

Mr. Secretary General,  
Mr. Chairman,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Canadian people and the Canadian Government, I extend to you all a warm welcome to Canada and to Halifax.

It is a great honour for Canada to host the Foreign Ministers of the North Atlantic Council. This Organization means much to Canadians. We were present at the creation, indeed played no small part in its genesis. And we have been with NATO at every step along the way.

During the long years of its existence, the Atlantic Alliance has known great moments, made historic decisions, weathered stormy periods, and resolved difficult crises. Today, the Alliance finds itself on the threshold of what could be a new era in East-West relations.

The disappointments of détente are behind us, the tensions of the first years of this decade have eased, and there is hope for a better tomorrow. But it is hope tinged with scepticism and tempered by experience.

As we embark on our deliberations, let it be clear that the Alliance has gathered to give hope a firmer foundation, to disprove the sceptics, and to pursue the noble cause of reconciliation between East and West without neglecting the firmness that prudence demands.

When Allies meet, it is customary to celebrate the role the Alliance has played in preserving the peace in Europe and North America. This is not an empty boast. Would that the rest of the world could say as much.

Let us never tire of declaring that our freedom, our rights, our system of social justice, our economic development, our democratic way of life, represent the product of our common values. And that we owe their preservation to the Atlantic Alliance.

NATO is not only a defensive alliance, of course. It is the primordial instrument of Western political consultation, more so today even than at the time of the Ottawa Declaration that NATO issued 12 years ago.

In this respect, let us pay tribute to the accomplishments of the Secretary-General. Thanks to his tireless efforts to encourage frank and effective consultations among allies, and to the sensitivity and wisdom he has shown in chairing alliance discussions, NATO's recent record on consultations has been enviable.