

not a new one. It was, indeed, President Eisenhower, who first made a proposal on the subject during his summit meeting with General Secretary Khrushchev in July 1955.

At that time, and in that conference room in Geneva, the presentation of the proposal, according to President Eisenhower's memoirs, was immediately followed by a loud, unexpected clap of thunder, an electricity breakdown, total darkness in the conference room, and stunned silence.

Seeing the large number of delegations present today both from East and West, I am happy to note that we have recovered from that shock eventually and that now we can discuss this bold and interesting idea.

I am grateful to President Bush for having launched the Open Skies proposal in May last year. The moment was well chosen. During the last few years dramatic changes have taken place and, although different in form as well as in thrust, they have in common that they mark the beginning of a new era that holds out bold promises.

In paraphrasing one of England's most famous poets, Milton, one could say "Europe lost, Europe regained", although we have hardly reached the state of paradise yet in Europe.

The unrelenting desire of the peoples to live in freedom and to build jointly, guided by a common heritage, a better Europe has uncovered new horizons. The Cold War is behind us; new tasks lie ahead.

One of these certainly is the management of change, our joint responsibility to ensure that the new Europe will develop along peaceful lines and remain embedded in a structure of stability.

As far as the Netherlands are concerned, two indispensable elements of such a structure of stability are the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance.

I am convinced that the process of European integration and the trans-Atlantic partnership will be two cornerstones of the new European architecture which we will have to design in the coming years. This architecture will have to be a robust one, strong enough to withstand any tendencies toward what I would call a re-nationalization of European policies, meaning a falling-back to the unstable and dangerous era of rampant nationalism and threatening power policies.

An important building-block in this new European architecture will also be a strengthened CSCE. The Helsinki process provides us with an excellent instrument for intensifying the co-operation between all European countries and enhancing security for all.