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NEW FACTORS IN RUSSIA-WEST RELATIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 11:
To what extent have the events of September 11 changed the priorities in the enlargement and security aspects of the Euro-Atlantic area?

The terrorist attacks of September 11 necessitated the assumption by the Alliance of a new role, the one of co-ordinating the Allies' anti-terrorist activities and policies and adapting their capabilities and decision-making mechanisms enabling NATO to tackle the threat of terrorism. A clear sign of such impact was the invocation of NATO's Article V in response to the terrorist attacks. The ways, in which this did or did not work out, present now the subject of serious political, strategic and legal scrutiny, which may, in a non-distant future, result in a considerable adaptation of the Alliance itself.

The NATO enlargement continues to be seen by its proponents as the widening of the area of security and stability that makes irreversible historic achievements of the past decade in the realm of European security. The main enlargement principles – the open door policy and yielding no veto right to any country outside the Alliance – remained intact. The firm commitment made by US President Bush on behalf of his country in his Warsaw speech last June to a big, rather than small, enlargement at Prague stayed in force.

However, by affecting the Alliance's internal and external agenda, the 11 September events unavoidably gave an important additional meaning to the enlargement process:

- The threat of terrorism, common to all nations in the world, became within minutes more obvious, tangible and sinister than ever. It made us all stronger than ever before perceive the need for mutual solidarity, support and collective

response to the common threat. This created additional incentives to enlarge the Alliance.

- At the same time, in the face of the common terrorist threat it became obvious that we in the West shared more interests with Russia, than Russia and even ourselves used to believe. Therefore, with Russia we mutually discovered vast grounds where enhanced co-operation and confidence were indispensable to adequately respond to the new security challenges. The warming NATO-Russia relationship has helped Russia re-evaluate its position *vis-à-vis* NATO and its enlargement, drifting away from the obsolete Cold War time thinking stereotypes. This trend was crowned, two days ago, by launching, at Rome, a new NATO-Russia Council as an institutional framework for the new-quality co-operation in the identified areas. This is, of course, to be seen not as the end of the process, but, rather, as a new beginning, the start of a new promising stage in the historic partnership. We can but welcome this new development and the new NATO-Russia agenda.
- In order to uphold NATO-Russia relationship at this truly new quality level, there has to be a strong political will from both the Russian and NATO side. We urge Russia to continue its constructive “post-September 11” policies towards the West. Lithuania is ready and willing to contribute its share to the constructive development of NATO-Russia dialogue.

Against this background, Russia, that had formerly criticised NATO enlargement, started to see it in a new light. The Russian political leadership realised that neither NATO enlargement, nor the wish of sovereign states like Lithuania to join the Alliance were directed against Russia’s legitimate security interests.

This is the key to the success of NATO’s long-standing effort to engage Russia in intensive, open and mutually beneficial co-operation that addresses adequately the issues of common concern. In the post-September 11 world the meaning of such engagement goes far beyond preventing a potential confrontation between Russia and the Alliance. Now, it primarily means joint search of solutions to the common problems and challenges, which is a much more solid basis for durable and trustful relationship.

The admission of my country and other new members to NATO will contribute to the strengthening of the NATO-Russia partnership, because we will integrate our own bilateral experience of good-neighbourly relations with Russia to the Alliance's co-operation strategy. Already today we do look forward to joining, as NATO members, the proceedings of the newly established NATO-Russia Council.