

And, by the same token, Mr. Chairman, I would propose that the CFE Joint Consultative Group, as foreseen in the Western draft Treaty text, be operational immediately upon the signing of the Treaty.

It is foreseen that, in the transitional period between the signing and the entry into force of the Treaty, the parties will already begin to exchange substantial information, such as their maximum levels of holdings.

It will, therefore, be of the utmost importance that already in this interim period a forum will exist in which the parties can discuss the exchanged information and, if necessary, ask for clarification.

Mr. Chairman, let us not under-estimate the tasks which we will be taking upon ourselves in implementing this Treaty. The timely installation and activating of the Joint Consultative Group can only enhance the prospects of a smooth and effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman, let me now return to the subject of Open Skies. In the Netherlands' view, the establishment of an Open Skies regime, consisting of regular, unarmed, surveillance flights, is the logical next step in the confidence-building process between East and West.

It will strongly enhance the transparency between our countries with respect to each other's military situation.

It contributes to stability in a period of great changes in Europe and can facilitate the management of those changes.

Moreover, Open Skies can usefully complement the verification arrangements under other arms control agreements.

We should try to create an Open Skies regime that is both flexible and effective. Heavy bureaucratic mechanisms and cumbersome procedures are to be avoided. The NATO countries have already reached some specific understandings in this connection. Subjects to which we attach particular importance concern the co-ordination of the observation flights to be conducted, the pooling of resources and the sharing of information gained from Open Skies flights.

There should also be the possibility for nations to group themselves into one unit for the purpose of hosting Open Skies flights and jointly accept the quota applying to the total land mass. I would like to inform the Conference that we have been discussing this possibility with Belgium and Luxembourg and that we are aiming at presenting ourselves as one Benelux group.