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## NATO and the broader Middle East region



The way ahead for NATO's programme of cooperation with countries of the broader Middle East, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, was the focus of a high-level conference in Rome on 18 March.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, launched at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul, offers interested countries in the broader Middle East practical cooperation with NATO on a bilateral basis, starting with individual members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The conference on "NATO and the Broader Middle East region" brought together over 100 high-ranking officials, parliamentarians, academics and security experts from NATO and the countries of the Gulf to exchange perceptions and discuss further ideas concerning the implementation of the Initiative.

The first session discussed the security challenges in the region. The second session looked at the way ahead in the implementation of Initiative, stressing importance of developing a cooperative relationship between NATO and interested countries in the broader Middle East region.

Describing the key principles of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative in his speech, the Secretary General of NATO Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that "*the relationship is very much a two-way street, and it should be. The Initiative will be flexible, allow for the different needs and requests of the individual participating states*

To date, three states, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar have formally joined the Initiative.

The conference was jointly organized by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the NATO Defense College and was held at the Defense College in Rome.

### News

- [17/03/2005 - NATO International Conference on "NATO and the Broader Middle East Region" March 2005](#)

### Background

- [NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue & Istanbul Cooperation Initiative](#)

### Opinions

- [Speech by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary General, at ICI Seminar, NATO Defense College, Rome, Italy](#)

