

CBMs and Preparations for the Madrid CSCE Follow-up Conference

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the context of the CSCE are actions taken by participating states that provide for greater transparency of their military activities. The Helsinki Final Act requires, in particular, the prior notification of major military manoeuvres "for the promotion of mutual understanding and the strengthening of confidence, stability and security". Manoeuvres including more than 25,000 troops were to be the subject of notification at least 21 days prior to the commencement of the manoeuvre. The invitation of foreign observers to manoeuvres was also provided for in the Final Act as was the prior notification (on a voluntary basis) of smaller-scale military manoeuvres and major military movements.

The implementation of these non-binding measures in the post-Helsinki period was reasonably satisfactory but a number of countries, including Canada, saw the need for their further development and enlargement. At the Belgrade follow-up meeting, Canada co-sponsored a proposal designed to expand the coverage of the Final Act provisions by inter alia decreasing the threshold of notification to 10,000 troops, advancing the notification period from 21 to 30 days, requiring prior notification of military movements, and expanding the relevant information to be provided. This proposal, like all others, was left on the table at Belgrade due to the absence of consensus. Nevertheless, it still represents, in the Canadian view, a practical step towards refining and deepening the collective commitment to confidence-building as expressed in the Final Act.

In the period leading up to the follow-up meeting in Madrid, CBMs have taken on a certain prominence reflecting the current emphasis being placed on the military dimension of détente. The French proposals for a European Disarmament Conference and President Brezhnev's recent announcement of unilateral troop withdrawals and suggestions regarding notification procedures will undoubtedly have an influence on the consideration of CBMs at Madrid although neither development is formally associated with the CSCE process. Canada, while hoping to see CBMs developed further at Madrid, wishes to ensure that an overall balance in the consideration of the provisions of the Final Act is preserved. During a series of bilateral consultations with other participating states currently underway, Canada will be exploring the question of CBMs and the role they can most usefully play at the Madrid meeting.