

Wednesday, April 4th, marks the day, thirty-five years ago, when Canada and eleven other founding nations signed the North Atlantic Treaty, the document which created the Atlantic Alliance. This treaty enshrines the basic principle on which NATO rests; the preservation of peace and security through collective defence.

For thirty-five years the Atlantic Alliance, now with sixteen members, has made a vital contribution to stability, to the deterrence of conflict, and to attempts at fashioning a more constructive dialogue between the nations of East and West. Canada's participation in NATO -- including the commitment of Canadian Forces -- is a continuing affirmation that today, no less than in 1949, our country's security is closely linked to that of both Western Europe and the United States.

Much has changed since 1949, and NATO has demonstrated a capacity over the years to respond to new challenges. The Alliance has become a major forum, if not the key forum for its members, for the exchange of information and the harmonization of views on international issues of common concern. Canada sets great store by NATO as an essential forum for free and frank consultation among the nations of the Atlantic Community.

The value of NATO's consultative mechanisms are nowhere better illustrated than by the focus on an immense variety of questions involved with East/West relations. Members of the Alliance have long recognized that collective security is best guaranteed by the combination of an adequate defence capability and the pursuit of a general climate of confidence and mutual respect in the broad spectrum of relations between East and West.

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