

HIS EXCELLENCY MESUT YILMAZ,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TURKEY:

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. At the outset I would like to express my appreciation for the efficient efforts deployed by Canada in promoting Open Skies. These efforts culminated in the successful organization of this conference and they rightly deserve our heartfelt congratulations. I would also like to thank our hosts for their warm welcome and hospitality.

The Open Skies Conference coincides with major transformations taking place in Europe and, henceforth, in the nature of East-West relations. The success of the reforms and democratization underway in the Soviet Union and other East European countries will, hopefully, bring about the end of the artificial division of Europe.

The prevailing circumstances also provide the necessary atmosphere for the acceleration of the ongoing arms reduction and disarmament efforts. There are promising signs that the first CFE agreements and a START Accord will be signed by the end of 1990. An agreement banning the use and production of chemical weapons also seems within sight. A CSCE summit will most probably be held during the last quarter of the year.

If all these are realized, 1990 might be quoted in the annals of history as the year of disarmament. The Open Skies Conference will no doubt contribute to this process.

We have come a long way since the idea of Open Skies was first formulated by President Eisenhower and formally proposed at the Geneva Summit in 1955. The very fact that when, thirty five years later, the same idea was re-launched by another American President, George Bush, it met a favourable reaction is a testimony to the far ranging progress achieved in East-West relations during the past few years.

If, as a result of our deliberations, we succeed in establishing an Open Skies regime, this will not only constitute a tangible proof of improved international relations, but will also contribute to the further advancement of the confidence building and arms control process already underway.

Indeed, by demonstrating the willingness of a country to open its entire territory to aerial overflights, to become transparent, the proposed regime will be a confidence-building measure par excellence. Moreover, it is likely to be very useful in assisting the verification of arms control agreements under negotiation. Therefore, as stated in NATO's Basic Elements paper, and I cite; "This double characteristic of an Open Skies regime would make it a valuable complement to current East-West endeavours."