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The Atlantic Alliance – neighbours that find cohesion in common ideals

Secretary of State for External Affairs Allan J. MacEachen, addressing the Atlantic Treaty Association on September 9 was, he said, pleased to comment in his new portfolio as External Affairs Minister, on the Atlantic Alliance which “provides a framework for co-operation between Canada, Europe and the United States in the common security of our territories”.

At the conclusion of its five-day meeting in Ottawa, the private group of non-government agencies from countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization issued an appeal for unity among NATO countries, including Greece and Turkey. It stated that a strong military force in Europe was essential to lessen world tensions. Passages from Mr. MacEachen's address follow:

...As I am sure you are all aware, but three months ago, the Foreign Ministers of the NATO nations met here in Ottawa and issued a document attesting to the continuing worth and vigour of the Alliance – I am speaking, of course, of the “Ottawa Declaration”. The signing of this singularly important document demonstrated the truly dynamic nature of our Alliance.

Looking back over the past 25 years, I am struck by the way in which NATO has maintained our common security through varied and changing circumstances. Despite the awesome technological developments in weapons of destruction, and especially nuclear weapons, and despite numerous challenges to our political ways of life, NATO has made and continues to make a fundamental contribution to the security of its members. With this increased stability came a period of relative peace and economic prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. This is the tangible achievement of NATO's collective approach to security.

Birth of the Alliance

Twenty-five years ago the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington, giving birth to the Atlantic Alliance – a unique association of 15 countries designed primarily to ensure the preservation of peace and the security of its members through a collective approach to defence. Faced with a threat to their security while Europe was still recovering from the ravages of the Second World War, the western countries resolved to group themselves into an alliance that would give sub-

stance to a collective resolve to resist aggression. But can any truly viable alliance among such diverse nations as ours be forged from the mere will to resist aggression? It is doubtful to me, as I am sure it is to all of you, that a mere grouping of tanks, planes and men could survive the changes which have taken place over the past 25 years, without some common thread, some intricate link binding its members...If the vitality of this community is to be maintained, it will be because our organization, in spite of some failings, has succeeded in reflecting, in its policies and in its actions, the desires and aspirations of all men to reach a common understanding through use of words and not arms, through co-operation and not confrontation.

Report of “three wise men”

The tangible expression of these ideals are manifest not only in the forces which we maintain for collective defence and security. Canadians have always attached importance to the North Atlantic Council as a forum for systematic consultation amongst close friends on a wide variety of questions of mutual interest. The exchange of views with 14 of our closest friends has, I am sure, been of benefit to us all. Eighteen years ago a report on non-military co-operation in NATO was produced by three distinguished statesmen, including the late Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson. This report, which has come to be known as that of the “three wise men”, is indicative of a sensitivity to these broader dimensions of the Alliance