

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great honour for me to be here to speak for the Government of Canada at this land-mark meeting. I know that Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, regrettably unable to be here today, would have appreciated as much as I do the gracious hospitality which has been extended to us by Dr. Mock and the Austrian authorities.

We have come together this week, here in Vienna, a city whose history extends both to the East and West, to mark the opening of two new negotiations on military security. The significance of these negotiations cannot be over emphasized.

We are here to help banish the threat of war in Europe and to search for new expressions of peace and security. We are here to establish new traditions of cooperation for future generations of Europeans and North Americans.

Forty-four years after the end of the Second World War, Europe remains a house divided between two military alliances, with over five million men and women still facing one another under arms. Despite the enormous progress made since 1945, Europeans continue to live with the spectre of sudden military attack. The present concentration of armed forces in Europe is the highest ever known in peace-time; its destructive potential is enormous.

Clearly, this is a situation which cannot be allowed to continue. Europe has seen, over the years, more than its share of war, and well understands its horrors. Canadians too understand the horrors of war: over 100,000 Canadian men and women have died in Europe in two World Wars. Such wars must never be allowed to happen again.

On March 9th, our delegations will sit down at two new negotiations, with the goal of lessening the possibility of war. One of these negotiations, dealing with Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, will attempt to build upon the already considerable results achieved at the Stockholm Conference; the second, a Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, will attempt to establish a balance of conventional armed forces at lower levels in Europe.

The negotiations which we are about to begin promise to be the most significant arms control and disarmament deliberations yet undertaken on a multilateral basis. If successful, they will have implications for negotiations in other areas as well, and will help consolidate the growing political will for a more stable Europe.