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Speech of the President of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga at the EAPC summit, Prague Congress Centre, 22 November, 2002

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,

Latvia after the historical invitation it received yesterday is looking forward to contributing to the security and stability of Europe in the framework of the NATO Alliance. But at the same time we welcome the continuation of NATO's open door policy and its readiness to consider applications from other countries as they approach on their own in the same path that we have been following. The success, because we consider it such, of our invitation, has been achieved through very hard work, diligent effort and close collaboration between the aspirant countries.

This collaboration is something that has prepared us for integration within NATO structures, but it also prepared us for extending our fair view beyond the confines of the alliance. As an aspirant country Latvia has already been privileged to offer consultations on the variety of issues touching social, political and economic reforms in such countries as Croatia, Macedonia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and we are very happy to continue in that wave since the path we have followed has been one of accelerated reforms, where we have been trying to catch up to the rest of Europe in a very brief time. The political commitment has been there from our part, the effort has been strenuous and we have acquired certain expertise in effecting reforms quickly, which as it were we are ready now to export to all and somebody who would be willing to collaborate on this with us.

We are, of course, committed to making our contribution to the international fight against the new threats that the world faces that do not know any borders that are of the international kind. I am speaking, of course, of international terrorism and proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction. These are dangers that touch all equally no matter what part of the globe we happen to live in. These are dangers that we have to tackle, and do so jointly. We stand ready to collaborate with all the members of the Euroatlantic Partnership Council. We consider it an excellent initiative, one, which has to make a contribution in extending the area of peace and stability in the world.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.