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NOTES FOR A STATEMENT BY THE
HONOURABLE ALLAN J. MACÉACHEN,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, TO THE
CONFERENCE ON CONFIDENCE- AND
SECURITY-BUILDING MEASURES
AND DISARMAMENT IN EUROPE

STOCKHOLM,
JANUARY 18, 1984

We are meeting here in Stockholm at a time when the dialogue on security in East-West relations has all too frequently been little more than a series of discordant pronouncements. Critically important negotiations on which great hopes had been fixed have been broken off, suspended or interrupted.

Concrete results seem as remote, as unattainable, as ever.

Let us all acknowledge the futility of acrimonious rhetoric, and let us acknowledge the need to restore dialogue -- and not only restore it, but deepen it.

Never has a conference been more urgently required than this one. And never have expectations - and hopes - been greater for a successful outcome.

To survey the condition of the world today is not a happy task.

Whichever way we turn, suspicion, distrust and tensions criss-cross our perspectives in a frightening manner.

And sharpened tensions have been accompanied by mounting rhetoric which, depressingly, seemed at times to have replaced the forthright dialogue by which nations customarily communicate their hopes and fears to each other.

Before this conference began, we had come close to a halt in our efforts to find more civilized ways of living with each other and talking to each other.

Since we last met in Madrid, there have been a number of developments which have made understanding and accommodation between East and West more difficult to achieve. In particular, the decision of the Soviet Union and its allies to suspend their participation in the major East-West arms control negotiations is most regrettable. We express this regret, not in the spirit of recrimination, but because we are convinced that sustained dialogue and the constructive pursuit of equitable and verifiable arms control agreements offer the best way to avert the risks of armed conflict.

We in the West demand respect for our legitimate security interests and are determined to ensure our security on the basis of a balance of forces at the lowest possible level. By the same token, however, we assert our respect for the legitimate security interests of all other countries.

It is in this spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect that we call for the resumption of East-West arms control negotiations at the earliest possible moment. For our part, we are ready and willing to begin again now.

In the words of the declaration issued in Brussels last month by the nations of the North Atlantic Alliance:

"We urge the countries of the Warsaw Pact to seize the opportunities we offer for a balanced and constructive relationship and for genuine detente."

It is the fear and the mistrust and the insecurity that have been building up in recent years that have been the driving force behind this conference.

Persistent and indeed escalating doubts prevail about what one side or the other intends to do with its arms. This is essentially a political issue and it constitutes the most likely basis for the outbreak of conventional war, which in turn could trigger a nuclear war.

Canada approaches the question of conventional arms in Europe from the premise that a more stable balance of forces must be established between the two alliances at the lowest possible level, if the danger of conflict is to be lessened. But how can we assure states that their security can be maintained without increasing military potentials to the dangerous levels we are witnessing today, especially in central Europe. We need to develop mechanisms which will lead to greater openness in military affairs among the participating states.

Unlike previous arms negotiations which have encountered difficulties in trying to strike numerical balances on the basis of what each side can do, our job here is to find ways of reassuring each other about what we intend to do, and more important, what we intend not to do.

This is the only way that we can break the spiral which impels states to redress perceived military imbalances, prompting their adversaries in turn to take countermeasures resulting in ever greater and increasingly unstable levels of arms.

The Prime Minister of Canada, concerned by the widening gap between military strategy and political purpose, has undertaken a personal initiative to encourage the reestablishment of political dialogue and confidence at the highest level between East and West. The leaders with whom he has met to date have agreed that there exists a pressing need to provide that jolt of political energy required to improve the climate and basis for the achievement of arms control agreements.

This conference offers an opportunity to restore political impulse to arms control in Europe because it links military and political confidence-building. For this reason, our work must be ambitious in scope, it must take into account all of the factors which are present in the current imbalance of conventional arms and which

could lead to surprise attack or political intimidation through the use of force.

This conference offers an opportunity to contribute in a unique and pioneering way to devising effective means and measures by which actual arms reductions can be implemented without diminishing the sense of security on which this process must rest.

We will not discover confidence by accident. We must work at it, we must create it, and the process is likely to be slow and laborious.

