



DR. ANTON GRIZOLD,  
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

# A CREDIBLE PARTNER



**During the NATO summit meeting in Prague this year, Slovenia expects to receive an invitation to become a member of the North-Atlantic alliance. So far Slovenia has always been very frank in expressing its interest in becoming a full member of NATO by meeting the democratic norms, demonstrating credibility and reliability, and fulfilling the conditions necessary for the implementation of the set development plans.**

**S**lovenia has been a member of Partnership for Peace since the very beginning. It also started to participate in the force-planning system conducted by NATO with partner countries in the early phases. When Slovenia first gained its independence after the end of the Cold War, it was left, like the majority of European democracies, with attitudes towards defence and a pool of military capabilities that were no longer adequate for the changed security situation. Since 1994 Slovenia's

efforts have been directed towards partnership and towards joining the alliance. On the basis of international relations and various forms of military cooperation, we have acquired important experience and paved the way from being a Partnership for Peace member to becoming a serious candidate for NATO membership. Initial Partnership for Peace activities were followed by a planning process with the PfP PARP (Planning & Analysing Review Process), which signalled the beginning of the

accelerated adaptation of the structure of the Slovenian armed forces and their participation in international military cooperation. Lessons learned in the Alba peacekeeping operation in Albania in 1997, in UNFICYP operations in Cyprus, and in SFOR and KFOR operations in the Balkans were, and still are, of considerable importance.

We know that all systems naturally tend towards balance. If we translate this rule into a defence system, this results in a minimum number of radical reforms, changes and new attitudes. Impulses for change therefore always have to be initiated from the outside. If not, everything seems to be perfect on the surface while real defence capabilities exist only on paper. In the Slovenian case, this invaluable impulse, which was a necessity as it provided a critical reflection of Slovenian efforts in the area of defence, was a result of our participation in the PARP process. The image we saw was not always pleasing, but it was an incentive to start working seriously on defence reform.

Slovenia is still working on the establishment of a comprehensive national security system which will, taking into consideration Euro-Atlantic political and defence integration, ensure a higher level of security for all its





**Defence Minister Dr. Anton Grizold meeting NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson.**



citizens. In the area of defence we are establishing links between the various elements of the defence system into a consistent, rational, efficient and cost-effective institutional framework, which is Slovenia's strategic goal in the period up to 2004.

In the military and defence area, Slovenia is conducting preparations for NATO membership, in particular by utilising the tools and mechanisms provided for by Partnership for Peace through consistent compliance with the criteria set out by NATO in the Membership Action Plan. We are aware of the fact that these criteria are rational and proven under the conditions of parliamentary democracy that have been developed and strengthened throughout the ten years of Slovenia's existence.

Slovenia has always fostered an open and honest attitude towards NATO; therefore, it is not giving promises it knows in advance cannot be carried out. Slovenia offers only as much as its material, financial, human and other resources allow. This is especially demonstrated in the participation of Slovenian

units in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, where Slovenia contributes a considerable share with regard to available resources and capabilities.

Although Slovenia does not face any direct threats, its actual security environment is less stable than during the Cold War.

A key characteristic of the modern security environment is the complexity of threats at

all levels – that is, at individual, local, national, international, regional and global levels.

In light of the threats that have emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, NATO, as a defence Alliance, has remained a central regional actor in the Euro-Atlantic environment, despite its ever-increasing political role. Through new enlargement and by maintaining an open-door policy towards those countries who have not expressed an interest in becoming either members or partners of NATO, the alliance's position, together with its partners and future members, will be even stronger.

The year 2001 was a very successful one for those working at the Ministry of Defence. We established a realistic and firm foundation for the further long-term development of the Slovenian armed forces and the defence system as a whole. This year will be critical not only in terms of further reorganising the defence system but particularly in the context of the expansion of the Alliance in Prague. Slovenia is therefore investing all its efforts in participating in ensuring international peace and security as a reliable NATO member state.

**Defence Minister Dr. Anton Grizold and soldiers.**

