

Mr. Chairman,

May I first join with my colleagues in expressing gratitude for the hospitality shown to us by the Foreign Minister of Austria and by his Government and people, and for the efficient and tireless work of Dr. Liedermann and his Executive Secretariat. This elegant city, and these beautiful buildings, have over the centuries witnessed many events of vital importance to the history of Europe, as well as countless manifestations of its finest cultural and intellectual achievements. As a representative of a young country, I find so much tangible evidence of history and achievement at once humbling and inspiring. But our presence here today is also an expression of the resilience, the continuity, and the dynamism of Europe.

This brilliant European civilization has, more than any other, provided the ideas and inspiration that have shaped our modern world. Much of Europe's recent achievement derives from its ability to move gradually from blind subservience, whether political or intellectual, toward freedom and tolerance. Many countries that share this tradition, including our own, have developed political systems based on the rule of law, under popular control, responsive to fundamental human needs for freedom, dignity, and social justice, and open to a wide variety of ideas.

Canada is an ocean away from Europe, but bound to you by both tradition and destiny.

In the event of a nuclear exchange, our capital city would be 30 minutes away from destruction by a modern ICBM. Canadian land and lives lie directly below the path of any polar strike between the superpowers. We are the second largest country in the world, with nearly 10 million square kilometers, and all that would be a battle ground if the catastrophe we are seeking to prevent in fact occurred.

Nearly five thousand Canadian troops are stationed permanently in Europe, and their numbers are increasing. Thousands of their predecessors fought in world wars here, and of those, thousands lie buried beneath the stark crosses of soldiers' graves in Flanders and Dieppe, at Klagenfurt and Salerno, and at Vimy Ridge.