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held on

THURSDAY, 14TH JUNE, 1973, AT 3 p.m.

at

THE BELLA CENTRE

COPENHAGEN

COMPTE RENDU

de la

SEANCE DU CONSEIL

tenue le

JEUDI, 14 JUIN 1973 a 15h00

au

CENTRE BELLA

COPENHAGUE

OTAN/NATO,
Copenhagen.

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N A T O S E C R E T

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Mr. LUNS

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iceland.

Mr. AGUSTSSON

Mr. Chairman, as on previous occasions, my intervention in this general debate of the Ministerial Session of this Council can be very brief indeed. I find myself in agreement with much of what has already been said by my colleagues who have spoken before me. They have given substantive and extensive exposes on East-West relations in recent months of the ever-improved atmosphere of detente.

Let me only refer summarily to the three main topics of our discussion: the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions and the affirmation of the Atlantic partnership in what the American Administration calls the "Year of Europe".

The multilateral preparatory talks in Helsinki have now culminated in success after long and arduous discussions on procedures for a European Security Conference. We have now paved the way as thoroughly as possible for the opening of the Conference early next month. Confirming now our acceptance of the final MPT document, I think we should all agree and explicitly state in the Communique that we welcome the Finnish invitation to hold the Conference in Helsinki beginning on 3rd July next. Iceland intends to participate in the Conference in the most constructive manner with the hope that all others will do so as well, aiming at concrete results in improving relations between all the countries of Europe and enhancing their security at the same time on the basis of mutual trust and confidence.

Although Iceland does not participate directly in the Vienna talks, we are most interested in following these talks, and we are very concerned that substantive negotiations on the reduction of force levels in Central Europe can start in the autumn to follow through the momentum of detente that we expect will be confirmed at the Helsinki Conference this summer. Let me only say that Iceland would all the same not like to see a direct linkage made between the opening dates of the CSCE and the MBFR negotiations, posing one as a condition for the other. Let us begin the Helsinki Conference and have faith in the goodwill of the other side - at least allow them another chance to give concrete proof of it. Progress in one forum may in reality depend on progress in the other, but a beginning has to be made so as to show how constructive our side can be in lessening still further tensions in Europe and improving relations with the Communist countries.

The recent invitation by the United States to its European Allies to reaffirm jointly their common objectives in a reinvigorated Atlantic relationship under radically changed economic, strategic and diplomatic conditions is, in my Government's view, extremely important.

Mr. AGUSTSSON (Contd)

And although Iceland's part in the forthcoming deliberations to that end will of necessity be rather modest, we want to participate fully in them and we will advance our viewpoints whenever we feel our interests are involved - whatever are the most appropriate existing organizations in which to discuss and determine the commercial and monetary issues, the defence postures or the political objectives. I want to stress that I consider the Atlantic partnership in defence of great importance for the security of Western Europe and North America. Having stated this our basic concept of Iceland's security outlook, I will have to turn the attention of this Council to two specifically Icelandic concerns of a current nature: (1) the British naval intervention inside the Icelandic fisheries' jurisdiction and (2) the review of the 1951 defence agreement between Iceland and the United States.

My colleagues around this table are aware of the discussions which have taken place in the Permanent Council with regard to the presence of the British war vessels in Iceland. The mission of these war vessels is to prevent the Icelandic Coastguard from even limited enforcement action within our fifty-mile fishery limit which came into force on 1st September, 1972. British trawlers are now fishing inside the limits under the protection of these vessels of war. This is a situation which my Government finds intolerable and we have therefore brought this problem to the attention of the Council so that it could be dealt with by the members of this Alliance as a matter of great urgency.

I want to emphasize the fact that, for the last two years, we have had a series of meetings with representatives of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany for the purpose of negotiating a practical arrangement for an interim solution of the problems with which the trawler industries in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic are faced because of the extension of our fishery limits. The latest meeting with British representatives was held in Reykjavik on May 3rd and 4th. We did not agree on the final terms, but both parties made concrete proposals which were to be studied further by both Governments. Two weeks later - on May 19th - the war vessels entered the area and, in view of these measures, negotiations have been suspended.

I would in this connection draw particular attention to the fact that while we were negotiating similar practical arrangements with our friends from Belgium and the Faroe Islands, their fishing vessels stayed outside the fishery limits and the practical arrangements were successfully concluded. I want my colleagues from Belgium and Denmark to know that my Government highly appreciates the way in which these problems were dealt with. I also want to mention that bilateral discussions with the Federal Republic of Germany will be continued in Reykjavik on June 29th, and we will soon take up talks with Norway regarding some concessions for their boats in Icelandic waters. On the other hand, I must strongly protest against the presence of the British Navy in the area and request that it be withdrawn without delay so that efforts to achieve a practical interim arrangement may be continued. Once the war vessels are outside the limits, we are ready to recommence the bilateral talks with the United Kingdom.

