

Mr. Chairman, we are here at an uncertain time in East-West relations. In recent weeks, the superpowers came tantalizingly close to a framework for major reductions in nuclear arsenals, only to be held back by the complexity of the issues facing them. We have seen certain CSCE signatories release some longtime dissidents and political prisoners, only, in some cases, to practice renewed repression against others. It is difficult to tell whether the omens are good or bad, whether we stand on the threshold of dramatic progress or renewed disenchantment.

A curiosity of these times is that we do not lack for leadership. There was leadership, on both sides, at Reykjavik. There was leadership by a wider cast, at Stockholm. What restrains that leadership is the deep legacy of suspicion. What is demanded of us, now more than ever, is the practical construction of confidence and trust.

Confidence-building is the essence of the CSCE process. It is the central theme of all three baskets of the Helsinki Final Act. In the CSCE all but one of the countries of Europe, as well as the two North American countries whose destiny is inextricably linked with that continent, can consider all the important, interrelated issues involved in political confidence-building between East and West. The CSCE has had its frustrations and failures, but despite this, it has performed a vital role in keeping alive a candid dialogue among many countries, including those who are neutral or non-aligned, that might otherwise have been impossible. Canada is wholly committed to the CSCE process. We want to see this Follow-up Meeting achieve substantial progress.

In order to achieve progress, however, we will have to come to grips with a significant problem affecting confidence. Simply put, that problem is that confidence requires compliance. Some countries represented here today have failed signally to implement many of the commitments they undertook at Helsinki and Madrid, and indeed in some cases there has been backsliding since 1975. An important opportunity has thus been lost to strengthen security and cooperation in Europe. Even worse, by failing to implement commitments they made at the highest political level, these countries have contributed not to the building, but to the erosion, of confidence in the CSCE process and, to a great extent, to an erosion of our confidence in their willingness to honour commitments in other areas.