

I am grateful to you for having invited me to speak to you today at this symposium on disarmament. As the organizers of this event undoubtedly recognize, there are few subjects in our international relations of such pressing importance. It is a subject in which I have taken a profound interest for many years, and more particularly since assuming my present portfolio. Only last month I delivered an address on disarmament to a group of parliamentarians from 15 nations in New York on the occasion of the opening of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Because the message I gave at that time was, in my view, an important one, I propose today to put forward a number of the points that were central to my remarks at that time.

For the two military alliances in the developed world, security rests chiefly on a system of deterrence, the essential component of which is a stable balance of forces. Thus, mutual deterrence has been the main element throughout the past 35 years in preventing a war in which the most powerful weapons ever available would be used. This form of security is clearly not ideal, since it carries with it the risk of mutual annihilation. Real security will be achieved only when there is a disarmament which has international agreement and is verifiable. In the meantime, our immediate disarmament objective must be the pursuit of undiminished security at lower levels of armaments, both in terms of destructive capability and cost.

But would there then be real security in the broadest sense of the word? The Brandt Commission Report, on international development issues, calls for a new concept of security, in the following words:

"An important task of constructive international policy will have to consist in providing a new, more comprehensive understanding of 'security' which would be less restricted to the purely military aspects."

Putting it more bluntly, the Report also says:

"History has taught us that wars produce hunger, but we are less aware that mass poverty can lead to war or end in chaos. While hunger rules peace cannot prevail. He who wants to ban war must also ban mass poverty. Morally it makes no difference whether a human being is killed in war or is condemned to starve to death because of the indifference of others."

As you have gathered, as well as speaking about disarmament, which is a vital element of security, I would like