

1 Opening Plenary

co-chairs: Joanna Miller, Ploughshares-Winnipeg; and Tariq Rauf, Monterey Institute

1.1 Setting the Context

Steven Lee, National Director, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD), explained that the mandate of the Centre is to engage Canadians in thinking about, and developing, Canadian foreign policy. The seminar is very timely; it will be able to contribute to the parliamentary debate and to policy development in other fora currently underway. Ideas for policy options generated will be reported to the Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) officials and the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. The seminar will also feed into the ongoing work of academics and international NGOs.

Doug Roche reported that the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons represents fifteen organizations from across the country specializing in nuclear disarmament issues. He observed that the seminar comes at an important moment both domestically - with a policy review underway by the Parliamentary Committee - and internationally. Moreover, Canada has recently asserted itself as a leader on the landmines issue. Though we have these opportunities, widely divergent views exist on how to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons, so the seminar offers a timely opportunity to put forward some of the policy options.

Paul Meyer, Director of Regional Security and Peacekeeping, DFAIT, suggested that Canada's disproportionate influence in international security policy rests on the conceptual leadership that is a product of policy debates among interested sectors of Canadian society. Ideas generated through exchanges such as this provide the underpinning for an activist Canadian foreign policy.

1.2 NATO and the Strategic Concept Review

Dr. John Barrett, Policy Planning Unit, NATO Political Affairs Department

Agreement on revisions to the Strategic Concept is expected by March or April of 1999, to coincide with the Washington Summit scheduled for end of April 1999. The current Strategic Concept is based on the earlier MC 14.3, a review of which was launched by the London summit in 1990 and adopted at the Rome Summit in 1991. It takes a broad approach to security, reflecting changes associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall which offered NATO opportunities to protect its members by political as well as military means. It recognises that security and stability have, in addition to the defensive, economic, environmental, social and political dimensions, and, therefore, that managing the diversity of challenges requires a broad approach to security. The Strategic Concept identifies risks to Allied security as arising less from calculated aggression than from instability arising from economic, social and political difficulties, such as ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes. Risks are therefore multi-faceted and multi-directional and consequently difficult to assess and difficult to predict.

Reviewing the strategic and political environment of 1991, setting out alliance objectives and security functions, and then describing this new, broad approach to security, the 1991 Strategic Concept provided guidelines for defense and for revising the force posture based on the principles of collective defense and integrated military structure.

One of the reasons for updating the Strategic Concept now is that there have been many changes in the European security landscape since 1991. Some of these changes were raised in the 1994 Brussels and 1997 Madrid summits, the latter providing the mandate for the Strategic Concept review. It is not clear where the revision will lead, although the following changes, which have taken place since the present Strategic Concept was established, give some indication of the