JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Good morning, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and our audience on the worldwide web. My name is Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you today to the first speech by the twelfth Secretary-General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

We are honoured to host this important event and if I may, Mr. Secretary-General, I would like to say that it is also apt that you chose Carnegie, for our two organisations share a common mission: maintaining and promoting international peace.

NATO has done that for 60 years since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, Carnegie has attempted to do it since its founding by Scots-American Andrew Carnegie, 99 years ago. Throughout its history, the Endowment has done, has employed different methods and approaches for pursuing this aim. It had at various times offices in Paris and in Geneva, working on international conciliation in Europe, on financing reconstruction and on the work of organisations, including founding the Academy of International Law at The Hague.
In 2007, Carnegie returned to Europe launching its European foreign policy forum, Carnegie Europe, here in Brussels. And since then, Carnegie scholars have engaged with European policy makers and experts across capitals as well as here at the heart of multilateral Europe.

The new Secretary-General has shown how he intends to proceed by choosing a controversial and deeply important topic, rather than the usual ‘tour de raison’ for his first speech. Many of you will have read his interviews this week in which he talked of his “vision” of “a true strategic partnership” with Moscow.

Relations with Moscow have been at the heart of our work as well for 15 years, we launched the Carnegie Moscow Centre in the early 1990’s and since then its outstanding Russian scholars, including its great director Dmitry Trenin who’s with us today, have become known around the world.

The success of the Moscow Centre in its collaboration between Moscow and Washington became the inspiration and the model for fundamental redefinition of Carnegie’s role and mission to become the first truly multilateral and ultimately, we hope, global think tank.

The idea of this new vision is that in today’s world, an institution whose mission is to contribute to global peace and prosperity requires a permanent international presence and a multinational outlook at the heart of its operations.

This is, I think, not a staggering insight here in Europe, but it is an important first step and a new one I think in the United States.

In his inaugural press conference NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN lost no time in announcing the beginning of his own new vision— a new Strategic Concept for NATO to be agreed at the summit in Lisbon. Looking back at his career, marked by achievement after achievement, both in Danish politics and in European leadership, it’s hard to think of anyone better suited to that important ambition.

Secretary-General, many of us applauded when, within days of taking office, you named relations with Moscow, with Russia as one of your top three priorities. It is wrong and disappointing that as we approach the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, relations with Russia can sometimes be as nearly as contentious as they were during the Cold War, that the supply of energy or relations with Georgia and Ukraine can sometimes bring relations almost to the breaking point. We at Carnegie are doing our best to help rebuild and re-think Russian-Western relations and we will soon announce a major U.S.-Europe-Russian initiative to help define the shape of the new three-way security and economic compact.

Getting NATO’s relations with Russia and its neighbours right would unlock cooperation on a whole range of crucial issues, within the realm of NATO’s concerns and well beyond it.

So, Mr. Secretary-General, we honour you for having chosen to challenge us all with the topic of this first important address and we look forward to hearing your views. Greatly honoured.
NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:

Mrs. Mathews, Mr. Pothier, Mr. Trenin, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your warm words of welcome.

This is my first major public speech as the new Secretary-General of NATO. I have chosen to make this a speech about the NATO-Russia relationship – and I’m very happy that we could get the Carnegie Endowment, a think tank with considerable expertise on Russia, to host today’s event.

Why did I choose to focus my first speech on Russia? The answer is quite simple. I believe that of all of NATO’s relationships with Partner countries, none holds greater potential than the NATO-Russia relationship. Yet I also believe that none is so much burdened by misperceptions, mistrust and diverging political agendas.

We spend too much energy on what divides us. We should instead focus on what unites us.

Let me make it clear right from the outset: I am not a dreamer. There are some fundamental issues on which NATO and Russia disagree, and they will not disappear overnight. However, I do believe that it is possible for NATO and Russia to make a new beginning – and to enjoy a far more productive relationship in the future.

I therefore want to use this opportunity today to make three specific proposals to help us move in that direction.

