

Initiatives on Arms Control

Arms control has always been an integral part of the Alliance's security policy and of its overall approach to East-West relations, firmly embedded in the broader political context in which we seek the improvement of those relations.

The allies have consistently taken the lead in developing the conceptual foundations for arms control, identifying areas in which the negotiating partners share an interest in achieving a mutually satisfactory result while safeguarding the legitimate security interests of all.

High Level Task Force to examine troop reductions

Historic progress has been made in recent years, and we now see prospects for further substantial advances. In our determined effort to reduce the excessive weight of the military factor in the East-West relationship and increasingly to replace confrontation by cooperation, we can now exploit fully the potential of arms control as an agent of change.

We challenge the members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization to join us in accelerating efforts to sign and implement an agreement which will enhance security and stability in Europe by reducing conventional armed forces. To seize the unique opportunity at hand, we intend to present a proposal that will amplify and expand on the position we tabled at the opening of the CFE negotiations on 9th March.* We will

— register agreement, based on the ceilings already proposed in Vienna, on tanks, armoured troop carriers and artillery pieces held by members of the two Alliances in Europe, with all of the withdrawn equipment to be destroyed. Ceilings on tanks and armoured troop carriers will be based on proposals already tabled in Vienna; definitional

questions on artillery pieces remain to be resolved:

— expand our current proposal to include reductions by each side to equal ceilings at the level 15 percent below current Alliance holdings of helicopters and of all land-based combat aircraft in the Atlantic-to-the-Urals zone, with all the withdrawn equipment to be destroyed;

— propose a 20 percent cut in combat manpower in US stationed forces, and a resulting ceiling on US and Soviet ground and air force personnel stationed outside of national territory in the Atlantic to the Urals zone at approximately 275,000. This ceiling would require the Soviet Union to reduce its forces in Eastern Europe by some 325,000. United States and Soviet forces withdrawn will be demobilized;

— seek such an agreement within six months to a year and accomplish the reductions by 1992 or 1993. Accordingly, we have directed the Alliance's High Level Task Force on conventional arms control to complete the further elaboration of this proposal, including its verification elements, so that it may be tabled at the beginning of the third round of the CFE negotiations, which opens on 7th September 1989.

We consider as an important initiative President Bush's call for an "open skies" regime intended to improve confidence among states through reconnaissance flights, and to contribute to the transparency of military activity, to arms control and to public awareness. It will be the subject of careful study and wide-ranging consultations.

Consistent with the principles and objectives set out in our Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament which we have adopted at this meeting, we will continue to use arms control as a means to enhance security and stability at the lowest possible level of armed forces, and to strengthen confidence by further appropriate measures. We have already demonstrated our commitment to these objectives: both by negotiations and by unilateral action, resulting since 1979 in reductions of over one-third of the nuclear holdings assigned to SACEUR in Europe.

Toward an Enhanced Partnership

As the Alliance enters its fifth decade, we will meet the challenge of shaping our relationship in a way which corresponds to the new political and economic realities of the 1990s. As we do so, we recognize that the basis of our security and prosperity — and of our hopes for better East-West relations — is and will continue to be the close cohesion between the countries of Europe and of North America, bound together by their common values and democratic institutions as much as by their shared security interests.

Ours is a living and developing partnership. The strength and stability derived from our transatlantic bond provide a firm foundation for the achievement of our long-term vision, as well as of our goals for the immediate future. We recognize that our common tasks transcend the resources of either Europe or North America alone.

We welcome in this regard the evolution of an increasingly strong and coherent European identity, including in the security area. The process we are witnessing today provides an example of progressive integration, leaving centuries-old conflicts far behind. It opens the way to a more mature and balanced transatlantic partnership and constitutes one of the foundations of Europe's future structure.

To ensure the continuing success of our efforts we have agreed to

— strengthen our process of political consultation and, where appropriate, coordination, and have instructed the Council in Permanent Session to consider methods for its further improvement;

— expand the scope and intensity of our effort to ensure that our respective approaches to problems affecting our common security are complementary and mutually supportive;

— renew our support for our economically less-favoured partners and to reaffirm our goal of improving the present level of cooperation and assistance;

(*) France takes this opportunity to recall that, since the mandate for the Vienna negotiations excludes nuclear weapons, it retains complete freedom of judgment and decision regarding the results contributing to the implementation of its independent nuclear deterrent strategy.