

Canadian authorities feel that the conference we are seeking to organize should not be considered as an isolated event. It is rather an integral part of a series of negotiations and actions to be taken in an effort to reinforce security and co-operation in Europe so as to lessen and, where possible, remove the tensions in that continent. Some of my colleagues have already mentioned a few of the steps already taken in this direction. The effect of these steps will be considerable, and will reach people in countries far from Europe.

Other measures come to mind... that would promote better conditions for the people, reduction of tensions between countries and an increasing respect for the freedom and integrity of individuals and nations.

Canada has long supported the proposal that talks be held to prepare the ground for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Such a conference, if carefully prepared and held after sufficient common ground has been found to offer reasonable prospects for its success, could be a useful part of the general process of negotiations which is under way in Europe.

Some have been sceptical about the use of the conference method to approach the many problems that cry for action on the European scene. We have not been of that number. We hope that this grouping of politically-mature states can work together in a spirit of common sense and accommodation to find ways of gradually reducing the barriers of antagonism and distrust which still persist.

At the same time, our expectations should be realistic. At first the conference method may achieve relatively few successes, but they will have enhanced importance because of the prestige of their origin. On the other hand, none of us would be content with a conference that had only superficial results. A conference that did no more than agree on high-sounding but empty forms of words would create a dangerous illusion of progress. This is why the Canadian Government is of the view that the conference should make concrete and real contributions to security and co-operation; it should deal with and resolve the underlying causes of division and tension in Europe; it should try to agree on specific steps -- however modest they may be in the first instance -- to improve the situation. In the best of circumstances, this will not be easy to accomplish. We should bear in mind that ministers at a conference will probably have only a few days to plan their work, debate the issues in depth, and agree on the follow-up work they think necessary. They are bound to be under intense time pressures. For all these reasons, the conference must be carefully prepared if it is to realize the hopes placed in it. This fact gives our own preparatory talks a special importance. We favour a step-by-step approach to our tasks here. A logical sequence of subjects should be followed, to permit concentration on a single area at a time and thus to build confidence for solving the next problem.

I would suggest: first, we should thoroughly explore our respective approaches to the proposed agenda items and arrive at a clear and agreed formulation of the agenda so as to ensure that a conference will have a reasonable chance of success.