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**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
Secretariat**

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### **Conference Services**

At the request of the OSCE Delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the attached statement on the occasion of the invitation extended to Albania and Croatia to begin the accession talks with NATO delivered to the 708<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Permanent Council on 10 April 2008 is being distributed to all OSCE delegations.



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**Statement by Ambassador Arsim Zekolli, the Head of Delegation of the  
Republic of Macedonia at the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
on the occasion of the invitation extended to Albania and Croatia to  
begin the accession talks with NATO  
April 10, 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of the Republic of Macedonia would like to use this opportunity and extend its sincere words of congratulation to Croatia and Albania for obtaining invitation to begin the accession talks for membership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We consider this invitation as a significant contribution of the Alliance to further strengthening of stability and security of the region and recognition for the reforms completed by the two countries.

Our delegation must stress it regrets that the Alliance missed the opportunity to fully accomplish its regional goal of consolidation of the stability architecture in the Balkans. The decision not to extend the invitation to my country, despite the unanimously acknowledged reform achievements and global security contributions, has undoubtedly cast a shadow on the success of the NATO Summit.

The Alliance's members, almost with no exception, have recognized that the Republic of Macedonia is meeting the standards for becoming part of NATO, conducted all necessary reforms, did everything it had been required to do to be at the equal level with the member countries.

As pointed out by our Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is worth remembering that "Most of the countries of the region are now on the road to the EU and NATO, but those who have not forgotten yesterday's Balkan should remember the existing risks. For the sake of one irrelevant argument the region's stability has been put at stake. However, Macedonia will keep playing the role of a stability factor in these crucial moments for the region, keep working in the best possible manner and cooperating with all of its partners and neighbours for the country's brighter future".

This brief statement, Mr. Chairman, would be incomplete if we would not express our sincere gratitude to the United States, Turkey, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and all the others who stood firm in supporting our candidacy until the very last moment.

Thank you.