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Speech of the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga At the NATO Summit in Prague During the Meeting of NAC and the seven invited states, November 22, 2002

Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Heads of State and Government,

On behalf of the Republic of Latvia and its people I thank all the Heads of state and government of the NATO member countries for courage to take the decision that they announced today. For us in Latvia it comes as a sign of international justice. It will put an end for once and for all to the last wastages of the Second World War, to the last sequels of what started with the Molotov-Ribentrop pact in 1939, to the consequences of the decisions taken in Teheran and Yalta.

Latvia had lost its independence for a very long time, and it knows the meaning both of liberty and a loss of it. Latvia knows the meaning of security and a loss of it. And this is why being invited in an Alliance that will ensure our security is a momentous moment that will be written large in a history of our nation.

We would like to congratulate you on a wisdom of your decision. You have taken a plunge, and you have put your faith in us, you have been guiding us and helping us along the path of reform that we have been undertaken. All of you sitting around this table in one way or another have pushed us, have encouraged us, and you have stood by our side as we have tried to recover from half a century of totalitarian rule, from half a century of oppression. We come from a very long way and we would like to thank you for having been at our side, for having been ready to shoulder us and to encourage us in all the difficult steps that we have been taking so far and in all the difficult steps that still are ahead of us. Because, of course, the road is off but half done and we still have a process of ratification ahead of us. We thank you for your trust and we would like to ensure you that it has been well placed. We are committed to the same ideals that you are. We would like to enjoy the same liberties and freedoms that you have enjoyed for so long and that we have so recently recovered. We are ready to work as hard as we ever had to attain the same standards, the same levels, and to make our full contribution. And I think that this NATO summit can be summarized in one word - Hope. Hope for a better future both for those nations - all seven of us - who have received this historical invitation today but Hope also for those nations for whom the door has not been closed, as it was not for us, for those who have still stand ready, and I think, will be encouraged by our progress, to continue their striving and their efforts, because they see that can led to the result that we all hope for.

We in Latvia would like to build our future on the rock of political certainty, not on the shifting sands of indecision. We do not want to be in some sort of gray zone of political uncertainty, we would like to enjoy the full sunshine of liberties and rights that NATO has been defending so long. We do not want to be left out in an outer darkness, and we would not wish it happen to any other nation who has expressed the desire to join those nations that hold the same values, that follow the same ideals, and that are ready for the same efforts and the same strivings. Our people have been tested in the fires of history, they have

been tempered by suffering and injustice. They know the meaning and the value of liberty. They know that it is worth every effort to support it, to maintain it, to stand for it and to fight for it. We make a solemn pledge and a commitment here today on this historical and solemn occasion that we will strive to our utmost to do our part to contribute not just to strength of the Alliance but to do what ever needs to be done to create a world where justice and liberty are available to all.