

An organization whose primary role has been to defend against plausible aggression must revise its role when that aggression becomes less plausible. It is only natural for NATO to assume a more political role, a role which would reflect both the new European reality and a declining military mission.

That is a change which Canada fully supports and which meets Canadian interests.

NATO must review urgently and comprehensively all aspects of its nuclear and conventional strategy. It makes little sense to retain those short-range nuclear weapons based in Europe whose only target can be our new friends in Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. It makes little sense to retain a military strategy which is based on a scenario of a surprise attack across a front which no longer exists and where surprise is no longer possible. And it makes little sense to continue to retain in Europe the largest peace-time deployment of military force in the history of the world.

This is not to deny the continuing requirement for prudence and military stability at this time of historic change. The possibility of instability is there and Soviet military capabilities remain substantial. Therefore, a strong military mandate for NATO continues to be valid and the North American commitment to Europe represented by the presence of Canadian and American troops there is crucial as we strive for strategic stability at significantly lower levels of military force.

It is important that NATO become even more actively engaged in the dynamic new security dialogue.

In the field of arms control and disarmament, NATO should develop an enhanced capacity and role in confidence-building and verification activities. Dedicated, multinational forces on the ground might be deployed for this purpose. NATO should also look to the establishment of a Verification Centre to co-ordinate these activities.

In addition, NATO should move away from a rigid forward defence to a much more flexible approach involving mobile units, possibly including forces of a multinational nature.

Mr. Speaker, NATO is of enduring value. But it has its limitations, a function of its mandate and its membership. There are other institutions whose role must be enhanced and transformed.

Central among these is the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Its membership is comprehensive, encompassing the nations of Europe, North America and the Soviet Union. Its mandate extends across the board.