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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to focus my brief remarks today on our collective ability to meet current and future security challenges. I will argue that, on a general level, there is broad international consensus on the nature of the challenges before us, and on the need to respond to them collectively. But I will also try to identify a number of “spoilers” which complicate such collective responses. And I will conclude with a few recommendations on the way forward.

As for the main challenges to our security, it is not too difficult to come up with a list that most people can subscribe to:

- international terrorism will continue to haunt our global village, even if it might have less and less political appeal;
- failed states and regional conflicts will continue to confront us with a cruel choice between engagement and indifference;
- climate change also has security implications, as we can see in the new claims for arctic territory supported by increasing military activity;
- nuclear proliferation is reaching a tipping point, with Iran edging closer to the bomb and North Korea threatening to reverse its denuclearisation commitments;
- cyber attacks have already taken place, and are likely to happen even more often in the future;
- and the scramble for natural resources has put a premium on energy security and food security .

Now, we may argue over which of these challenges constitute first-order issues, and which are secondary. But we all agree that they overtax the abilities of any single nation, and that international cooperation is therefore a strategic imperative.

This cooperation takes place in a number of ways. One is through international institutions. Of course, many of our major institutions, including the one that I represent, were created in a different era. And no one will argue that our efforts to adapt them to the new requirements of today have been 100% successful. But institutions remain our most effective instrument for generating consensus, and converting that consensus into common action.

We also agree that we need not just to reform our institutions individually, but also to enable them to cooperate with each other more effectively. That is the logic behind the “Comprehensive Approach” to crisis management, and behind the strategic partnerships between NATO and the EU and NATO and the UN. If the challenges are multi-dimensional, so must be our institutional response. Civilian and military institutions must work together and complement each other.

So far, so good, one might say. If we agree on all of this, what could possibly go wrong? Unfortunately, several new developments challenge the broad consensus that

I have just described – and hence our collective ability to cope. Let me mention three of these trends.

The first is a tendency of some key players to challenge an international order that they perceive as Western-dominated and disadvantageous to their own interests. We can see this in Russia, and in parts of Asia.

The Russian concept of “sovereign democracy” is an attempt to have a successful capitalist economy, yet with a carefully controlled public space. Some Asian countries challenge the Western notion that economic success and political freedoms must inevitably go together. They try to prove that the market can work without freedom.

I am firmly convinced that separating a free market economy in the classic sense and freedom will ultimately prove unworkable. Such notions are driven by short-term interests rather than by long-term strategic considerations.

Another factor is a kind of “fatigue”, better known as “integration fatigue” right here in Europe. This “fatigue” is nothing new, nor is it as serious as some Eurosceptics want to make us believe. However, it does prevent the EU from becoming the unified economic and foreign policy actor that it wants to be and should be.

Looking at the other side of the Atlantic, I don’t detect any “fatigue” in America’s aspiration to provide global leadership. But as the Bush-presidency draws to a close, and with a major financial crisis shattering confidence, there is growing debate about how the United States should position itself in a much more complex world with a range of new players.

The third challenge to our collective ability to cope is the ever more complex interrelationships between different national interests. Of course, nations have always had different, and sometimes conflicting, interests. But never before have our nations and national politicians been asked to satisfy so many demands. In a world marked by an increased competition for natural resources as well as many new threats and challenges, nations need to satisfy their citizens’ demands for physical security, but they are also asked to provide for job security, for energy security, food security and many other aspects. And to satisfy these demands, governments might be tempted to adopt an inward-looking, selfish, perhaps even nationalist stance. And this would push us even further away from notions of enlightened global governance.

This risk is real. Over the past few weeks, the UN Security Council failed to agree on a joint position on the conflict in Georgia, on another round of sanctions for Iran, or on condemning Zimbabwe. The OSCE is going through rough times. Given their more limited and likeminded membership, NATO and the EU are perhaps not quite as vulnerable to disagreement as the United Nations, yet this is hardly a consolation. After all, NATO and the EU draw much of their legitimacy for action from the UN. If the UN system is strained, because key players follow different rules, it will have a negative effect on all other institutions.

What is my conclusion from all of this? Three brief points:

First, I believe that it is even more important to push for closer, pragmatic cooperation among our key institutions. NATO and the UN signed a joint declaration. I hope it will set the scene for further progress – for example, in building closer relations between NATO and the African Union, the Arab League, and key NGOs.

Second, we must realize that many rules and institutions were created well before today’s new heavyweights made their entry on the international scene. Some of them challenge the rules precisely for that reason. We must engage them constructively – and make them stakeholders in a common endeavour. As far as “my” institution – NATO – is concerned, I believe that our partnership policy still holds considerable potential

Third and finally, in light of the many problems this world is facing, I believe that the true yardstick of power will be the power to co-opt. How to rally others, notably the rising powers, behind a common agenda, will be the crucial question in the years to come. With shrinking financial and military resources, and rising domestic demands, nations can only pursue a sensible, outward-looking agenda if they act in concert and share the burdens. Clearly, this common agenda can no longer be a purely Western agenda. Still, one would hope that certain unique achievements of the West could serve as an inspiration for the wider world: the sense of being part of a broader community, and the importance of institutions for turning common views into common action.