

Monsieur le Bourgmestre, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, Mesdames, Mesdemoiselles, Messieurs:

I know that I speak for all of us when I say how happy I am that we are meeting this year in Brussels. This beautiful and historic city has always been one of the centres of European civilization and art, as the architectural treasures of Grand Place and the Hotel de Ville testify. Moreover, the thoughtful arrangements for our reception and the warm welcome we have received have touched us and impressed us all very much. They redound to the credit of the Belgian Government and of Bourgomaster Cooremans, who has guided the affairs of this city with such distinction in recent years.

The conjunction of recent events was not foreseen when it was decided last December to accept the invitation of the Belgian Government to hold this meeting in Brussels. It is especially appropriate that we are meeting at this turning point in our Atlantic affairs in this city. For it was from Brussels in 1948 that the nations of Western Europe sent forth their historic message of hope and of courage - the first call for common action to meet a common threat. The Governments of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom "resolved to afford assistance to each other, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in maintaining international peace and security and in resisting any policy of aggression". They further resolved "to associate progressively in the pursuance of these aims with other States inspired by the same ideals and animated by the like determination". The Atlantic Treaty a year later was the direct consequence of this call from Brussels.