

After further discussion, the President made his speech to the graduating class at Texas A&M on May 12. In it he stated that "such unprecedented access would show the world the meaning of openness" and called upon President Gorbachev to consider the proposal. The initiative was subsequently endorsed by the NATO leaders in the communiqué following their Summit in late May.

The Alliance Adopts its Position

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1989, representatives of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met frequently in Brussels to iron out a consensus position on the structure of an eventual Open Skies regime. The result of this process is called the Basic Elements Paper of December 15, 1989 (which is attached as Annex A of this backgrounder).

The Basic Elements Paper sets out the unanimous view of the 16 NATO countries as to how an Open Skies regime would work in practice. As the Paper points out, the original "Open Skies" proposal was put forward at an inauspicious moment in the history of East/West relations. Today's "Open Skies" proposal can be expected to receive a more sympathetic hearing. Moreover, though an Open Skies Treaty would stand as a Confidence-Building Measure in its own right, it is likely to be of considerable utility in assisting in the verification of many arms control agreements which are currently in the process of negotiation.