

the 'Harmel Report,' called after the then Foreign Minister of Belgium. In the same period, efforts were undertaken to convene the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which finally opened in Helsinki in 1973 involving not only all members of the two Alliances but also the neutral and non-aligned countries in Europe. But the West believed that an improvement of the political situation in Europe should go hand in hand with a lessening of the military confrontation on this continent. And so, Western proposals to discuss force reductions in Central Europe finally led to the convening of our talks here.

The Western participants came to Vienna in 1973 with great expectations, and with the firm resolve to avail themselves of this unique opportunity to contribute to the strengthening of peace and security in Europe. But at the same time it was clear that embarking on this venture meant breaking new ground, politically and militarily, conceptually and practically. Our talks were the first multilateral negotiation on conventional arms control in the post-war period and the participants soon discovered the tasks set by the mandate as laid down in the Final Communiqué to be a great challenge. The complex subject matter obviously required a very careful and tenacious approach, which has inevitably been time consuming.

In the course of the negotiations, both sides have developed their respective negotiating positions, both at the conceptual level and in the form of concrete proposals for an agreement. Proposals by one side were followed by counter-proposals from the other side, usually building on the proposals that preceded them. Although this continuing process did not in the end lead to an agreement, it is important to note its value in enabling both sides over the years to gather a wealth of experience and deeper insight in the complex issues of conventional arms control as well as a better understanding of the concerns of the other side.

This, then, is the first and perhaps most important experience we have gathered in MBFR: it has been an irreplaceable learning process which has enabled us to understand better the whole issue and

the security considerations which are at stake. But there has been more to it. In our talks we have proceeded well beyond formal exchanges and have undertaken thorough discussion of the subject matter itself. And in doing this, we have discovered that we were indeed able to move closer to each other. Despite the great political and practical difficulties, many points of convergence have emerged, both at the conceptual level and on concrete issues.

At the point that we have reached now, there is a large measure of agreement between the two sides on a number of general aims and principles, such as the aim of increased stability at lower levels of forces, the commitment to limit forces after reductions, the requirement for effective verification, the need to proceed on a step-by-step basis and to ensure at each stage that the security of participants is not adversely affected, and the need for appropriate

some important problems remain which East and West have not been able to solve. During our negotiations we have identified main areas of particular difficulty being the data problem, the modalities of verification, the geographical factor and the question of the treatment of armaments. These points are well known to all of us. At this moment, it is enough for me to remark that for the West these areas of disagreement touch upon fundamental requirements for its security. It is not a simple matter of negotiators having failed to find some suitable compromise formula. Rather, these problems require a durable solution which does justice to the West's legitimate security requirements, contributes significantly to the strengthening of peace and security, and at the same time increases confidence between the participants. In this sense, the issues we have not been able to resolve here around this table might well prove to have a wider sig-



*The site of the recently concluded Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna.*

accompanying measures to enhance stability and confidence.

The fact, however, that after fifteen years an agreement has not been reached is ample evidence that notwithstanding substantial common ground

nificance which goes beyond the scope of our negotiations.

Each side will wish to preserve its own judgment as to why and where opportunities have been missed to solve these important problems. As far as the West