

UPDATING THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT

- 15.** The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada argue forcefully within NATO that the present re-examination and update as necessary of the Alliance Strategic Concept should include its nuclear component.

Response

The Government agrees. Current NATO nuclear policy is set out in the 1991 Strategic Concept. The Concept, drafted in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, was positive and progressive for its time, but the profound transformation of the security environment in the intervening years led to a decision at the 1997 Madrid Summit to re-examine it. The updated version is expected to be released at the Alliance's 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C. in April.

Canada argued that for the revision to be credible, it must deal with an examination of the characteristics of NATO nuclear forces. Developments with respect to various arms control and disarmament arrangements have enhanced overall Alliance security. Circumstances are much changed since 1991. For example, the Alliance has reduced by more than 80% its sub-strategic nuclear forces, eliminated all nuclear artillery and short-range ground-launched missiles and reiterated that it has no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new Alliance members. As well, remaining Alliance nuclear forces operate at significantly reduced levels of readiness. In addition, the CFE Treaty has reduced the levels and relative balance of conventional forces in Europe. NATO has sufficient conventional forces to withstand any conventional challenge by any imaginable single or combined adversary. Other developments, including the establishment by NATO of co-operative security bodies such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the inauguration of a new partnership with Russia and other states, as well as the new roles adopted by NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace support operations, have significantly improved NATO's ability to prevent conflict and manage crises through political means.

As a result, NATO is better placed to defuse crises through diplomatic or other means or, should it be necessary, to mount a successful conventional defence. Consequently, the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated by the Alliance are now extremely remote and ever more difficult to envisage.

Through arms control measures and by demonstrating their NPT commitments to the implementation of nuclear disarmament, NATO members should seek to enhance security and stability further at the lowest level of forces consistent with defence. The Alliance is an