

My country has already embarked on the demolition of the rampant military machine. We shall continue along that path. We would welcome it if all the participating states proceeded in a similar manner.

We welcomed, with extraordinary satisfaction, the proposal by President Bush for a substantial reduction of the envisaged contingent of American and Soviet forces for Central Europe. The ceiling of one hundred and ninety-five thousand soldiers makes it possible to meet the wish of those states, among them also Czechoslovakia, which do not deem it necessary to have foreign troops stationed in their territories.

Mr. Chairman, we are today jointly launching working in a cause that took more than thirty four years to mature to this stage of its materialization in the form of a proposal put forward by President Bush on the 12th of May last year.

Czechoslovakia welcomes and unequivocally supports the proposal for the creation of an Open Skies regime. The reason we do so is after major political changes that have occurred in our society, we are determined to contribute towards the all-round strengthening of confidence and progress in the process of disarmament where precise and consistent verification represents the basic prerequisite, also because the proposal meets the call for maximum transparency of military activities and military organizations and, furthermore, because, in our view, this regime will significantly enhance collective security, which is our ultimate goal.

This precisely is the path to creating conditions in which military alliances will be gradually losing their justification.

It is, of course, typical that today we discuss Open Skies while the skies have been already open for tens of years and for decades we have been able from satellites to read the licence plates on cars.

The Open Skies is, therefore, a symbol of the changing times. We have to agree on something which in one way or another has been here for a long time. But the concurrence of views demonstrates our desire for transparency in military matters.

If an agreement is reached, it will be an indisputable contribution towards overcoming the division of Europe.

We would wish that the Open Skies project might gradually be open to all the states of Europe, that it might develop into a system of confidence-building measures which would have a truly European-wide and eventually also a global character.