

We will be meeting today and tomorrow in a less formal way that reflects the Secretary-General's considerable efforts to improve the quality of political discussions among Foreign Ministers. Our agenda will permit more time than ever before for those issues, current and prospective, that concern Allies the most.

Of all the issues before us, the most important is the effective management of the West's relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The most urgent issue is that of arms control and disarmament. International terrorism and conflict in the Third World should also command some attention.

There exists today a renewed desire for cooperation between East and West that cannot fail to promote peace, if properly cultivated. But the peace that we have enjoyed for nearly forty years continues to depend on our having a sizeable deterrent force in being.

It is a paradox we have had to deal with ever since the Alliance was formed: Only by maintaining forces sufficient to counter those of our adversaries have we been able to ensure our defence.

But the most important phase of our work lies ahead of us: ensuring our security at a reduced level of armaments.

In the realm of arms control and disarmament, we are in a period that is both uncertain and expectant.

No one is pleased with the current military situation. Weapons continue to accumulate. They are more and more sophisticated. And the stakes are so high, and the negotiations so complex that progress must inevitably be very slow.

When we add to this Mr. Gorbachev's repeated indulgence in what I will charitably call Soviet "kite flying", you will agree that the way ahead is anything but clear.

But public opinion expects early results, and it is imperative that we try to meet those expectations. We need to get the message across that the Geneva negotiations are vital to international security, and that we have gone into them determined to see them through to a successful conclusion.

In this connection, I should like to thank the United States publicly for the quality of the information it has supplied to Allies on the Geneva negotiations. To those professional critics who are quick to condemn what they see as a lack of consultation within the Alliance, let me say that at no time has the United States failed to keep its Allies posted on the course of the negotiations.