

Thus one distinct feature of our Alliance is that it is not simply a group of nations forced together by outward circumstances or by geography. We are neighbours who find cohesion in our common ideals. We can work in harmony because of our dedication to democratic principles. And so, in speaking of this twenty-fifth anniversary year as being the year of the revitalization of the Atlantic Alliance, we should bear in mind the evolution of the activities of our Alliance and its contribution over the past 25 years to improved conditions for all mankind. For, if we were to examine the activities of our 15 nations since 1949, it would become evident that the principles that guided our nations 25 years ago have continued in force throughout this period and remain relevant today.

This Atlantic Alliance was created by men possessed of wisdom and tenacity. Their concern a quarter of a century ago was the protection of our way of life from a common external threat. Today our civilization faces numerous challenges, some of them unforeseen then by even the most farsighted. It has been our willingness as partners in NATO to face up to these issues of change that has proved the strength of the Alliance. We consider that NATO continues to be a most useful international forum for exchanging and discussing the views of its various members, not only through its structured organs but, as well, through its adjunct bodies such as the Atlantic Treaty Association. This Association and the Atlantic Council of Canada enables parliamentarians and academics to involve themselves in foreign affairs and to expand and communicate their knowledge to others by discussing the vital issues of the day with their counterparts from other NATO countries.

As a representative of a Government committed to the principles and policies of the Atlantic Alliance, I hope that the exchange of views that takes place here this week will confirm the solidarity of the Alliance -- not for the sake of solidarity alone but as a result of a fundamental evaluation of why NATO exists and how we, collectively and individually, benefit from it. While an open examination runs the risk of disenchantment, it is my view that a continuing examination of the basic principles that constitute the underlying strength of the Alliance can only benefit its members.

The Alliance will remain strong as long as it enjoys wide public support in all its member nations. You have an essential role to play in explaining Alliance actions and policies to the people of your countries so that their support can be based on a proper understanding of what the Alliance is all about. In the end,

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