First, I believe that NATO and Russia should immediately look to reinforce our practical cooperation in all the areas where we agree we face the same risks and threats to our security -- and there are many of those areas.

Second, in order to build confidence and trust, I would like to rejuvenate the NATO-Russia Council, so that we can use it as a forum for open and unbiased dialogue on all issues related to peace and stability in Europe.

And third, I would like to see NATO and Russia agree to carry out a joint review of the new 21st century security challenges, to serve as a firm basis for our future cooperation.

As you can see, these proposals are linked. But before I flesh out my ideas, let me stress that there is one precondition for all this to work, and that is for us all to display greater realism. Because let’s be honest; when the Cold War ended twenty years ago, NATO and Russia developed rather unrealistic expectations about each other – and those flawed expectations are still very much alive today and continue to burden our relationship.

Put simply, Russia expected NATO to be dissolved when the Warsaw Pact collapsed. Because it didn't, many in Russia can only find one explanation – that the Alliance still sees Russia as a threat. And every thing we do is seen through that prism: enlargement, missile defence, even our partnerships.
For many in the West, the end of the Cold War seemed to herald a new age, when Russia would see things our way, cooperate with us across the board, and support the membership in NATO of former Warsaw Pact countries.

That was – in retrospect – a little unrealistic. Russia is a great European power, with her own point of view and her own interests. Often, those don’t coincide with ours. And when that happens, there is a sense of disappointment and incomprehension among many in the West.

Well, it’s no wonder that the NATO-Russia relationship has remained a difficult one. Yes, we found great language for our partnership aims in the NATO-Russia Founding Act and in the Rome Declaration – but we have not been able to translate them into reality. Yes, we cooperated on a number of issues – but this cooperation was always kept hostage to the overall political climate. One major disagreement and it would falter. And last year, following the war with Georgia, when Russia unilaterally recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we reached that very point. Our relationship went into a freeze – because the foundations of this relationship were not strong enough.

A time-out may have been useful to rethink our relationship. But the international security environment does not wait for NATO and Russia to sort out their act. Quite simply, NATO-Russia cooperation is not a matter of choice – it is a matter of necessity.

But if the relationship is to be successful, then we must not continue to harbour false hopes. I firmly believe that now is the time for us all to be much more realistic. Russia must realise that NATO is here to stay, - not because we think Russia is an enemy. We do not. But because Allies share common values, and a culture of cooperation and we want to preserve it. And there should be no doubt, anywhere, that this Alliance will continue to make the security of all its members our number one priority.

And why not? I do not believe that the enlargement of NATO and the European Union has created any security problems for Russia. On the contrary: A more stable and prosperous Europe is indeed contributing to the security of Russia.

We also need to be realistic in recognising that NATO will continue its open door policy -- not because of any intention to “encircle” or marginalise Russia, but because respect for territorial integrity and the right of each sovereign state to freely decide its security policy and alignments are fundamental if Russia is to be, if Europe is to be, truly “whole and free”.

Finally, we also have to be more realistic in recognising that Russia has security interests which we need to understand and take into account. Many things that NATO Allies may regard as entirely benign can sometimes look very different when seen from Moscow – and vice versa.

I make these points, not in order to engage in some kind of blame game, but to highlight the difficulties of the concrete task before us: Making a new beginning in NATO-Russia relations.
Our ultimate goal must be a relationship that allows us to pursue common interests even when we disagree in other areas. So, let me now flesh out my three proposals and explain how they will help us to reach that goal.

My first proposal concerns the short term. I would like NATO and Russia to strengthen our practical cooperation in the many areas where we have a clear common interest.

Key among these areas is the fight against terrorism. The days when terrorism was a purely local phenomenon have long passed. Terrorism has mutated into a global, trans-border franchise. Terrorists move from theatre to theatre – from Iraq to Afghanistan, from the Middle East to the Caucasus. And several NATO nations as well as Russia have repeatedly suffered the horrors of terrorist attacks.

