

Agreement on the limiting of strategic nuclear weapons has long been regarded as the most urgent arms-control objective. It is of vital importance to East-West relations and to world peace and security that the two superpowers agree to limit the further growth and refinement of strategic nuclear arms in order to preserve and increase the stability of the strategic balance and so reduce the risk of war.

In 1978 Canada continued, both in NATO and through bilateral channels, to give strong support to the search for early agreement on measures that would help halt and eventually reverse the nuclear-arms race.

Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)

After SALT, the most important East-West continuing arms-control negotiations take place at the Conference on the Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe, generally referred to as MBFR. In these negotiations, which began in Vienna in 1973, NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries have been seeking agreement on ways to reduce the level of armed confrontation in the area of its greatest concentration. As had been expected from the outset, many difficulties have been encountered and progress has been slow. A principal obstacle has been the failure to reach agreement on the level of forces actually present on each side in the area of proposed reductions and the consequent failure to agree on the size of reductions by each side that would result in a balanced outcome. By the end of the 1978, no agreement was yet in sight.

Canada remains convinced of the importance of such an agreement. Within the NATO alliance, Canada has been a consistent and strong supporter of the aims of MBFR and has participated actively in the formulation of policy and the conduct of the negotiations.