

both in numbers and in effectiveness. At a special meeting of foreign and defence ministers in Brussels on December 12, 1979, NATO decided to counter the massive deployment of new Soviet SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles with a plan to produce and deploy in Europe a number of new ballistic and cruise missiles, beginning in late 1983. At the same time, NATO ministers invited the Soviet Union to engage in arms control negotiations seeking limits on the numbers of these weapons on both sides at the lowest level possible.

At the INF negotiations which began in Geneva in November 1981, initial negotiating positions were tabled. The US position, worked out in close consultation with NATO allies, is based on a bold "zero option" approach which proposes that deployment plans for new US Pershing and cruise missiles will be cancelled in return for the dismantling of Soviet SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 missiles. The Soviet Union has reiterated a proposal for a freeze in INF deployment and reduction of INF systems down to 300 on both sides. The net effect of the Soviet proposal would be to allow the triple-warhead SS-20 missiles to remain in place while denying the West any possibility to deploy equivalent systems.

Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks

Next to strategic arms negotiations, perhaps the most important ongoing East-West arms control negotiations are those of the Conference on the Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe, now known as MBFR, which began in Vienna in 1973. In these negotiations, NATO and the Warsaw Pact have been seeking agreement on ways to reduce the level of the opposing forces in central Europe with undiminished security for both sides. As anticipated from the outset, many difficulties have been encountered and progress has been slow. A principal obstacle has been the failure to agree on the size of the Eastern forces in the area which would be subject to reductions. The negotiations continued through 1981 albeit, with little forward movement. As with SALT and other arms control negotiations, the deterioration in the East-West political climate that followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and later the Soviet menace to Poland, could not but adversely affect the prospects for agreements.

Canada continues to believe that a mutual reduction of forces in central Europe would ease East-West tensions and improve confidence. Such a development, besides being important in itself, could lead to further progress in arms control and disarmament. Within the North Atlantic Alliance, Canada has been a consistent supporter of the aims of MBFR and has participated actively in the formulation of policy and the conduct of negotiations.