Much has already been done in this area. We agreed a Joint Action Plan on Terrorism. We have been looking at threats posed by Al Qaeda. We have examined the threat to civilian aircraft and to critical infrastructure. We also analysed the terrorist threats to our troops when we were jointly engaged in bringing stability to the Western Balkans. But in order for all this work to bring lasting benefits to all our nations, we need to give it another political push. Let us agree, for example, to update our Joint Action Plan on Terrorism.

Another shared interest is preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery. Many international experts believe that we are at a nuclear tipping point. If North Korea stays nuclear, and if Iran becomes nuclear, some of their neighbours might feel compelled to follow their example.

Such a multi-nuclear world is not in NATO’s interest – and it is definitely not in Russia’s interest either. And so I believe we need to take a much more thorough look at the available options: at arms control as well as non-proliferation efforts, and at means to protect ourselves against Weapons of Mass Destruction. And here as well, we can build on work that we have already initiated in the recent past, such as our joint assessment of proliferation trends, risks and challenges.

And this brings me to another area where Russia and NATO can and should work together, which is missile defence. Yesterday, the United States announced its plans with regards to a missile defence which can include and can protect all our allies. These plans will involve an even greater role for NATO with regard to missile defence in Europe – and I welcome that as a positive step.

In my view, the proliferation of ballistic missile technology is of concern not just to NATO nations, but to Russia too. Our nations, and our forces deployed in theatre, will all become increasingly vulnerable to missile attacks by third parties.

Studying ways to counter this threat is in NATO’s and Russia’s fundamental strategic interest. We should explore the potential for linking the US, NATO and Russia missile defence systems at an appropriate time. And I believe that the work that we have already done on Theatre Missile Defence under the aegis of the NATO-Russia Council, including joint exercises, clearly demonstrates the potential for cooperation in this area.
Both NATO and Russia have a wealth of experience in missile defence. We should now work to combine this experience to our mutual benefit.

Afghanistan is another area where we can and should do much more together, and where we already have a pretty solid foundation of cooperation to build upon. We have long agreed that countering terrorism and assisting the Afghan government in building a stable and secure country is in NATO and Russia’s common interest. Indeed, Russia has offered land transit – to ISAF contributors and to NATO Allies bilaterally -- to facilitate our operation in Afghanistan, and this is most welcome.

NATO and Russia have also achieved a great deal together in our joint work on counter-narcotics training. We have advanced the professional skills of almost 1000 counter-narcotics officers from Afghanistan and Central Asia. This is a good start, and it should give us the confidence to go much further -- by examining, for example, how drugs money and organized crime in general are fuelling international terrorism.

So, we have firm base of cooperation in relation to Afghanistan on which to build. We should now look more closely into what else we can do together, and how we could possibly further Russian engagement. It is my firm belief that there is a lot more that we can and should do together to help Afghanistan to get on its own feet.

Finally, maritime security. This is another area where I am sure that progress is possible in the short term, as both NATO nations and Russia face the common challenges of piracy and terrorism at sea.

Again, we have an excellent basis on which to build. On a national basis, Russia has deployed ships to the Gulf of Aden to protect its shipping, and it cooperates at the tactical level with all other actors in that area, including several NATO member countries. NATO and Russia have already cooperated successfully in Operation Active Endeavour, the Alliance-led maritime anti-terrorist patrols in the Mediterranean and NATO has invited Russia to renew her participation in this particular operation, and I do hope Russia will accept.

So, as you can see, there is considerable scope for NATO and Russia to do more together – and this will, I am sure, help us to re-build confidence and trust.

But we need more than just enhanced practical cooperation to address some of the more serious disagreements between NATO and Russia. Hence my second proposal, which is to re-vitalise the NATO-Russia Council as a forum for serious dialogue.

I firmly believe that we should use the NATO-Russia Council again in the way it was originally intended -- not as a fair-weather forum, but as a forum where we can all air our differences openly and transparently, and where all our security concerns are discussed – including Russia’s.

