EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT

Lisbon, 19 November 2010
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Remarks by Herman VAN ROMPUY,
President of the European Council,
at the NATO Summit in Lisbon

Thank you, Secretary General,

May I start with congratulating you for the work you have conducted in the past one year, above all on the new strategic vision for the next decade.

Dear Colleagues,

Although for me personally this is not the first NATO summit, it is the first time ever that the President of the European Council is invited to attend one. The invitation is a symbol. Thanks to the trans-Atlantic alliance, Europe has emerged as a continent of cooperation and integration. There would not have been an EU without NATO. Our two organisations have been in the same boat for decades.

As a Union we are together with NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Kosovo and along the Somali coast. We also work shoulder-to-shoulder in Afghanistan, and I confirm the EU’s long-term commitment to Afghanistan’s stabilization and reconstruction. We are strategic partners.

We both notice how the strategic scenery in the world is evolving rapidly. The world’s emerging countries claim a political place corresponding to their economic strength. Whereas prosperity is spreading, power is shifting. The power of our weapons will be needed for a long time, but will become meaningless without an underlying economic resilience. To put it simply, we still are in the same boat.

The EU's contribution to crisis management and conflict prevention is proven by the almost two dozen civilian missions and military operations undertaken so far. The EU can offer a wide range of instruments. Implementing a holistic approach is the EU’s very “raison d’être”. We are comprehensive by nature, with a strong potential of creating civil-military synergies in crisis management, and integrating strategic military and civilian planning. Our operation at the Horn of Africa is the best testimony of this capacity. With the political and diplomatic structures of the Lisbon Treaty in place, we can do even better.
We must, therefore, ensure that our EU-NATO strategic partnership is built, not against the background of competition and division, but on synergy, inclusiveness and co-operation. I hope the ambition to further reinforce the relationship between the EU and NATO will be reflected in the new Strategic Concept and I re-confirm the EU's strong commitment to this endeavour.

I do not underestimate the difficulties of this task, be they political or practical. But I strongly believe we have an opportunity to make progress, while respecting the legitimate concerns and interests of all EU Member States and all NATO Allies. We have to move forward in a pragmatic way. The EU has made this year a set of concrete proposals. We have to find practical solutions to wider structural problems that have hindered the EU-NATO relationship, without discriminating anyone.

Due to the efforts of the High Representative and the Secretary General, significant progress has been recorded in the relationship in the past few months. The EU has the political ambition to pave the way for further steps. This has been reflected in the conclusions of the September European Council, giving the High Representative a mandate to come up with ideas to reinforce EU-NATO relations.

The ability of our two organisations to shape our future security environment would be enormous if they worked together. It is time to break down the remaining walls between them.

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Photos covering the event will be available for download in high resolution from the Council Photo Library http://www.consilium.europa.eu/photo