

12 March/mars 1999**COMMUNIQUE
PR (1999) 035****WELCOMING STATEMENT BY THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL
TO THE THREE ALLIES**

Today a new chapter opens in the history of the Atlantic Alliance and of Europe. The North Atlantic Council warmly welcomes three new Allies - the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary - who today will formally accede to the Washington Treaty. Next week, on Tuesday 16 March we will receive the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary here in Brussels. Their flags will be raised alongside those of the other 16 member countries at a ceremony of welcome. They will then take their seats at the table of the North Atlantic Council as full and equal Allies.

The Alliance will continue to welcome new members in a position to further the principles of the Treaty and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO's door will remain open to all those willing and able to contribute to our common vision of a lasting order of peace based on human rights, freedom and democracy.

The process of opening the Alliance to new countries is part of the Alliance's policy to improve the security and stability environment for nations in the Euro-Atlantic area. The contours of a new security order in Europe become clearly discernible. It is based on integration and cooperation, not confrontation. It raises the security of all and it excludes nobody. The countries of Europe are moving closer together to finally overcome the division of Europe.

We, the members of the North Atlantic Council, look forward to work with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in our common quest to make the 21st Century a time of peace and progress for all our peoples.