

Opening Statement at Preparatory Consultations
on
Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
by
the Head of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. G. K. Grande

Mr. Chairman,

Canada is happy to join with other states assembled here on what one may hope is the threshold of an important new phase in the continuing process of negotiations aimed at lowering tensions and increasing East-West cooperation particularly in Europe. Canada has consistently maintained that concrete action to reduce the present military confrontation in Europe should go hand in hand with political measures to that end.

We have been heartened by recent political developments. The progress achieved at the Multilateral Preparatory Talks in Helsinki to lay the groundwork for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the conclusion of SALT I, the successful outcome of the negotiations to place on a stable footing the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR, the People's Republic of Poland and the German Democratic Republic form an auspicious background for negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions. It has taken a long time for these exploratory talks to materialize. We can be hopeful about the prospects for a viable détente if we can duplicate even in a small way in the military field what we have achieved politically. We must be realistic and recognize that these talks will be complex and that considerable time and effort will be needed to achieve positive results but we are confident that with goodwill and growing mutual confidence such an outcome can be reached.

We believe in a gradual systematic approach in this as in other aspects of these efforts to improve security and stability in Europe. We think the time has come to take an initial but serious step toward the reduction of the level of military confrontation where it is highest, in Central Europe. If we can agree on a common purpose and find sufficient common ground concerning detailed ways of moving in that direction, progress should be possible. Negotiations to reduce forces in Central Europe should thus contribute further to the détente process if our combined efforts are based on realistic objectives. Above all our efforts to reduce the military confrontation in Central Europe should not be to the disadvantage of any country and should safeguard stability and security in Europe as a whole.

Canada intends to play a full role in the forthcoming negotiations. As you know, Canadian Armed Forces have fought in two wars on this continent. Canadian and European security have been inseparable in the past and in our view remain so for the foreseeable future. We are present today because we continue to maintain forces in Central Europe in recognition of this inseparable link, and because we wish to make a positive contribution to European and Atlantic security. We owe it to our people to do all in our power to see that the danger of a new conflict is excluded and the burden of defence is reduced in due course without diminishing security.

With their origins drawn in large part from all over Europe the Canadian people wish to maintain, strengthen and enrich their ties with a Europe enjoying greater security, stability and harmony. It is their hope that the forthcoming negotiations will contribute to that end.