Take for example President Medvedev’s ideas on a new European security arrangement. I am aware that the OSCE is the primary forum for such a discussion, and I am also aware
that President Medvedev’s ideas have not yet turned into concrete proposals. But to the
degree that these ideas demonstrate Russian concerns about being marginalised in European
security, I believe that a NATO-Russia dialogue could provide real added value. We must all
aim for a Euro-Atlantic security architecture in which Russia sees herself reflected.

As many of you are aware, NATO has just started the process of drafting a new Strategic
Concept. I plan to make this the most open, the most inclusive process in the history of
NATO – or any other organisation. A process in which we will thoroughly engage the
strategic community, and use new media in ways we have never done before. It goes without
saying that this open process offers an excellent opportunity for the Russian strategic
community to make its voice heard.

And now to my third proposal. When I look at the recent “Russian Security Strategy Until
2020,” I realise that Russia, very much like NATO, is grappling with the new and rapidly
evolving security environment. This environment confronts us with challenges that have
little in common with those of the past. But I also firmly believe that it offers an ideal
opportunity for enhanced cooperation between NATO and Russia. We should use the
NATO-Russia Council to identify those areas where our interests converge and where
further cooperation would be beneficial.

This is why I propose that we undertake a joint review of NATO’s and Russia’s common
threats and challenges. We need an agreed analytical basis, which we can then use to further
enhance our practical cooperation.

We don’t have to start from scratch. NATO and Russia have already conducted several joint
assessments on specific threats and we have agreed on an Action Plan on Terrorism. What
we need to do now, in essence, is to broaden this work.

The agreement to conduct such a review would provide the NATO-Russia Council with an
unprecedented high-level political profile. And it would also be an unambiguous signal of
our intention to work more closely together and to put our past differences behind us – it
would represent a genuine new beginning for the NATO-Russia relationship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am perfectly aware that the proposal, the proposals, I have just laid out are ambitious. The
historical baggage of the relationships between NATO and Russia, and between the West
and Russia, cannot simply be ignored. And not all our disagreements are simply based on
misunderstandings; some of them are of a fundamental nature and, hence, will not disappear
quickly.

I am also keenly aware that NATO-Russia relations can quickly become hostage to domestic
politics – in Russia as well as in Allied nations. After all, the state of NATO-Russia relations
is very much a reflection of the state of bilateral relations between individual Allies and
Russia.
So my proposals will require realism, but also considerable political will – not just to launch them, but particularly to prevent them from getting derailed by possible disagreements in other areas.

Carnegie’s Dimitri Trenin once described Russia as being merely the planet Pluto in the “Western solar system”. In other words, while it is formally part of the system, it is located out on the fringes where it is lonely, cold and frustrated. This situation is neither in Russia’s own interest nor in NATO’s interest.

NATO wants Russia to be a real stakeholder in European and international security. We need Russia as a partner in resolving the great issues of our time. And although many in Russia may still hesitate to agree, I predict that Russia – sooner rather than later – will also come to realise that a more cooperative relationship with NATO is very much in her own self-interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this new relationship will require a lot of hard work. But if we manage to get away from the reflex of assuming the worst about each other, and focus instead on our common interests, then we can make a genuine new beginning in our relationship – in our own interest and that of the entire international community.

Thank you very much.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: We have time now for questions both from the room and from the worldwide web and there are microphones on each aisle.

There’s a gentleman right there, please, if you will.

RICARDO MARTINEZ DE RITUERTO: Martinez de Rituerto with El País, Spain. Secretary-General you have made a very compelling speech, ecumenic speech, but you have also underlined that the relationship between Russia is...hostage, let’s put it that way, of the bilateral relationship different allies and NATO, and Russia sorry. Have you ever consulted the content of your speech with the allies and in particular with the number one ally the United States, with President Obama so that we are all more or less in tune and these not only your ideas but the ideas of the, of the college of the Alliance? Thank you.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Obviously, I take responsibility for my own speeches, but as a long-experienced politician, I always consult before I make major speeches and I have raised these issues with allies on several occasions and I’m confident that I am within the framework of what is an allied consensus.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Yes...please...

