

is concerned, we have consistently taken the objective of our mandate very seriously and have done much to fill out the framework it provided with concrete proposals. Throughout all these years, and in all our proposals, the guiding principle of our position has been to seek a genuine improvement of the security relationship in Europe reflected in a meaningful agreement that takes into account the requirements of security and stability.

West has sought improvement in European Security

The West has played its full part in filling the conceptual void that existed at the outset of our talks. It has contributed a number of important concepts, which in the course of the negotiations have gradually been adopted by the East in principle, and have thus become common ground. Examples are the concepts of parity expressed in common ceilings, collectivity, strict and effective verification and the need to solve the problem of asymmetries. We have contributed a number of other ideas, such as the necessary link between reductions and ensuing limitations and the need for associated measures designed to promote the general goal of increasing security and stability. We have proposed numerically ambitious reductions, and more modest ones, reductions including armaments and reductions focussing on manpower only. In the course of these fifteen years, we have made a number of different proposals for a possible agreement: a phased approach, a comprehensive agreement and a time-limited first-phase agreement.

Despite these efforts, we did not reach an agreement in this forum. However, the West is optimistic as we prepare for a new beginning in conventional arms control. We welcome the expressed willingness on the part of the East to engage seriously in conventional arms control issues. There is now general recognition that significant disparities exist in the conventional force balance, which need to be eliminated.

Looking back on these fifteen years of negotiations, our conclusion is that, despite the absence of an agreement,

'the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction Talks were a pioneering attempt to arrive at conventional arms control measures in a crucial area of Europe.' This is a quotation from the speech of the Canadian Foreign Minister, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, at the CSCE concluding plenary meeting only two weeks ago. Our talks have made a valuable contribution to an increasing mutual understanding between East and West of each other's positions, to raising public awareness of the importance of the issues involved and to the gradual creation of a better security relationship in Europe. The experience of the process of negotiating on conventional arms control which we have thus gained is of great and lasting value. And finally, our talks have been a useful instrument to maintain the dialogue between East and West on security issues, even during the more difficult periods of our relationship. As such, our talks have formed an element of stability in themselves.

Our talks end here today. But the efforts to bring about greater security and a more stable relationship in Europe must and will go on. The conclusion of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty proved that — given political will on both sides — it is possible to find solutions for seemingly intractable problems. At the same time, it has heightened the awareness of governments and publics alike of the vital importance of the conventional aspects of security and has emphasized the need to try to achieve a more equitable conventional force relationship in Europe at lower levels. The general improvement in the East-West climate, as seen most recently in the successful conclusion of the Vienna CSCE Follow-up Meeting, also points to optimism about the prospects for arms control. The Governments of the West remain committed to the process of arms control, which is an integral part of the West's security policy. Our Governments will continue to explore all opportunities consistent with our security requirements, for effective and verifiable arms control agreements. As has been stated by the NATO Heads of State and Government in their Brussels declaration 'The Way Ahead' on 3rd March 1988: 'We seek negotiations not for their own sake but to reach agree-

ments which can significantly reduce the risk of conflict and make a genuine contribution to stability and peace.'

Mr. Chairman, I have already mentioned that our discussions have contributed to a better understanding between East and West. I think this is now the right moment to add that these many years have also given great satisfaction on a personal level, as they have forged so many bonds of friendship and mutual esteem. I am sure these bonds will last, for which we should be most grateful.

It is also the right moment to address a word of thanks to the authorities of the Republic of Austria. The impeccable and hospitable way in which the authorities have contributed to the organization of our talks deserves our gratitude. We are also indebted to our interpreters who have faithfully rendered their services to our talks for so many years." □

New Conventional Talks Underway

On March 9, the Department of External Affairs issued the following communiqué:

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today announced that Canada, at the opening sessions of the two new negotiations on conventional arms control in Vienna, tabled a series of proposals aimed at enhancing stability in Europe. Canada tabled these proposals on behalf of all the states members of the NATO Alliance.

In the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Mr. Clark noted that Canada and its Western Allies seek: the establishment of a secure and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels; the elimination of disparities prejudicial to stability; and the elimination of the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action. To achieve these ends, we have proposed: a radical reduction in the overall levels