

Statement

Discours

Department of  
External  
Affairs



Ministère des  
Affaires  
extérieures

89/09

SPEECH

BY THE HONOURABLE MARY COLLINS,  
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE,  
TO THE MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS  
TO MARK THE OPENING OF NEW NEGOTIATIONS  
ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL IN EUROPE

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

March 7, 1989.

Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

Canada

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.

Today, all our peoples have grounds for new hope that the peace we now enjoy will continue - but in a more secure and less confrontational world. We are the makers of our own history. Let us harness our collective energy and direct it toward the creation of a more harmonious and stable European security framework.

The work that has gone into preparing these negotiations, both at the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting and in the Mandate Talks, has been protracted and arduous. However, the results are worthy of the effort. No arms control undertaking has ever started off on a firmer footing than the Negotiations on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures, nor has any begun with more clearly stated objectives and guidelines than the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

The signs are encouraging. True, a serious imbalance in conventional forces in Europe still exists. Yet, dramatic progress in arms control and disarmament has been made over the past few years, and problems which previously seemed intractable have yielded, or are in the process of yielding, to long-sought solutions.

The successful conclusion of the Stockholm Agreement in 1986, marked a major step forward toward enhanced security in Europe. The soundness of the agreement signed in Stockholm has been amply confirmed in its implementation.

Since January 1987, some 35 observations of military activities have been carried out under its terms. Canadian soldiers are among those who have been inspected and observed, and have themselves participated in observations. These observations have contributed materially to the heightened sense of confidence which now exists; they have helped entrench such important gains as the right to on-site inspection.

The pattern of observations and contacts among military personnel that has been established is unprecedented in both its nature and scope. A great opportunity exists to enhance this new climate for trust and cooperation. We must build carefully and well on this foundation.

All of our efforts, of course, have not been equally fruitful. Last month, for example, we concluded the Mutual and Balanced Forces Reduction (MBFR) talks without having reached agreement. The extent of common ground proved to be insufficient. However, even here we gained invaluable experience.

Earlier this year at the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Mr. Clark described the MBFR talks as a pioneering attempt at conventional arms control: the positions of the two sides converged on a number of issues and the participants gained a clearer picture of what will be necessary to achieve mutually agreeable and verifiable reductions and limitations of forces and armaments in Europe.

Solid progress has also been achieved in other areas of arms control. The 1988 INF treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union has been hailed, quite rightly, as an historic achievement. The progress that these two countries have continued to make toward an agreement on major reductions in their strategic nuclear arsenals provides grounds for optimism. I was pleased yesterday to hear both Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and Secretary Baker renew their commitment to progress in this crucial area.

On another front, we believe that the political momentum developed at the Conference on Chemical Weapons in Paris, in January, will make it easier to conclude a ban on such weapons at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. In this connection, Canada welcomes and supports the proposals relating to chemical weapons announced here yesterday by Secretary of State Baker. We look forward to working with the United States, Australia and others in the implementation of these proposals. For its part, Canada has recently made public details of its Chemical Defence Research Programme and we have invited representatives of the Soviet Union to visit the single Canadian facility at which this research is carried out.

This progress reflects the determination with which the Western Allies, including Canada, have pursued arms control and disarmament objectives throughout this decade. All too often it is forgotten that the origins of many key arms control proposals are to be found in the West. It was the unswerving determination of the members of the Western Alliance which ultimately resulted in an acceptance of the "zero option" for INF. It was in Halifax, Canada, in May 1986, that NATO foreign ministers took decisions to prepare for the negotiation of mandates and arms control proposals relating to conventional arms in Europe that have led to our meeting here today. It was our call for the elimination of asymmetries in conventional forces in Europe to which the member states of the Warsaw Pact responded in declaring a readiness to reduce their forces in Eastern Europe.

Today we face an emerging new dynamic in East/West relations, in part brought about by changes which are taking place in the Soviet Union. Along with glasnost and perestroika has come a new political thinking in the USSR, which has had its impact in the area of arms control as well. Soviet leaders and their Warsaw Treaty partners now espouse a concept of "reasonable sufficiency" in military doctrine, which suggests a shift to a more defensive posture. There appears to be a growing appreciation that the West's military approach reflects its own perception of its legitimate defensive needs, in the face of Warsaw Pact force levels and deployments.

Eloquent testimony to this change in thinking was provided by President Gorbachev's statement to the UN General Assembly last December, in which he announced his intention to reduce Soviet force levels and to change the Soviet force posture. This was followed by the announcement of further reductions by other Eastern European countries. Mr. Shevardnadze provided further elaboration yesterday. These were welcome announcements and we look forward to their implementation.