Mr. AGUSTSSON (Contd)

Now 15 days have passed since the Icelandic Government sought the assistance of NATO to have British warships leave the Icelandic fisheries' jurisdiction.

I must express my Government's serious concern over the fact that nothing has happened. We are highly disappointed over NATO's inability to solve this problem, and if it appeared that NATO was unable to comply with our request, it is obvious that the Icelandic people would find it necessary to re-assess the advantages of continued active co-operation in the Alliance.

Another matter to which I want to refer is the presence of military forces in Iceland. It will be recalled that when Iceland became a member of NATO in 1949, it was agreed by all concerned that no military forces would be stationed in Iceland in time of peace. In 1951, the Defence Agreement was concluded in view of the emergency situation existing at the time but after more than 20 years the troops are still in Iceland.

My Government has had discussions with the Government of the United States on this subject on an informal basis. We have studied the possibility of a modification of the arrangement without reaching a conclusion. The Government of Iceland has now decided to invoke in the near future Article VII of the Defence Agreement. As you may know, that Article reads as follows:

"Either Government may at any time, on notification to the other Government, request the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to review the continued necessity for the facilities and their utilization, and to make recommendations to the two Governments concerning the continuation of this Agreement. If no understanding between the two Governments is reached as a result of such request for review within a period of six months from the date of the original request, either Government may at any time thereafter, give notice of its intention to terminate the Agreement and the Agreement shall then cease to be in force twelve months from the date of such notice. Whenever the contingency provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty shall occur, the facilities which will be afforded in accordance with this Agreement shall be available for the same use. While necessary, maintenance work will be performed by Iceland or Iceland will authorize its performance by the United States."

This is the Article in its entirety.

Mr. AGUSTSSON (Contd)

I have notified the Government of the United States of this decision and at the same time proposed that discussions for the revision of the agreement be continued. Our request for review will be submitted to the Council in Permanent Session later this month. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LUNS

Well, Gentlemen, I have been asked from several sides whether it would not be a good thing if the Icelandic situation to which some Ministers would like to address themselves could not better be dealt with right away. I agreed with these Ministers. There is now a slight problem as the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway had asked to speak immediately after the Minister of Iceland but there has just been a request by Sir Alec Douglas-Home asking whether he could not have the right of reply straight away. I wonder whether the distinguished Minister of Norway could agree that Sir Alec be given the floor now. I see that you are nodding in an affirmative way. I therefore call on Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

Sir Alec DOUGLAS-HOME

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I start from the position which is very obvious that Iceland and Britain are allies. There is an obligation which lies on allies not to use force in settling their disputes but to use negotiation. It so happens that I was Foreign Minister when there was last a dispute between Britain and Iceland over fish, and I settled it, in 1961, with the Iceland Foreign Minister of the day. There is nothing I would like more than to have a repeat performance. Our agreement lasted 10 years and there was no trouble whatever. But we did agree at that time that should there be a dispute between us, and I remember this vividly because we decided on it there and then, we would refer it to the International Court of Justice for settlement. The recent trouble began, I regret to say, when Iceland felt restive with the existing arrangements but refused to go to the International Court for settlement as we had agreed. So the United Kingdom found herself, and I hope that Mr. Agustsson will recognize this, the United Kingdom found herself in a difficulty. We had agreed to go to the International Court but one party had refused. So we went to the International Court and said to the International Court: what shall we do which is reasonable in relation to a catch of fish between now and the Law of the Sea Conference which is to assemble towards the end of this year?

Sir Alec DOUGLAS-HOME (Contd)

The International Court gave us two very clear judgements. The first one was that there should be no force used between the parties; the second was that we in Britain should reduce our catch from the 200,000 tons plus, which we have been catching in Icelandic waters, to 170,000 tons. The Icelandic Government didn't like that and so we agreed to bring our catch down from 170,000 tons to 145,000 tons, a point half way between the judgement of the International Court and the claim of the Icelanders to 117,000 tons upon which they insisted. So, Mr. Chairman, I am bound to say that the situation as it is now is this: we are fishing in international waters according to our rights and our frigates are in international waters and nobody can dispute their right to be there. We are acting precisely according to the judgement, interim judgement, of the International Court. Now the trouble is that we, our trawlers, have been harassed continuously for eight months. They have had their warps cut and they have told us that they cannot go on fishing in these conditions and therefore they must have protection. And I don't see how we could possibly have denied it to our trawlers when they were being harassed week in and week out.

