

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today two important steps taken in the last few days by Canada, in concert with its friends and allies, to open a further phase in the continuing process of negotiation which is aimed at lowering tensions and increasing security and cooperation in Europe and in the world.

The first of these steps was the acceptance of an invitation from the Government of Finland to all European states, Canada and the United States to attend Multilateral Preparatory Talks on the question of holding a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. These talks will begin November 22 in Helsinki. Canada will be represented by its Ambassador, Mr. Ernest Côté. Our aim is to establish whether enough common ground exists to warrant reasonable expectations that a conference would produce satisfactory results.

The second and complementary step was the extension of a formal invitation on November 15 to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the USSR, by Canada, in concert with the Governments of Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the USA, to participate in exploratory talks on Mutual Balanced Force Reductions in Central Europe. In addition the Government of the Federal Republic communicated the same invitation to the German Democratic Republic. It is proposed that these exploratory talks commence on January 31, 1973, at a site yet to be agreed upon.

Those two separate but related steps will, it is hoped, pave the way for two parallel sets of negotiations which may lead to further progress in détente and to a reduction of the military confrontation in Europe and in cooperation with the countries of Europe, Canada will participate fully in these negotiations and endeavour to make a positive contribution to their successful conclusion.