EBERHARD RHEIN: Eberhard Rhein, European Policy Centre, Brussels. Mr. Secretary-General, three points. One, what would you like Russia to do to get Iran under control and renounce its alleged intension to get nuclear armament. Second point, you did not mention
as part of your short term priorities, disarmament, resumption of disarmament, the bilateral
disarmament talks that have been stalled and third point, would, what would you suggest
with your old hat as former, at certain time former President of the European Union,
rotating Union? What would you like the European Union to do in parallel to strengthen the
cooperation because you mention of course the NATO perspective but there’s also an
important EU perspective and I think both should go hand in hand and reinforce each
other.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Thank you very much. First about
Iran – what I would expect is that Russia will join us in putting a maximum of political and
diplomatic pressure on Iran to stop Iran’s nuclear aspirations; I think it’s also in the interest
of Russia.

Second, well I didn’t want to talk that much about disarmament talks, because this is very
much also a bilateral question between Russia and in part the United States not that I
underestimate the importance of that, but this is the reason why I didn’t focus on it in my
speech.

And finally, about the European Union, I do hope that it will be possible to conclude a new
cooperation agreement between the European Union and Russia we, the European Union
has, for quite some time, negotiated this with Russia, I hope to see real progress so that we
can ensure parallel tracks.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Yes, please...may we have...here we go...

BROOKS TIGNER: Thank you. Is this on?

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Yes.

BROOKS TIGNER: Yes, Brooks Tigner, Jane’s Defence Weekly. Secretary-General, you
mentioned that the two sides should explore how to link possibly their missile defence
systems, right now that cooperation really is only in the form of desk top, table computer
generated exercises and ...some exchanges of tracking data such as...it’s a fairly technical
question and I’m not asking you to address that, but, how beyond that should the two do
you think, should the two connect their systems, what do you, what do you have in mind
there? Thank you.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: You’re quite right, it is somewhat
technical and I’m not a technical expert, I’m a politician, so I don’t think I’m capable to
answer your question in detail. What I have done today is announce our preparedness to
integrate the systems or at least ensure cooperation at an appropriate time. So that’s the
political part of it, I will leave the technical part of it to the technical experts.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Secretary-General we have a question, this from Moscow from
an expert at the Eurasia Heritage Foundation who asks, he’s watching on the web, do you
think that cooperation between the CSTO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and
NATO is possible? Can they cooperate in Afghanistan? And can NATO acknowledge CSTO as a useful partner or even an ally against terrorism?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: I would like to make three points. Firstly, we have good relations with individual members of CSTO. Secondly, we have invited rotating presidencies of CSTO to deliver briefings within the NATO-Russia Council and also within the EAPC Council. So we already have these kinds of contacts. However, I also have to say that at this stage, there is no consensus within NATO as regards to formal relations between NATO and CSTO.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Thank you. Back to the room, the gentleman far in the back...

ALAR OLLJUM: Secretary-General thank you very much for your presentation today, I think it really is a courageous and ambitious plan. I would like to ask you about the...if you’ve read the German Marshall Fund’s recent survey on transatlantic opinions and what seemed to me to be a rather troubling tendency for Central and Eastern European members of the Alliance to have less faith in the Alliance ...and some of the interpretations of that have been as regards to what happened last summer, in the summer of 2008 on Georgia and the impression amongst some member states of NATO that the NATO guarantee for its security is perhaps weakened...maybe this has been also amplified by the recent decision...to...not go ahead with ballistic missile defence in Poland and the Czech Republic. When you’re now trying to re-engage with Russia, what would you have to say to your new member states of NATO with regard to their anxieties that I think are reflected in that poll? Thank you.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: I would like to make two things clear. Firstly, it is a misinterpretation of yesterday’s decision if it is considered an abolition of missile defence in Europe. It’s not. On the contrary, the new plans will make capabilities ready sooner than the previous plans and will provide us with broader coverage. And as I said in my speech, these plans will make it possible to include all allies and protect all allies. So, there’s no reason to fear that these plans will weaken the defence of any ally, on the contrary. That’s my first point.

