

would take account of the special features of the German situation, represent an important contribution to security and co-operation in Europe. The ministers express the hope that all governments desiring to contribute to a policy of relaxation of tension in Europe will, to the extent possible, facilitate a negotiated settlement of the relationship between the two parts of Germany and the development of communications between the populations.

9. The ministers noted with satisfaction that the four powers, in the framework of their rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole, began discussions on 26th March about improving the situation with regard to Berlin and free access to the city. They express the hope that the difficulties which exist at this especially sensitive area of the east-west relationship could be overcome by practical measures and that Berlin would be enabled to make its full contribution to economic and cultural exchanges.

10. The conversations between the United States and the Soviet Union aiming at the limitation of strategic armaments, which began last November at Helsinki, have been continued at Vienna in April. Ministers welcome these talks, the outcome of which is so important for the security of Europe and the future of humanity.

11. On the occasion of the coming into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, ministers re-emphasized the importance they attach to limiting the spread of nuclear weapons as well as to measures for genuine nuclear disarmament. They noted with interest the efforts now under way to exclude mass destruction weapons from the sea-bed and to deal with the problem of control of biological and chemical weapons. They expressed the hope that further progress on disarmament measures, with appropriate safeguards can reduce the arms burdens borne by all.

12. The members of the North Atlantic Alliance have, over a number of years, proclaimed their interest in arms control and disarmament measures which facilitate a gradual elimination of the military confrontation in Europe. Ministers recalled the declarations issued at Reykjavik in 1968, and at Brussels in 1969. They noted that up to now these declarations had led to no meaningful reply.

13. The allies have nevertheless carried out intensive studies on mutual force reductions in accordance with the directions given by ministers in December 1969. Ministers exam-

ined the detailed report presented to them by the North Atlantic Council in Permanent Session. This has been of great value in clarifying the complex issues involved. Ministers gave instructions for further relevant studies which would guide policies and explorations in this field.

14. Ministers, having examined all these developments, both positive and negative, and having taken note of the report on the procedures for negotiation which they had commissioned from the Permanent Council, stated that they were ready to multiply exploratory conversations with all interested parties on all questions affecting peace.

15. In so far as progress is recorded as a result of these talks and in the ongoing talks—in particular on Germany and Berlin—the allied governments state that they would be ready to enter into multilateral contacts with all interested governments. One of the main purposes of such contacts would be to explore when it will be possible to convene a conference, or a series of conferences on European security and co-operation. The establishment of a permanent body could be envisaged as one means, among others, of embarking upon multilateral negotiations in due course.

16. Among the subjects to be explored, affecting security and co-operation in Europe, are included in particular:

(a) the principles which should govern relations between states, including the renunciation of force;

(b) the development of international relations with a view to contributing to the freer movement of people, ideas and information and to developing co-operation in the cultural, economic, technical and scientific fields as well as in the field of human environment.

17. In addition, ministers representing countries participating in NATO's integrated defence programme attach particular importance to further exploration with other interested parties of the possibility of mutual and balanced force reductions and have therefore issued a declaration on this subject.

18. As a first step, Ministers requested the Foreign Minister of Italy to transmit this communiqué on their behalf through diplomatic channels to all other interested parties including neutral and non-aligned governments. They further agreed that member governments would seek reactions of other governments to the initiation of the