

We are gathered in Paris for the Inaugural Conference on the European Stability Pact. Canada supports the objectives of the Pact. Indeed, the stability of this continent to which Canada is indissolubly linked through its history and current commitments, will be strengthened by a shared determination to implement the solemn principles that we adopted in Helsinki in 1975 and 1992, and in Paris in 1990.

Only five years after enthusiasm and hope arose from the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, and despite these solemn commitments, here we are once again faced with conflicts caused by ethnic hatred and territorial aggression.

Our security depends on our ability to build prosperous societies together, with borders open to ideas and goods, and firmly based on the rule of law. Without democracy and respect for the rights of minorities, there is no sustainable security. It is disturbing that we must repeat this here at the dawn of a new millennium.

Canada views the European Stability Pact as an opportunity to pursue its work in the area of preventive diplomacy. The process launched under the Pact must be closely in keeping with the initiatives and mechanisms of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe [CSCE].

The document submitted to us today proposes that round tables be established using the format in the Helsinki document. This seems to be a flexible way of bringing together those who are willing to discuss an agenda based on good neighbourly relations between countries, the essential elements of which are the inviolability of borders, respect for minorities, economic exchanges and political co-operation. Canada will seize the opportunities that present themselves in connection with work launched under the Pact to actively contribute to greater co-operation in Europe.

Canada has demonstrated throughout its history the importance it attaches to its bonds with European countries. These are expressed through our full and complete contribution to NATO and the CSCE, and our co-operation with the European Union which is in the midst of developing. We work closely with all our European friends and partners, and with the United States, to strengthen and expand our co-operation within the context of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council and the Peace Partnership Program. Some 2000 Canadian soldiers work in UNPROFOR [the United Nations Protection Force] with those from numerous countries represented here, and together we strive to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict raging in the former Yugoslavia, the worst conflict Europe has seen since 1945. Canadian representatives have participated in preventive diplomatic and conflict resolution missions in the Baltic states, in Moldavia and other hot spots in Europe.