

meaning to any agreement on mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force.

13. In the field of international co-operation, the contacts mentioned in Paragraph 10 might provide an opportunity to consider ways and means of ensuring closer co-operation between interested countries on the cultural, economic, technical and scientific levels, and on the question of human environment. Ministers reaffirmed that the freer movement of people, ideas and information is an essential element for the development of such co-operation.

14. Ministers noted that alliance studies on the various aspects of the mutual and balanced force reductions question have further progressed since the Rome meeting and instructed the Council in Permanent Session to pursue studies in this field.

15. Ministers representing countries participating in NATO's integrated defence program re-emphasised the importance they attach to mutual and balanced force reductions as a means of reducing tensions and lessening the military confrontation in Europe and recalled the declarations on this question issued at Reykjavik in 1968 and at Rome earlier this year. They noted that the Warsaw Pact countries have not directly responded to these declarations but have mentioned the possibility of a discussion at some future time of the question of reducing foreign armed forces on the territory of European states.

16. These ministers renewed their invitation to interested states to hold exploratory talks on the basis of their Rome declaration, and also indicated their readiness within this framework to examine different possibilities in the field of force reductions in the Central Region of Europe, including the possibility of mutual and balanced reduction of stationed forces, as part of an integrated program for the reduction of both stationed and indigenous forces.

17. Ministers reaffirmed their profound interest in genuine disarmament and arms-control measures. In this connection, they expressed their satisfaction with progress towards a ban on the emplacement of weapons of mass destruction on the seabed. They further considered the pursuit of allied efforts and studies in all fields related to disarmament to be essential, including those concerning biological and chemical weapons. They invited the Council in Permanent Session to continue to examine these matters.

18. Ministers endorsed the recent Council recommendation to all governments to start work at once in order to achieve, by 1975 if possible but not later than the end of the decade, the elimination of intentional discharges of oil and oily wastes into the sea. This and the other accomplishments of the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society during the past year were welcomed by ministers as evidence that the allies are effectively combining their resources to stimulate national and international action on environmental problems.

19. Ministers examined a report on the achievements of the Conference