

Mr. Chairman:

We are gathered here this week to conclude more than two years of successful negotiations on the whole range of interrelated subjects essential to security and cooperation in Europe.

When this Conference began, I said in my opening statement that our task would not be easy, and it has not been. The problems have at times seemed intractable; the language often bitter; the negotiations tense and at times frustrating. There has been the temptation to gloss over difficult issues, to hide real differences. But only by speaking frankly, by facing our differences directly, could we achieve the real changes our people have a right to expect.

Our world has changed since we began this negotiation, and generally changed for the better. For the first time in history, there is an agreement to abolish a whole class of nuclear weapons. The two superpowers have a better attitude towards one another and towards multilateral institutions like the United Nations. Some regional conflicts have been resolved or are on their way to resolution in the Middle East, in Africa and Asia. Soviet forces are withdrawing from Afghanistan and Mr. Gorbachev has offered unilateral force reductions in Eastern Europe. Our political environment has become more positive, more hopeful.

From the beginning of the Vienna Meeting, Canada raised the fundamental issue of compliance with CSCE commitments. Candidly, but factually and fairly, we called attention to shortcomings, because we were convinced that unless there were better compliance, or a demonstrated willingness to improve it, further promises were unlikely to be meaningful. Far from building a climate of confidence, they would have eroded it.

We firmly believed that this Conference should produce real progress on the whole range of issues covered by the Helsinki Final Act. Canada played an active role in all three Baskets in sponsoring and supporting measures that addressed the most serious issues. We pursued these goals patiently, constructively, and at times stubbornly. We were convinced that we would deserve to be judged harshly by future generations if we failed to make the most of the Vienna Meeting. That was a common purpose of the Canadian government and of the non-governmental organizations, here and at home, with whom we were able to work so constructively.

Incrementally, and by hard bargaining, the Vienna Concluding Document took shape. Subjects whose introduction into a CSCE forum would earlier have been denounced as "confrontational" or "interference in internal affairs" were considered openly and debated freely. We could begin to see that the opportunity open to us was even greater than we had thought, if we had the will and the patience to exploit it to its fullest extent.