My second point is that an improved relationship between NATO and Russia will also be to the benefit of our Eastern allies. It is beneficial for all of us to reduce tensions in Europe. And let me conclude by saying that nobody should doubt the commitment to Article 5 and territorial defence in the NATO treaty.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Other questions in the room? Serge. Right here in the front row ok? And then we’ll go behind...

SERGE SCHMEMANN: Thank you. I’m Serge Schmemann from the International Herald Tribune. Two of the major sources of friction between NATO and Russia were the proposed membership for Ukraine and Georgia and Russia’s occupation of South...Russia’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. You didn’t really delve into those, do you still believe that Ukraine and Georgia should eventually become members of NATO? And are you still prepared to proceed with an improvement in relations with Russia, despite the
continued recognition and despite the fact that the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has not been resolved?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: First of all let me re-iterate that I do realise that we have real disagreements between NATO and Russia. No reason to hide that. However, I think we should focus on what unites us instead of what divides us. That’s my first point. Secondly, I will remind you that we have taken a very clear decision at the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008 according to which Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO implicitly understood of course that they fulfill the necessary criteria. We all know that they do not do this at this stage. So, NATO foreign ministers have decided a framework within which we have initiated a practical cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine aiming at reforming their military. So this is the current state of play and it is of course premature to make any predictions of future development but I would stress on this occasion that of course we stick to the decisions taken at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. But this is exactly the reason why it is so important to embark on an unbiased and very open dialogue with Russia on this, it is really my ambition to convince Russia that the Open Door Policy is not directed against Russia and we have to provide an atmosphere and a security environment in Europe within which the Open Door Policy can continue while at the same time Russia feels assured that this is not directed against Russia. That’s the challenge. It’s difficult, but if life was easy, there would be no need for politicians.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: There are two gentlemen here, let me take one with the hand up right now, and then next...and then I’ll go back there...either one can...

KAI NIKLASCH: It’s the same question.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Ok.

KAI NIKLASCH: So, I’m Kai Niklasch from German television and I would like to know, Mr. Secretary-General, you said Russia and NATO should work together in missile defence. Can you elaborate on this a little bit? How can I imagine this new working together? Is it just an adding up of all the systems (inaudible) theater missile defence or is it something you have in mind that is like a revolution?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Again I’m not, I’ve no intention to go into the technical details about this. What I have done is to give a very clear political signal that once the technical conditions are fulfilled and once the political environment allows it, I think it would be profitable to ensure integration or at least cooperation to ensure that individual allies and partners can plug into a common system. This is actually what we intend to do within the Alliance and then I foresee that in the future once the necessary conditions have been fulfilled, we could also envision Russia plugging into such a system. So, unfortunately I’m not able to go into more details right now I think here and now the most important thing is to give the political signal.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: There’s a question at the back...yes...sitting right behind you...
STEFFEN WEBER: Mr. Secretary-General thank you for outlining your ambitious plans here. My name's Steffen Weber I'm working in the European Parliament, Foreign Affairs Committee and especially on EU-Russia relations and I wanted to draw your attention on our backyard again of the NATO on a region that is a bit neglected it's the Arctic region...we...we see an ever growing activities up there not only in the sector of the exploration of energies or in the transport sector but also military activities. We have continuation of violation of Icelandic airspace for example...and...my question is will this region be as discussed be in the focus of the new strategy? And if so, why, how do you think could Russia, Europe, NATO cooperate in this field of major importance to both of the partners? Thanks.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: This is a very, also a very interesting question, and I can confirm that it will be one of the key issues to discuss when we elaborate a new Strategic Concept. It's obvious that climate change will have a significant impact on our security environment, I'll not go into details, but it's much broader than just the Arctic region, the Arctic region is obvious, but also, in a broader sense, this will be one of our major challenges in the years to come, to deal with the consequences of climate change. It's not been right in the focus yet but I think it will and speaking about the Arctic region, it is obvious that climate will imply, that new sea-routes will open, that we will see accessibility to resources that we have not yet been able to exploit and all this will create more competition in the Arctic region and we know from experience that stronger competition might also lead to tensions including the risk of armed conflict. So, I think that we have to take this into consideration in due time and this is the reason why I intend to put this very high on the agenda when we discuss our new Strategic Concept and I see a broad scope for cooperation between NATO and Russia in the Arctic region not only seen from a military point of view but there's also environmental issues. So it’s really really a broad agenda and we have to address it.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: We have a question here.

