

I am, of course, referring in particular to the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament and on the Vienna followup meeting last year.

Listening to the previous statements of our colleagues, yesterday, no one could be in doubt that we are on the threshold of a qualitatively new beginning. A new world order is gradually taking shape and we have a good glimpse of it in Mr. Genscher's speech just a few moments ago.

We who are gathered around this table may consider ourselves to be fortunate in many ways; fortunate in being called upon to administer our nations' international relations during this historical period of transition, when we are moving from an area of Cold War and confrontation into a new epoch of understanding conciliation and co-operation among nations. A new epoch that has already inspired hopes of a better world for future generations.

This welcome turn of events now offers humanity unprecedented opportunities for releasing resources long absorbed by military confrontation for more productive ends.

This is a message of hope, not only for the nations of Europe, East and West, but also for the developing nations and for the future relationship between North and South.

The task of apportioning credit for this auspicious turn of events is one that I shall happily leave to future historians. I would be amiss, however, if I did not take this opportunity to commend, in particular, the courage of the Soviet leadership in recognizing that the current flow of events is, after all, irreversible and for persisting in the face of Herculean difficulties in pushing through fundamental restructuring of their society from above.

All this testifies to the primacy of politics in initiating fundamental reform. There is no historical inevitability at work. Never shall we forget the resilience and the determination of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe who are now hopefully harvesting the fruits of their vigorous resistance to totalitarian rule over the last half century.

Overcoming the divisions of Europe has always been a part of the agenda of the Western Alliance. The attainment of that goal does not mean, however, that the Alliance has outlived its usefulness.

The Atlantic Alliance embodies, not least, the intertwining of the fates of Europe and North America in good times and bad, as this meeting testifies in a significant way.

This Alliance has served its double purpose well, that of