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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SPRING SESSION

ADDRESS

by

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MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UKRAINE**

**OPENING CEREMONY
FIRST PLENARY SITTING**

Hall Ternes, Palais des Congrès,
Paris, France
Friday 26 May 2006

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you, first of all, for accepting me as a Special Representative of the President of Ukraine to the Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

It is a great honour to participate in your distinguished gathering. Since I officially became a member of the Parliament of Ukraine, taking the oath yesterday, the parliamentary dimension of NATO-Ukraine relations will be among the priorities of my further activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I come here with a message from President Yushenko, who sends his regrets for being unable to meet you here and asks me to convey the following:

"Dear delegates,

First of all, let me thank Mr. Lellouche, the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and all the representatives of the Assembly who participated in the International Election Observation Mission during the parliamentary elections in Ukraine on 26 March 2006.

I am convinced that the conduct of fair, transparent and democratic elections in Ukraine witnessed by the Assembly observers has become an important evidence of the European choice of our country. It has also testified to Ukraine's intentions to contribute, together with other states, to the enlargement and consolidation of the new Euro-Atlantic space of democracy and security.

The course towards the European and Euro-Atlantic integration remains a strategic goal of our State's development. It is with Ukraine's accession to NATO and the EU that we link our hopes for the evolving of a prosperous and democratic Ukraine. Its full-fledged participation in the Euro-Atlantic community will become an important factor in spreading security and stability across the region. I am confident that Ukraine will receive an invitation to join the **Membership Action Plan** in the near future.

We have a clear understanding of the leading role of the *Verkhovna Rada* (Parliament) of Ukraine in implementing the course towards joining NATO. It was back in the early 1990s that the Parliament adopted the principal guidelines of Ukraine's foreign policy, which defined the Euro-Atlantic and European integration as main priorities for development. Thus, the cooperation between Ukraine's Parliament and legislative bodies of NATO member states constitutes an integral part of our State's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Let me wish you a fruitful work and interesting discussions, so that the exchange of views initiated at this session yields useful and tangible results."

I would like to add a few remarks to the words of President Yushenko, to which I fully subscribe myself.

In my view, we have enough reasons to be proud of the progress that my country has achieved over the past 15-16 months in advancing democracy. On the other hand, there are still a number of obstacles on the way to making life in Ukraine economically and politically sustainable.

Much has been said about the "Orange revolution" as a true milestone in Ukraine's history. I am not going to repeat well-known things. After the revolution there have been gains and setbacks, successes and mistakes of new authorities in Ukraine. However, despite the fact that the

Orange revolution has not brought, as many expected, immediate positive changes in all spheres of life of Ukrainians, there is an undeniable truth that this revolution gave birth to a **strong civil society** in Ukraine. Democracy took deep roots in our country. There is no way back.

The **parliamentary elections held last March** have taken a prominent place in the list of the country's democratic achievements. They were recognized by the international observers, including those from NATO Parliamentary Assembly, as the **first free and fair elections in Ukraine**.

President Yushenko calls upon all the political forces that won the 2006 elections to demonstrate their political maturity and take responsibility for the future of Ukraine.

For the moment, the talks between political parties have entered their final phase towards creating a new government, a government based on mutually agreed **coalition program** of activities, which will correspond to **President Yushenko's Action Plan** called "**Ten Steps towards People**".

This plan determines major directions of the country's development. These are building a knowledge-based competitive economy; introducing energy efficiency; ensuring the rule of law; fighting smuggling, corruption and other asymmetric risks; reforming Ukraine's legal system, law enforcement agencies, medicine and education, etc.

Given a number of supporters of NATO membership among the MPs, as well as the President's firm commitment to maintain Ukraine's course towards Euro-Atlantic integration, there is no doubts that the **policy of joining NATO will be further pursued by the Parliament and the Government of Ukraine**.

I join my President in wishing you a fruitful work and constructive discussions.

Thank you for your attention.
