

At our meeting last December, we agreed unequivocally to open the door to new members, specify the objectives of and methods for achieving such an expansion, and to submit the results of our deliberations to our partners before our December 1995 meeting in Brussels. I am happy to see that this process is proceeding on schedule. It has allowed us to list the issues that must be clarified before we can share the results of this work with our partners.

We must send two messages to our partners. The first is one of openness. Let us avoid excluding *a priori* any nation that is seeking co-operation. Naturally, we will have to determine in due course whether or not admitting a particular country contributes to our region's security, after establishing that it has met criteria relating to democracy, respect for human rights, civil control of military authority, and other practical factors. There is no doubt that such a decision will be highly political.

The second message concerns the seriousness of the commitment stemming from an expansion of the Alliance, for both current and future members. Countries applying for membership will have to have the will to help strengthen the Alliance militarily and politically. For our part, we will have to review our own priorities in light of their legitimate needs.

We are in complete agreement that Russia cannot have any sort of veto over the admission of new members by the Alliance. Nevertheless, we still have every interest in developing a relationship with Russia that recognizes its leading role in matters of European security. The form that this relationship will take (treaty, joint commission, memorandum of understanding) has yet to be determined. The important thing for us is to have, as soon as possible, an effective mechanism for consultations on a 16-plus-1 basis. We will have the opportunity tomorrow, we hope, to begin these consultations with Russia.

We believe that we can have consultations without allowing Russia to dictate our decisions. Such consultations will allow us to manage inevitable differences of opinion with a minimum of surprises or bitterness. We will also be able to deliver clear messages to Russian leaders regarding elements of co-operation, which I hope will continue to grow, as well as situations such as the one in Chechnya, which I fear will not necessarily be the last to face that country.

Progress in these special relations with Russia will have to be accompanied by some sort of transformation of our organization. Indeed, Russia has underscored time and again, in its consultations with Canada among others, NATO's inability to change. We must admit that, despite changes to our political structures and our rhetoric, our military structures remain essentially the same. In Russia's view, they continue to be identical to the military structures created to counter the threat of the Soviet Army.