the need to protect critical infrastructure.

We will not tire to emphasize that Europe needs a common and coherent policy approach in this field.

Given its increasing demand, Europe must diversify and secure its energy sources, suppliers and transport corridors.

Energy security liberates us from tensions and allows us to foster an environment of cooperative prosperity and development.

The new challenges posed by globalization, climate change, market liberalization should discourage exclusive self-interested approaches.

We are confident that expanding cooperation in the Black Sea region, and strengthening Euro-Atlantic partnerships with the Caspian countries, we will also enhance energy security policies for Europe overall.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

NATO is, first of all, about freedom, democracy and prosperity. Let's never forget that!

Yet it is with pride that young Romanians stand shoulder to shoulder with Europeans and North Americans throughout the globe.

We are involved around the world in peacekeeping efforts, in fighting terrorism, because we know how important it is to help those who like us share the longing for a better world.

The geographical expansion of NATO's recent missions underlines the need to project stability beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, including post-conflict reconstruction, stabilization operations or training tasks.

NATO's experiences in these regions have demonstrated that success stems only from efficient military-civilian cooperation and a strong emphasis on "winning hearts and minds".

Afghanistan provides us with a solid opportunity to underpin a gradual convergence between NATO, EU and UN in terms of stabilization and security efforts in areas of shared concern.

The renewed commitment of our transatlantic community is currently vital in Afghanistan.

To a good extent, NATO's future will be shaped in that theatre.

For all these reasons we strongly believe our mission in Afghanistan has to be an irreversible success and we want this summit to reconfirm our large solidarity for accomplishing it!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have to transform the Alliance, refashion its partnerships, and work on its future strategic vision.

It is indeed not an easy task.

On the quality of this transformation hinges the security not of a group of countries, but of the values underlying our world.

I thank once again the German Marshall Fund and the Chatham House for their undertaking to approach this impressive agenda and I wish you inspirational debates!

Thank you very much!"