

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN:

Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I would call now on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Luxembourg, His Excellency Georges Wohlfart.

HIS EXCELLENCY GEORGES WOHLFART,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE, LUXEMBOURG:

Mr. Chairman, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I should like to join my voice to those of previous speakers in order to thank the Canadian authorities for having spontaneously accepted to host in Ottawa the first session of the Open Skies Conference. I would also like to express my appreciation to the government of Hungary who has offered to host the second stage of this conference.

My country is happy about the initiative taken last May by President Bush, and I should like to pay homage to him for that here. At the time we are constantly feeling encouraged in our objective to see draconian reductions in arms great importance should be accorded to a means of surveillance and information as well as verification of disarmament agreements.

The Open Skies regime is the proper measure of confidence-building and transparency. I am convinced that this system of verification of an entirely new type could also turn out to be an important factor in the context of new structures for security between East and West. In this spirit Luxembourg wholeheartedly supports this initiative.

When President Eisenhower first expressed the idea of Open Skies 35 years ago, it was at the time a revolutionary idea; too innovative, perhaps, for the period. And yet the installation of a system of verification of such a scope would have corresponded to a dire need at the time and would certainly have contributed to attenuating tensions and mutual distrust.

Since that time the situation has changed and the famous spirit of glasnost has now penetrated the military world as well. The principle of intrusive verification has now been largely accepted and we see concrete applications of it, particularly in the implementation of the agreement on the elimination of -- The hope has been taken up again by President Bush and we can hope that it surely will have a satisfactory agreement. I think the Open Skies regime can only acquire its true dimension when it has served as a complement to the verification measures which are now being negotiated elsewhere. How can we help but think of the CFE agreement, which we hope to be able to sign at the end of the year.