

Eduard Shevardnadze's  
Statement at the  
Open Skies Conference

---

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of Open Skies implies an open-minded debate, which may cover all its different aspects --from conceptual approaches to technical points.

My task, as I see it, is to set forth our vision of the problem, focusing on key issues and fundamental principles.

The Ottawa Conference is being held in winter--a winter which, for all the ups and downs in the temperature, has not been cold. Our meeting in the capital of Canada could be another clear sign that the Cold War is over. It went on for over forty years, leaving in people's minds the memories not only of a big political chill but, what is more, of fear, uncertainty about the future, and restrictions of what man values most--his freedom.

It is wrong to think that such restrictions affected societies only on one side of the Iron Curtain.

Passports stamped "Not Valid for Travel to Communist Countries" set a definite limit to freedom of movement in the West too.

The prefix "anti", applied, in both its Soviet and American versions, to countless things, was common on both sides of the political watershed.

But why recall all of this now?

Because we should not forget why the skies close or open.

As a poet once said, it is because someone needs it.

Walls, curtains and bans create fear, suspicion and intolerance. When the world had all of that in abundance, for long decades everyone needed closed doors. As a result, the skies were closed and divided, as was the world.

Today we need open skies, and not just the skies. The willingness of the participants in this conference to discuss this idea is evidence of tremendous changes in our perception of each other.