PETER LENNON. Listening to your presentation, not least your emphasis on concentrating on what unites us rather than what divides us, it reinforced my conviction that NATO should be rebranded, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is the past, and we should create a GTO, a Global Treaty Organisation, and invite Russia, China, India and some other countries perhaps to join us.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Well, in that case, we need a new treaty, you’re quite right, because the current treaty states, in Article 10, that the Alliance may invite any European country, which is in a position to further the principles of the treaty, to accede to NATO. So, the current treaty does not allow what you might call a global NATO or a ‘Global Treaty Organisation.’

Next, I'm not sure that it would be the right way forward. I think such a global organisation would water down the core task of the current North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which is territorial defence and deterrence. It has, during 60 years, been the core task of the organisation and it will in my opinion also be the core task in the future.
However, we have to realise that in today’s world, territorial defence very often starts out of area, so in that respect, you’re right that we have to embark on a more global approach, but I see no contradiction between territorial defence and deterrence and occasionally out-of-area operations. So, I think the current framework will be sufficient for a foreseeable future.

Having said that, I agree that we need partnerships, we need expanded and broader partnerships than today and that’s also one of my focal points, to further develop partnerships between NATO and not only Russia, that’s been today’s theme, but I also announced as one of my priorities to develop further our partnerships within the Mediterranean dialogue and the Istanbul cooperation initiative, that is a number of countries with Muslim background, I could also point to countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, like-minded countries so in that respect I also agree with you that we need a broader, more global perspective, but I still think that the core should be the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: We have a question from the web from Dr. Abdul Quddus, in Brussels, who asks whether you think, Secretary-General, that NATO and Russia can jointly work together to enhance peace in the Balkans?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Yes, indeed, and actually we do. Let me remind you that we joined efforts to bring peace and stability to the Balkans and actually I do think that our experience in the Balkans is a success story. I’ve visited the region recently and I’m pleased to see that conditions now seem to be fulfilled, that we can gradually reduce military presence in Kosovo, of course we will carefully examine the situation before taking new steps but I think we can now see a clear profile in the direction of a reduced military presence in the region and in exchange the European Union, has already deployed EULEX, a civil-mission, so we have seen, I think, and excellent example of how we can work together, NATO, Russia, the European Union, to bring peace and stability to the Balkans.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Yes, please, right here.

THOMAS SAUER, UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP: On NATO’s nuclear weapons policy. The threat of nuclear proliferation, you mentioned that. Given the link between nuclear proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as more and more experts admit, like Henry Kissinger and George Schulz, and the commitment made by President Obama to nuclear elimination and drastic steps towards nuclear disarmament, how is NATO going to further delegitimise nuclear weapons in the new strategic concept?

Will NATO, for instance, still argue that nuclear deterrence is a key necessity for defending our vital interests and would it not be a good idea for NATO to withdraw the nuclear weapons, the American nuclear weapons, from the non-nuclear weapons states like this country; I think it would also be a good confidence-building measure towards Russia.

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: It’s a very interesting question. First of all, let me say, as a politician, that I think we all have the vision and the ambition to live in
a peaceful world without weapons, without armed conflicts and of course also without nuclear weapons. That would be a wonderful, ideal world. Let’s agree on that.