These developments augur well for our undertaking here. Yet the challenge before us in these new security negotiations remains a daunting one. We shall surely need great reserves of political will, confidence and determination when confronted with the enormous complexity of the issues involved. Our will for a stronger peace, based on enhanced mutual security, must drive these negotiations forward.

Canada's interest and engagement in these negotiations results from the long history and rich traditions which we share with the countries of Europe. Our cultural and linguistic ties with the countries of both Eastern and Western Europe reach back over the centuries, and remain strong; commercially, we prosper as good neighbours. The very foundation of our state was linked to our participation in European affairs. In recognition of this shared heritage and of our continuing common security interests, Canadian soldiers remain in Europe today, firm in the fulfillment of our responsibilities as a member of an Alliance committed to the defence of freedom and human rights.

At the start of the new negotiations on Thursday, Canada will join in tabling detailed, concrete proposals as outlined here yesterday by Sir Geoffrey Howe. In the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, we will work to improve and expand the measures agreed upon in Stockholm, seeking greater transparency both of military organizations and of military activities. We will propose measures for an annual exchange of information concerning military organization, as well as measures designed to produce

greater openness and predictability regarding military activities. Convinced that contacts at the military level should be extended in order to improve our understanding of each others military thinking, we will propose as well an organized exchange of views on military doctrine.

These Confidence- and Security-Building Measures will be put forward with a view to effecting an increased openness about military matters; they will seek to dispel the suspicion which is a cause of tension between East and West.

In the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, our proposals will seek to promote enhanced stability through a reduction in the capability of states to mount surprise attacks and large-scale offensive actions. To this end, we will propose an overall limit on the total holdings of armaments in Europe which most threaten us, such as tanks, artillery and armoured troops carriers. These weapons systems are capable of rapid mobility and high fire-power and are central to the seizing and holding of territory. They must be reduced and limited, with equal numbers on each side. As well, we will propose limits on the quantity of those armaments held by any one country, both on its own territory and stationed on the territory of others. No one country should be permitted to dominate Europe by force of arms.

A critically important aspect of these negotiations will be agreement on effective verification measures. Acceptance of verification of compliance as an essential element in the arms control and disarmament process has been formally registered through the adoption of consensus resolutions at the UN General Assembly.

Arms control verification has its own distinct and specific characteristics. It is not equivalent to unilateral monitoring by national means. Neither can it be equated to the observation of unilateral measures under conditions determined by one or more countries without benefit of negotiation. Real verification measures must be a product of negotiation. They must be acceptable to, and equally applicable to, all parties to an agreement. International experience with the negotiation and implementation of such verification measures is still scarce. However, in the bilateral area, the INF agreement is pointing the way, and multilaterally, the implementation of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures under the Stockholm Agreement is providing valuable experience.

Here in Vienna, our negotiators must draw on their experiences in both bilateral and multilateral contexts to develop an effective verification régime, capable of providing confidence in compliance. It will not be sufficient to work

toward agreement on reduction measures and subsequently to attempt to devise verification provisions. It will be necessary to examine closely the verification implications of all proposals under negotiation to ensure that compliance with agreements reached can be verified.

A meaningful verification régime will have to be built on a variety of techniques. On-site monitoring, surveillance from space and from aircraft and challenge inspections will probably all have to be used. We were therefore much encouraged by Mr. Shevardnadze's statement that in these negotiations there is no verification measure that the USSR would not be ready to consider and accept on the basis of reciprocity.

In Canada, we will devote considerable resources to this aspect of the negotiations; we have in the past shared the results of our research with the international community. We hope that other nations will devote similar efforts to these important issues. In both negotiations, Canada will be active in devising means to ensure the reliable verification of any agreement.

The proposals that Canada and its Allies will put forward are, in our view, realistic. They will require important changes, not just in the deployment of conventional forces but in our thinking about how peace and security can best be preserved and strengthened in Europe. They will require an unprecedented willingness to draw aside the veil of secrecy which often obscures military operations. The proposed changes are possible and workable. They involve reasonable steps which will further reduce mistrust and the risk of miscalculation. We must now get down to the hard work involved in translating these proposals into agreed measures which, as the Foreign Minister of Poland has just said, will strengthen the security of all.

Today, a growing sense of optimism exists about East/West relations. There is a sense that the world has entered one of those special, if infrequent, periods in the history of states when political will and imagination can fruitfully be brought to bear on previously intractable problems. Let us seize this opportunity to redeem the reputation of our century for unprecedented destructiveness and bloodshed. Let us devote all the energies and resources at our disposal to building a genuine and stable security framework for Europe and North America in the 21st century. As a Minister of my Government, as a concerned citizen and as a mother, may I say that we owe no less to our ancestors and to our children.