

Opening remarks

by Adam Kobieracki, Assistant Secretary General for Operations at the Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee meeting in plenary session in EAPC format

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the Spring 2005 Plenary session of the Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee.

On previous occasions when I had the honour to chair this committee's proceedings, we always met at the NATO Headquarters. Today, for the first time during my Chairmanship, we hold a meeting outside Brussels. And we do so in a special place, the beautiful city of Helsinki, upon the gracious invitation of our trusted and valuable Partner Finland.

Finland has been a consistent and effective contributor to civil emergency planning activities in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. These contributions, along with those of our many other Partners, have served to build a strong and productive Partnership in Civil Emergency Planning. In fact, looking back to our achievements in the last years, it is fair to say that the contribution of EAPC Partners to NATO Civil Emergency Planning has become indispensable. Looking towards the future, this is even more true.

Our discussions over the next day and a half will range from civil-military cooperation in peacekeeping operations to disaster response and terrorism preparedness. These are complex challenges, to which we need to find comprehensive and – above all – effective answers.

Our Civil Emergency Planning Action Plan and the work of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre make an important contribution. Today, we need to build upon this strong foundation and move further ahead in our efforts to improve civil preparedness.

Likewise, we can build upon our excellent record of cooperation in peace operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan as we embark upon the important task of facilitating more robust and structured civilian support to the military. Partners have a lot to contribute to this effort, commensurate with their strong participation in NATO's operations. And once again, our host Finland deserves special mentioning in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I think you will agree that there are many common challenges before us. The defining feature of our Partnership is that we do not only acknowledge those challenges, but that together we take concrete, tangible measures to address them.

I look forward to working on these issues with you for the next day and a half. But before we begin with our agenda, I would like to express to you, Mr. Salmi, on behalf of all of the guests here – our profound appreciation for hosting this meeting here in Helsinki. A special thanks also for the splendid reception last night, which we all enjoyed greatly.