

**NATO's vision for missile defense cooperation with Russia,
Address by Ambassador Alexander Vershbow,
Deputy Secretary General of NATO
to the Moscow Missile Defense Conference, 3 May 2012**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great to be back in Moscow. I spent some of the most rewarding years of my professional life in this city representing the United States. I am very honoured to be here now representing NATO, and to discuss with you the great potential for NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defence. All our nations face a grave and growing missile threat. Over 30 states are working on advanced missile technology. Some already have ballistic missiles that can be fitted with conventional warheads or with weapons of mass destruction. Some of our major cities are already in range. And there is a small but growing chance that, someday, we may be faced with a hostile country threatening our citizens with ballistic missiles. NATO is a security and defence organisation. We have an iron-clad duty to defend our people. This requires planning for threats to our future security that lie just over the horizon. That is why, at our last NATO Summit in Lisbon in November 2010, we agreed to develop a capability to defend ourselves against current and emerging ballistic missile threats. Our NATO missile defence system is now coming together. Along with a substantial US contribution, several other NATO Allies have announced or are actively considering contributions of interceptors, sensors, and command and control systems. And at our next Summit in Chicago later this month, we expect that we will declare an Interim Capability that brings together elements of the NATO Command System with these national contributions. This Interim Capability will provide a limited defence against a ballistic missile threat to the Alliance. And we plan, in the years ahead, to build on this Interim Capability to achieve full coverage and protection for all NATO European populations, territory and forces against a potential future threat originating outside the Euro-Atlantic Area. At Lisbon a year and a half ago, NATO invited Russia to cooperate with us on missile defence, and Russia's President agreed on this goal. Regrettably, progress on NATO-Russia cooperation has not matched progress within NATO. We have seen a clear perception here in this country that NATO is ignoring Russia's views. The truth is that our ambition for missile defence cooperation with Russia is unique among NATO's partnerships. We must find common solutions for this common problem. NATO's objective is to find a way forward that includes strong cooperation with Russia on Missile Defence. 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. Russia has sought reassurances that NATO's missile defence system will not undermine Russia's strategic deterrent. We in NATO have taken Russia's concerns seriously, and have discussed them in detail many times in the past year. We have welcomed every opportunity to explain why our missile defence system is not, and will not be, directed against Russia. We have also been interested in hearing from Russia about its own missile defence capabilities, and its future plans. This conference should help us to better understand each other in that regard. For the benefit of our discussion, let me just summarise why NATO's missile defence is not a threat to Russia. First, geography and science do not lie. Our system is aimed at protecting NATO and Europe from ballistic missile attacks from outside the Euro-Atlantic area, not Russia. In our Joint Review of Common 21st Century Security Challenges, NATO and Russia both agreed that the threat is serious. Today, Southeastern Europe and Southern Russia are the main areas at risk. But by the end of the decade, all of Europe could be within range. And that is why NATO is planning sites in Romania and Poland, to keep pace with the proliferation of increasingly long-range missiles. These sites are simply in the wrong place if we

were trying to defend against Russian ICBMs aimed at North America. Furthermore, Russia's ICBMs are too fast and sophisticated. They would simply outpace our planned NATO interceptors. And finally, Russia's ICBM force is far too large for the NATO system to seriously undermine, even if our interceptors were concentrated in larger numbers than we currently envisage. Second, we have no desire at all to disturb global strategic stability. Quite the contrary. NATO's Missile Defence will be capable of intercepting only a small number of relatively unsophisticated ballistic missiles. Our NATO system is neither designed against, nor directed at Russia. As several leading Russian military scientists recently acknowledged in articles published in the Russian media, Russia's land-based strategic deterrent is safe, and it will remain safe. While I've listened carefully to the Russian briefings this morning insisting on the threat to Russia's deterrent, I must say that I am not convinced. The briefings are based on the false assumption that the NATO system can launch before the burnout of an attacking ballistic missile, which is simply not the case. I believe that U.S. and other Allies' technical experts will address this in more detail during today's meeting. Going forward, we need a political basis for our cooperation in this area. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. We have a solid track record of cooperating on Theatre Missile Defence. We held a very successful computer aided exercise in Germany just over a month ago. It showed that close cooperation can improve the effectiveness of NATO and Russian missile defence. It is now time we deepened that cooperation in the real world. At our Lisbon Summit in 2010, President Medvedev identified areas where NATO and Russian Missile Defence capabilities could be complementary. For our part, we are keen to find solutions in which NATO and Russian missile defence systems *bolster* one another, increasing security for both sides. 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. One proposal builds on President Medvedev's own ideas. The idea is to establish **two NATO-Russia missile defence centres** where NATO and Russian officers would work closely together around the clock. The **first centre**, the NATO-Russia MD Data Fusion Centre, would pool data from NATO and Russian sensors to form a common operational picture of possible third-country missile launches. This operational picture would be fed into the **second centre**, the NATO-Russia MD Planning and Operations Centre. There, NATO and Russian officers would develop plans for intercepting missiles that may be launched against us in a range of scenarios. The second centre would also develop concepts of operations, rules of engagement and pre-planned responses for coordinated missile defence operations that could be implemented in the event of an actual attack. Under this arrangement, NATO and Russia would carry out missile intercepts through their separate command and control systems. But there would be substantial cooperation at every stage of the intercept process, and this would greatly enhance the effectiveness of our combined missile defence capabilities. In Chicago later this month, NATO intends to announce an Interim Missile Defence Capability. And we will continue to work on a Europe-wide defence architecture that would be operational by the end of this decade. We do this because we are committed to protecting our populations, territories and deployed forces from emerging threats to our security. We know that Russia and other non-NATO countries are also committed to protecting their populations and territories. Every country in this room faces the threat of missile proliferation. And very few have the ability to counter this threat on their own. 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. And it would transform the entire NATO-Russia relationship for the better. Missile defence cooperation would be a real game-changer. It would significantly improve our shared security. And it would show the world that NATO and Russia are determined to work together to meet one of

the main threats of the 21st century. In his message to this conference, the President of the Russian Federation warned that the price of mistaken decisions in the area of missile defence could be high. I believe it would be a mistake for NATO and Russia not to cooperate on missile defence. Let's seize the opportunity to begin the process now, in 2012, when our respective systems are at an early stage of development. The benefits would be enormous for our common security interests.