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This meeting, the first of its kind, may perhaps acquire unique significance because of the moment of history in which we are living.

For what we are now witnessing and experiencing in Europe is the rapid disintegration of the post-war international order based on bi-polarity and division, on ideological, political and military confrontation.

A decisive factor in this process has been the dramatic movement toward democracy which emerged in the East European countries, given impetus by the winds of Gorbachev's perestroika.

Since November 10 of last year, Bulgaria has proudly and resolutely joined in this movement. The goal is the peaceful and orderly transition from a bureaucratic, monopolistic and oppressive authoritarian regime, to a multi-party, democratic, parliamentary system, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights and entrenched in a pluralistic market-oriented economy.

Despite philosophical and political differences these objectives are shared both by the governing party and by the newly emerged parties and organizations of the opposition. In order to translate this broad consensus into new legislation and into practical policies which would enjoy the broadest possible popular support, a national round-table has been set up and is holding regular sessions, with a view to preparing genuinely free, open and competitive general elections.

These radical internal changes are naturally reflected in Bulgaria's foreign policy where priorities based on the national interest and universal values are redefined on a democratic basis.

Bulgaria is an integral part of Europe, of its historical heritage, of European moral, political, social and cultural values. At a time when existing alliance structures and capabilities are put in doubt, we are determined to find a proper place for our country in the newly emerging all-European solutions. That is why we welcome and support the establishment of a new, comprehensive effective system of security and co-operation in Europe, based, to an ever-growing extent on disarmament, confidence building, political guarantees, and the interdependence of economic interests.

It is precisely for this reason, and with these hopes in mind, that Bulgaria welcomes the idea of holding a summit conference of the 35 CSCE member countries preceded by a preparatory meeting of ministers. We believe that joint preparatory work should start in the nearest future for the convening of this summit as early as possible during the autumn of this year.