This is why this conference is so essential. And that is why it should embark on constructive business from the very outset. Efforts must begin right now on the task of translating the notion of confidence-building into sustainable measures and policies.

It would be easy for us to use the opportunity of the next weeks to make wonderful speeches.

But we have no time - our specific tasks are too imperative to allow us to indulge that temptation.

It would be easy to present a series of careful and detailed analyses of the balance or imbalance of arms, conventional or otherwise.

But do we really need to do that? Is the presentation of conflicting data and differing interpretations of what it means - are these the purposes that have brought us together?

And above all, it would be easy for us to engage in rhetoric:

In declamation
In denunciation
In recrimination

It is easy to make accusatory speeches - especially in times of stress and danger. It is much less easy to decide to set all that aside and to make an unemotional, workmanlike beginning on the slow and detailed task of finding ways to reverse a downward trendline in international dialogue.

Of inflamed debate and of recrimination we have all, surely, had enough.

Early on in our meeting here in Stockholm I appeal for a different approach to prevail:

Detailed
Specific
Serious
Urgent

Let us not waste time belabouring each other with the many unresolved grievances we can all list and recite without much trouble.

Of course these issues exist and of course they must be recognized and dealt with.

But are we prepared to allow them to obscure the possibilities for progress inherent in the mandate we have given ourselves for the endeavour on which we are embarking?

I hope not, and I know that my hope is shared by millions of people around the world.

We have come here to negotiate, to present and discuss propositions.

And to reach agreement on specific measures which will contribute to confidence, stability and security.

We, in the group of nations referred to as the West, have our conception of the type of measure on which we can build. We will present a package of ideas which, if accepted, would be a long step forward, creating a new basis on which to approach arms reduction.

We will propose measures which envisage more openness about basic military information, earlier notice of a wider range of military activities, mandatory rather than voluntary exchanges of observers at important military activities and ways to verify any agreements reached. These measures would promote assurance that the routine military activities of other participants in Europe are not threatening and would make unusual preparation for hostilities more difficult to conceal. They will also treat a practical problem which arises from the present limited mutual confidence: that is, how to deal with emergencies or accidents which could spark crises in Europe.

We have every expectation that others at this conference, individually and collectively, will bring forward their own ideas.

I am sure that some will be more interesting than others.

I am sure that we will be urged to consider measures that would be more declaratory than specific - and I am equally sure that we will, all of us, be vigilant about ideas that, by suggesting slick and easy and apparent solutions to agonizingly difficult problems, could lead us into a false and dangerous sense of security.

But that discussion is still to come.

For the moment let me impress on this gathering the sense of urgency which must attach to our work.

The presence here this week of so many Foreign Ministers underlines the importance which participating states attach to this conference and to the opportunity which it offers for a new beginning in East-West relations. But, if this conference is to fulfill our expectations, we as Foreign Ministers cannot confine our involvement in it to being present at its launching. We must undertake to keep the progress of the conference under close review, so that we are prepared to intervene at the political level whenever this may appear necessary to ensure forward movement. The construction of an edifice of mutually reinforcing military and political confidence is an urgent necessity and one which will require the constant application of political will.

Let us, as Ministers, commit ourselves here and now to investing this enterprise with a sense of political direction and urgency, and if it proves desirable for us to return to this forum to re-inspire and maintain that momentum, is there any among us who would not come back, who would assign a higher priority to other engagements?

Let us begin to negotiate.

Let us concentrate on the realistic goals defined by the mandate for this conference of confidence-building - and not on the enormity of some of the gaps that must ultimately be faced in our search for a less dangerous world.

A less dangerous world: I am convinced that that is what we all want - regardless of our political system, our geographical size, our armed might.

We are all in this together, superpower and mini-state. We move forward together, or we sink back into greater and greater danger.

I come back again and again to the urgency of our confidence-building task.

Never have imagination and determination been more urgently called for.

The Government of Canada commits itself now, as it has done in the past, to responding unstintingly to this challenge.

As we strike out along this new path, this road that begins in Stockholm, we declare solemnly that we will spare no effort in our common search for peace - and for the sense of confidence that underpins security.

Let us see whether we can, together, build confidence and restore a civilized political dialogue between us.