

Unfortunately the explorations on MBFR have not yet begun because of Soviet unwillingness to receive Manlio Brosio, former Secretary-General of NATO, as an explorer. More recently, however, the Soviet Union has expressed its willingness to explore procedures for negotiations on MBFR. At the Bonn meeting NATO ministers affirmed their support for multilateral explorations. The next step will be to find means of translating this idea into action. I suggested in Bonn that a group should be selected among NATO members to engage the Soviet Union and other interested countries in preliminary talks to seek sufficient agreement to bring about negotiations. Considerable interest was shown in the Canadian idea at the meeting and we hope Alliance members can reach accord on some form of group approach in the near future.

The atmosphere in Bonn was very much influenced by the promising progress recently made in the broad negotiating process by which we hope to resolve the underlying causes of tension, including the division of Germany. NATO countries responded by expressing their intention to pursue the opportunities for progress on both preparations for a conference and explorations for MBFR. We should have no illusions about the difficulties that lie ahead. In many ways the task which now faces us is the most difficult of all. We shall have to combine continued defence preparedness with pursuit of détente, Alliance solidarity with willingness to seek accommodation with the other side and firmness on basic principles with flexibility on means.

Canada has direct and identifiable interests in both security and co-operation in Europe. That is why we have supported Alliance policies in defence and détente in the past and why we intend to work with our NATO allies in the continued search for improved East-West relations through mutual balanced force reductions and a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

I should now like to table the communiqué issued after the meeting of the North Atlantic Alliance, and suggest, if the House agrees, that it be printed as an appendix to Hansard.