

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that Canada will be sending a delegation to attend exploratory talks on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) in Central Europe which will begin in Vienna on January 31. Positive replies from the Warsaw Pact countries which received the invitation extended by Canada and other NATO countries will enable these talks to get underway as scheduled. Their purpose is to consider the agenda and modalities of the proposed negotiations planned to begin next autumn.

The Canadian Government has consistently worked for the commencement of East-West discussions on mutual and balanced force reductions and will exercise its best efforts to ensure that progress is made. If a measure of agreement is reached the talks could be the threshold of an important new phase in the continuing process of negotiations aimed at furthering détente in Europe.

The Canadian Delegation will be headed by Mr. George Grande, Director of the Defence Relations Division of the Department of External Affairs, and will include officers from the Department of External Affairs and the Department of National Defence.