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Open Skies: Canada Hosts Major Negotiation

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From February 12 to 28, 1990, Canada will play host to its 15 NATO allies and the seven member-states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) as these two groups negotiate an agreement providing for regular over-flight of each others' territory using unarmed surveillance aircraft.

Open Skies, as the concept is called, is not an arms control proposal *per se*. No arms will be limited or reduced as a direct result of an Open Skies agreement. Rather, Open Skies is a confidence-building measure. Its purpose is to increase the openness of the two sides about their military activities, and thus strengthen the developing atmosphere of cooperation between NATO and the WTO and enhance the feeling of security of all participating states.

Although Open Skies will be negotiated separately from any arms control agreement, the arrangement is likely to contribute significantly to the verification of a range of existing and future arms control agreements. Indeed, Canada believes that Open Skies will be a useful adjunct to the verification methods eventually agreed to in a treaty on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe.

The government favours a broad Open Skies agreement, with as few restrictions as possible. Although the original agreement will be negotiated among the states of NATO and the WTO, nothing should, in principle, preclude other European states from joining Open Skies at some future date.

Agreement will build confidence and strengthen NATO-WTO cooperation

The Open Skies Conference, to be held in Ottawa, will be divided into two portions: a ministerial session from February 12 to 14, at which the foreign ministers of all 23 NATO and WTO states will be present; and an official session from February 15 to 28, during which teams of officials from each country will carry out the negotiations. The Conference will be opened by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark will host the ministerial portion of the Conference. The head of the Canadian delegation at the official level will be Mr. John Noble, Director General of the International Security and Arms Control Bureau of External Affairs and International Trade Canada (EAITC).

The Ottawa Conference will be a work-oriented gathering, the purpose of which will be to establish the outlines of an Open Skies regime. The negotiations are expected to be concluded and an agreement signed at a second Open Skies Conference, to be held later in 1990 in Budapest, Hungary.

Canada offered to host the first Open Skies conference because of its commitment to improving East-West relations. It has long viewed Open Skies as a valuable proposal which, once implemented, will enhance both Canadian and international security and speed progress in arms control. In addition, Canada's longstanding expertise and credibility in the field of verification, both at NATO and in the UN, made the country a natural leader on the Open Skies issue.

The Ottawa Conference will be the first major East-West gathering of the 1990s, and the first meeting of the NATO and WTO foreign ministers since the dramatic events that swept Europe in the fall of 1989. As such, it will help to set the tone of East-West relations for the coming decade. Canada intends to work vigorously to ensure that the Conference, and its follow-up in Budapest, result in an Open Skies agreement that can form the basis of a new East-West security relationship characterized by openness and cooperation rather than secrecy and competition.

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