

Mr. Chairman,

The idea of opening our skies to allow inspections by air over each other's territory is not a new one. It was President Eisenhower, who first made a proposal on the subject, during his summit meeting with General Secretary Khrushchev in Geneva in July 1955. At that time, the presentation of the proposal - according to President Eisenhower's memoirs - was immediately followed by a loud, unexpected clap of thunder, an electricity break-down, total darkness in the conference room and stunned silence. Seeing the large number of delegations present today both from East and West, I am happy to note that we have recovered from the shock eventually and that now we can discuss this bold and interesting idea.

I am grateful to President Bush for having launched the "Open Skies" proposal in May last year. I think that moment was well chosen. During the last few years dramatic changes have indeed occurred in the relations between East and West. Although different in form as well as thrust, these changes have in common that they mark the beginning of a new era that holds out bold promises; in paraphrasing Milton, one could say "Europe lost, Europe regained", although we have hardly reached the state of paradise yet in Europe. The unrelenting desire of the peoples to live in freedom and to build jointly, guided by a common heritage, a better Europe, has uncovered new horizons.

The cold war is behind us; new tasks lie ahead.

One of these is the "management of change", our joint responsibility to ensure that the new Europe will develop along peaceful lines and remain embedded in a structure of stability. As far as the Netherlands are concerned two indispensable elements of such a structure of stability are the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance. I am convinced that the process of European integration and the