

## CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL

### STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL MEETING IN MINISTERIAL SESSION AT NATO HEADQUARTERS, BRUSSELS

(8-9 December 1988)

1. In their statement "Conventional Arms Control: The Way Ahead", the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in March 1988 emphasized that the imbalance in conventional forces remains at the core of Europe's security concerns. We shall be presenting specific proposals at the negotiating table to redress this imbalance.
2. We look forward to the early commencement of the two negotiations we have proposed: one on conventional stability between the 23 members of the two military Alliances in Europe and one on confidence- and security-building measures among all 35 signatories of the Helsinki Final Act.
3. In these negotiations we will be guided by:
  - the conviction that the existing military confrontation is the result, not the cause, of the painful division of Europe;
  - the principle of the indivisible security of all our nations. We shall reject calls for partial security arrangements or proposals aimed at separate agreements;
  - the hope that the new thinking in the Soviet Union will open the way for mutual agreement on realistic, militarily significant and verifiable arrangements which enhance security at lower levels.

#### TOWARDS STABILITY

4. The major threat to stability in Europe comes from those weapons systems which are capable of mounting large-scale offensive operations and of seizing and holding territory. These are above all main battle tanks, artillery and armoured troop carriers. It is in these very systems that the East has such a massive preponderance. Indeed, the Soviet Union itself possesses more tanks and artillery than all the other members of the Warsaw Pact and the Alliance combined. And they are concentrated in a manner which raises grave concerns about the strategy which they are intended to support as well as their role in maintaining the division of Europe.