Now, without prolonging this discussion because I don't want to do so and I hope that we can still find a means of settling it either with your help, Secretary General, or directly with the Iceland Government. I would like to state our position. We will withdraw our Navy if the Iceland Government simultaneously can inform us that they will not use force against our trawlers. Now, I suggest that there could be no position, more legal, more conciliatory or more civilized and I hope, therefore, that we can by one way or another contrive that we will withdraw our Navy, that the Icelanders can find some way of giving us an assurance that when we do that, they will stop harassing during the process of negotiation. And that seems to me, to put it in a nutshell, if I may, the way Allies should behave.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you Sir Alec. I now call on the distinguished Foreign Secretary of Norway.

Mr. VARVIK

Mr. Chairman. On several occasions my Government has expressed deep concern over the increasing tension which the fisheries dispute has created between Iceland and Great Britain. Our views were last presented by the Minister of Defence, Mr. Kleppe, at the DPC meeting on 7th June.

Mr. VARVIK (Contd)

My Government feels that if this unfortunate conflict between two members of the Alliance should be allowed to continue, this may have serious negative effects both on the image of the Alliance and on the cohesion and co-operation within the Organization. In this context we should also keep in mind that the conflict takes place in a rather exposed area. A further deepening of the conflict might have unforeseen consequences and could involve the security of the whole Alliance, not least the Northern flank.

I would not like to pass judgement on the legal aspects of the dispute. However, given the extreme dependence on fisheries of the Icelandic economy and the increasing threat of overfishing in the North Atlantic waters, we do understand and sympathize with the motives behind the Icelandic policy. We also share and actively support the view that the UN Law of the Sea Conference should result in a treaty which recognizes extensive coastal state control over the natural resources, including fish, in adjacent areas outside the 12 mile limit.

We understand that it is difficult to make the first move in a conflict where both parties' interests are so much involved. In view of the seriousness of the conflict it is, however, of the utmost importance that one of the parties break the impasse and make a first move. This is why, after having carefully considered the situation and the interests of the two parties and in the overall interest and solidarity of the Alliance, we have appealed - and wish today to repeat the appeal - to the British Government to make a first gesture and to withdraw the frigates from the disputed area.

I feel there is a reasonable hope that this first move from the British side will prepare the ground for contact and further moves by both parties, thus creating a basis for negotiations. In making this appeal to the British Government, my Government has also in mind the agreement concluded between one member country and Iceland and the readiness of Iceland and other member countries with considerable interests in the disputed area to engage in negotiations for an interim agreement. If NATO could prove instrumental in the solution of this problem it would no doubt have a beneficial influence on the image of the Alliance in Iceland and elsewhere. Thank you.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you, Mr. Minister. On the situation around Iceland, I now recognize the distinguished Foreign Minister of Denmark, Mr. Andersen.

Mr. ANDERSEN

Thank you Mr. Chairman. The fisheries dispute between Iceland and the United Kingdom has seriously affected all the other members of the Alliance, and not least my own country.

Mr. ANDERSEN (Contd)

In view of Denmark's very close ties with both Iceland and the United Kingdom, we are deeply concerned about the present situation which is not only detrimental to the good relations between the two countries but also involves important interests of the Alliance. This conflict leads to a weakening of the possibilities of the Alliance in the North Atlantic and thereby to diminished security for all of us. The Danish Government would greatly regret this; I want to stress that we would greatly regret such diminished security in that part of the Atlantic Ocean.

We all realize the particular problem for Iceland because of her exceptional dependence on fisheries, and the Danish Government sympathizes with the Icelanders' wish for a special regime valid for the seas around Iceland. We sincerely hope that a way will be found to solve the problems peacefully, and by negotiations. In this connection, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my appreciation for the declared willingness on the part of the United Kingdom to continue to find a solution through agreement.

We in our Government are convinced that a withdrawal of the British frigates from the disputed areas would constitute a useful gesture, and I want to stress it is a gesture. You are in an international area and you have the right to stay there, but I am thinking of it as a useful gesture, as a first move which, without prejudice to the final solution, would break the present impasse and generate a mutually acceptable basis for renewed negotiations. And I sincerely hope that it will be possible for our Icelandic colleague, in one way or another, in the open meeting or outside the open meeting - this is not a question of procedure - to give such a kind of, well, guarantee - that is a very big word but anyway let me mention it - that it would be possible for our British colleague to take the decision, and to recommend his Government to take the decision, to withdraw the frigates. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you Mr. Minister. Before I give the floor to the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, I call on Mr. Mitchell Sharp, Foreign Minister of Canada, on the Icelandic situation.

