

### **NATO calls for close partnership with Russia on missile defence (3 May 2012)**

NATO's Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, called for close cooperation between NATO and Russia on missile defence to help bolster security against future common threats at a Moscow conference on 3 May 2012. Ambassador Vershbow said in a speech delivered to the Moscow Missile Defence Conference that NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defence could transform bilateral ties into a true strategic partnership. The 3-4 May conference was organised by Russia's Ministry of Defence. *"NATO's objective is to find a way forward that includes strong cooperation with Russia on missile defence,"* Ambassador Vershbow said. *"We want NATO and Russia to be full partners in missile defence. Cooperation between our respective missile defence systems would strengthen strategic stability and build confidence that we are pursuing common objectives."* The Deputy Secretary General said that Russia had nothing to fear from NATO plans to build a missile defence system. *"Our NATO system is neither designed against, nor directed at Russia,"* he said. Ambassador Vershbow stressed that the NATO system would be capable of intercepting only a small number of relatively unsophisticated ballistic missiles. He said that NATO's system is designed to protect Allied nations from ballistic missile attacks from outside the Euro-Atlantic area and not from Russia. Ambassador Vershbow added Russia faced the same potential threats as NATO nations from the proliferation of ballistic missile technology and weapons of mass destruction. He also addressed criticism that NATO is ignoring Russia's views when it comes to the development of its missile defence system adding that NATO has constantly worked to brief Russia on its plans and made proposals for concrete cooperation. *"Our cooperation makes sense practically, militarily and politically. And if we work together it would show – once and for all – that we can build security with each other, rather than against each other,"* he added. The Deputy Secretary General said that the political basis for closer cooperation was already in place, pointing to a solid track record of cooperation on Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) as shown with the recent computer aided exercise which was held in Germany in March. The exercise included participation from Russia. *"It is now time we deepened that cooperation in the real world,"* he said. Ambassador Vershbow said NATO's aim was to make sure that NATO's and Russia's missile defence systems complement each other. *"Our vision is of two coordinated systems with one goal – two systems that would exchange information and coordinate planning to make the defence of NATO territory and of Russian territory more effective."* He noted a proposal to create two joint NATO-Russia missile defence centres. The centres would include NATO and Russian officers who would work together in tracking and assessing missile launches as well as planning for coordinated missile defence operations to intercept ballistic missiles that may be launched against us. NATO heads of state and government are expected to announce an interim missile defence capability at their Chicago NATO Summit on 20-21 May.