Second, as I said in my speech: I’m not a dreamer. I don’t think, I don’t think, we can make 100% sure that the world will become 100% free of nuclear weapons. If so, I still think it would be worthwhile, just in case, to consider having something to protect yourself. This issue will be a subject for discussion during the process of elaboration of our new strategic concept and it would be premature if I, at this stage, made any statement, as regards the exact wording about this in the new strategic concept. It will really be a matter of discussion among allies. But I think we should take into consideration that we live in the real world, but having said that I would once again reiterate my vision of the ideal peaceful world without weapons at all. Let that be our point of departure and from that we can embark on what I call real life. So that, that’s a real political answer.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: We have a question in the back.

ANNA MOY, AGENCE PRESSE-TV: Secretary-General, a couple of brief questions, the first one on missile defence. One of the reactions coming from Moscow yesterday was that the sudden reversal of U.S. policy on the issue is a correction of an error; it’s not a concession. What is your reaction to this type of attitude? The second question is do you have any indication at all from Moscow that they will cooperate on Iran?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: First of all, no, I don’t have any indications from the Russian side as regards their Iran policy and as regards your first question, I’m not sure that I understood it correctly, so maybe if you could repeat?

ANNA MOY, AGENCE PRESSE-TV: One of the reactions from Moscow was that the sudden reversal on missile defence, the U-turn that’s coming from the Obama administration, is not a concession, it’s a correction of an error. Do you consider that to be a mistake or a concession?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: Well, I’m not going to discuss such wording. The reality is what I said earlier. The United States has now launched new plans as regards the development of a missile defence system. It would be a misunderstanding to interpret that as if there would be no missile defence system in Europe. It’s not an abolition of a missile defence system, it’s a development of a missile defence system, which can include all allies, can protect all allies, it’s a flexible system, which can enter into force sooner than the previous plans. That’s the facts on the ground.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: There was one question, right here, and then we’ll take the last two questions.

PASCAL LAFOND: Thank you. Lafond, from the Energy Charter. Secretary-General, in relation to your point number three, would you see a role for NATO in energy security and in particular, bearing in mind the fact that any Russia-EU dialogue would leave out important countries like Turkey, for instance, which is an ally, and the Ukraine, out of the EU-Russia dialogue. That’s my first question.
My second question, and I apologise in advance for the audacity, but would you see it feasible, not perhaps as the Secretary-General, but as a politician, that my grand children live in a world where Russia is a NATO ally?

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL RASMUSSEN: First about energy security. Energy security is really a subject of great importance to our overall security, in that respect, is also an item on our agenda when we are going to discuss our new strategic concept, definitely. And I would not exclude that there are aspects of energy security which also belong to the core tasks of NATO such as defence of critical energy infrastructure.

However, in the more broad sense of the word energy security, I don’t think it is a primary task for NATO to deal with it – because in the more broad sense, it’s much more about a reduction in individual countries’ dependency on imported fossil fuels, it’s much more about broadening their energy sources and here, I think, we could develop a cooperation between NATO and the European Union, because a lot of energy security aspects are more efficiently dealt with within the European Union than within NATO.

As regards a possible future Russian membership of NATO, I think I should reiterate the wording of Article 10 in the NATO treaty, according to which, the Alliance, or the allies, may invite any EU country, which is an a position to further the principles of the treaty, to accede to the Alliance. Russia is a European country, I think, so in that respect, it might be a possible, provided that Russia fulfills the necessary criteria.

Quite another question is whether Russia will apply. So maybe it’s a bit premature to make any predictions so I think a more realistic approach here and now would be to develop a strategic partnership between NATO and Russia.

JESSICA T. MATHEWS: Secretary-General, you’ve shown us today how you intend to proceed with fresh thinking and with candour and with clear speaking and I think it is clear that your leadership signals not just a new beginning for NATO-Russia relations but for NATO itself, one that all friends of the Alliance and all friends of international peace would welcome and we thank you for your really interesting address and for your leadership.

I hope that you will join me in thanking the Secretary-General. Before you do let me remind you that there is a reception next door and I hope everyone will join us there and thank you again.