

comprehensive programme of exploration and negotiation which they envisage.

19. Ministers reviewed the first report from NATO's Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society and welcomed the progress made in the six months since the committee was established as a demonstration of the value of allied co-operation on the urgent problems of human environment. Intensive studies now in progress will contribute to national and international action on a broad range of environmental issues, including such pressing concerns as air and water pollution.

20. Minister reaffirmed the view that the benefit of the alliance's work in mankind's environment particularly could become a basis for broader co-operation between east and west in this field of ever-increasing importance. They considered that this could be ensured either through existing international organizations providing a useful framework for enhanced co-operation or by any other appropriate method.

21. The next ministerial session of the North Atlantic Council will be held in Brussels in December, 1970.

#### DECLARATION ON MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS

1. Meeting at Rome on 26th and 27th May, 1970, the ministers representing countries participating in NATO's integrated defence programme recall and reaffirm the commitment of their nations to pursue effective policies directed towards a greater relaxation of tensions in their continuing search for a just and durable peace. They recall, in particular, the invitation they have previously addressed to the Soviet Union and other countries of eastern Europe to join them in discussing the possibility of mutual and balanced force reductions.

2. The objective of the work on which their representatives have been engaged has been to prepare a realistic basis for active explora-

tion between the interested parties at an early date and thereby to establish whether it could serve as a starting point for fruitful negotiation. Such exploratory talks would assist those concerned in developing in detail criteria and objectives for substantive negotiations to follow at the appropriate stage in a forum to be determined. They would also provide tangible evidence of the readiness to build confidence between east and west.

3. Ministers invite interested states to hold exploratory talks on mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe, with special reference to the central region. They agree that in such talks the allies would put forward the following considerations:

(a) mutual force reductions should be compatible with the vital security interests of the alliance and should not operate to the military disadvantage of either side having regard for the differences arising from geographical and other considerations;

(b) reductions should be on a basis of reciprocity, and phased and balanced as to their scope and timing;

(c) reductions should include stationed and indigenous forces and their weapons systems in the area concerned;

(d) there must be adequate verification and controls to ensure the observance of agreements on mutual and balanced force reductions.

4. As a first step ministers requested the Foreign Minister of Italy to transmit this declaration on their behalf through diplomatic channels to all other interested parties, including neutral and non-aligned governments. They further agreed that in the course of their normal bilateral and other contacts member governments would seek to obtain the responses and reactions of other governments. Members of the alliance will consult further regarding the outcome of their soundings with a view to enabling the alliance to determine what further individual or joint exploration might be useful.

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