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Statement by the Head of the Canadian
Delegation, Mr. G.K. Grande, Vienna -
October 30, 1973

MBFR NEGOTIATIONS

Canada has for several years been an active proponent of the negotiations upon which we are about to embark. It is therefore with a deep sense of satisfaction that we join the nations gathered here for these most important discussions.

History, a shared civilization, and common ancestry constitute enduring bonds between Canadians and the peoples of Europe. Successive Canadian Governments have reflected the wishes and sentiments of the Canadian people in the interest which they have displayed in the affairs of Europe, and in particular, in the wellbeing, security and peace of all European countries.

Canada unequivocally demonstrated its lasting concern for Europe in two world wars and the reconstruction enterprises which followed them. It is now no less determined to play an active and constructive role in the consolidation of peace in Europe and in current efforts to contribute to East-West détente.

The achievement of real détente has been, and will continue to be, a slow process, putting to the test the will of many states to achieve increased cooperation and a relaxation of tensions among themselves. Significant progress has already been made and a number of major steps already taken, the most recent of these being the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe which commenced in Helsinki last July. The second phase of the CSCE now taking place in Geneva should give form and content to the shared aspirations endorsed by the Helsinki Conference.

The negotiations on mutual reduction of forces and armaments and associated measures will constitute a real test of the willingness of the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries to proceed further in the direction of lasting détente. There is no doubt that these negotiations will pose very serious problems for all participating countries, since they concern concrete measures which relate directly to the security interests of the two alliances and their member states. However the understanding achieved during the exploratory talks held here earlier this year permits us to approach these negotiations confident that progress is possible.

The primary objective of the MBFR negotiations should be to lessen military confrontation in central Europe by means of equitable reductions and limitations in the size of the forces present in central Europe, insofar as this can be attained without diminishing the security of the states party to the negotiations, or indeed of any other states. If this objective is to be reached, due account must be taken in these negotiations of the nature and posture of the forces involved on both sides. Moreover it is obvious that the mutual confidence so essential to such delicate negotiations can only be adversely affected by measures taken by any party to increase the size of its forces in central Europe as a prelude to our deliberations here.

The Canadian Government considers that to be consistent with the ultimate goal of fostering détente in East-West relations, agreements on the reduction of forces in central Europe must have the full confidence of all the countries involved. They must include provisions designed to satisfy all concerned that they will be observed. They should therefore provide for appropriate collateral measures designed to avoid the risk of their possible violation or circumvention.

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The Canadian Government is very conscious of both the problems and opportunities which lie ahead as we start these discussions. On the one hand, for the countries of Europe, these negotiations will give rise to fundamental questions related to national security; Canada shares these concerns since it regards its security as inseparable from that of Europe. On the other hand, the MBFR negotiations hold the prospect of a more stable peace and increased mutual cooperation for the European countries with which Canada enjoys close and expanding political, economic and cultural relations.

The Canadian delegation will play its full part in what it hopes will be a common effort to meet the challenge and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by these negotiations. We are optimistic, but we will also be realistic. We are hopeful, but we also intend to be vigilant. We will assess the intentions of other parties to the negotiations not only by their words here, but also by their deeds elsewhere.

The agreement of the Austrian authorities to host this important conference in Vienna and to make available the necessary facilities and services is deeply appreciated by the Canadian Government. On its behalf I would like to join all my colleagues in thanking the Austrian Government for its full cooperation.

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