Mr. SHARP

Mr. Chairman, like other members of the Alliance Canada sincerely regrets the persistence of this dispute between two of our members with both of whom we have very close ties.

This Council is not the place, of course, to discuss the merits of the dispute or the differences between our two friends; differences which affect the livelihood of fishermen in both countries and differences whose settlement may be influenced by evolving international opinion.

Mr. SHARP (Contd)

It seems to me regrettable, Mr. Chairman, just at a time when the Law of the Sea is undergoing very substantial modification, with countries like Canada in favour of the extensions of the responsibility of coastal states for the management of fisheries, that this dispute should come before us. Our concern today, however, is with the effect of this dispute on our Alliance. We have welcomed the presence of Iceland in the Atlantic Alliance and Icelanders who have settled in Canada have made an extremely valuable contribution to the Canadian ethnic mosaic. We in Canada have many extremely distinguished Icelanders or people of Icelandic birth; indeed, we have a number of Members of Parliament and, of course, there's nothing higher in any country than elected Members of Parliament.

I would like to say, too, Mr. Chairman, that we Canadians have had some experience, like our friends in the United Kingdom, over the last twenty-five years of trying to preserve the integrity of another organization known as the Commonwealth of Nations, and we've tried to preserve this integrity from damage by bilateral differences between members. On a number of occasions, members of the British Commonwealth of Nations have said that if the Commonwealth can't put pressure on a member to settle a dispute they would quit the organization. Our reply has been: "Don't blame the Commonwealth for your bilateral differences". The Commonwealth lacks the authority to compel, and it may be in the interests of the smaller members that it does not have that authority to compel, since that authority might be compelled to require you to do something as well. So I'd like to say to my Icelandic colleagues that we value very highly the contribution that you have made to the Alliance. We do not expect NATO to compel a member to take any particular action either for or against any other member and, as I said this morning, Mr. Chairman, in my contribution, I don't really think you can bargain economics against security. It's a very dangerous kind of game and I am quite sure that, on reflection, no member here would support this particular point of view.

We have also had, of course, a long and even more intimate connection with our friends in the United Kingdom - one of our mother countries. As I once remarked, we have two mother countries - Britain and France - but we've never discovered who the father was! At any rate, I'm confident that the British Government will respond generously, and I hope that they will find it possible to take action which will help to break this deadlock. We can't expect the United Kingdom to do things that are unreasonable any more than we can Iceland, but in a dispute like this somebody must take the initiative.

Finally, Mr. Secretary General, I would like to thank you for the efforts that you've been making and you have our support.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

SIR Alec DOUGLAS-HOME

I would like my colleagues to ponder, and perhaps the Minister for Iceland to tell me, what is wrong with my offer that we should withdraw the Navy simultaneously with Iceland giving an assurance that they won't use force.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you, Sir Alec. Je donne la parole au Ministre des affaires étrangères du Royaume de Belgique.

M. VAN ELSLANDE

Monsieur le Président, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention l'exposé de notre collègue d'Islande. D'ailleurs, je lui suis reconnaissant d'avoir bien voulu dire que mon gouvernement et le gouvernement de l'Islande sont arrivés à un accord en ce qui concerne les difficultés qui nous préoccupent cet après-midi. J'ai écouté également avec beaucoup d'attention les interventions de Sir Alec et de nos collègues de la Norvège, du Canada et du Danemark. Et cela m'a fait penser à d'autres fonctions que j'exerce quand je ne suis pas membre de mon gouvernement. Je suis en effet, dans ces périodes, officier de l'Etat civil de ma petite commune, et il m'arrive donc de devoir consacrer des mariages civils. D'après la loi belge, je dois donner lecture des droits et devoirs des époux. Après avoir donné lecture de ces dispositions légales, je leur souhaite amicalement de ne jamais avoir besoin d'y faire appel, parce que, s'ils devaient le faire, ce serait un signe manifeste que l'amour n'existe plus. Eh bien, je crois que dans le différend qui nous occupe actuellement c'est un peu la même chose. Il y a, d'une part, des dispositions légales, il y a la loi; mais, d'autre part, il y a - je ne dirais pas l'amour - mais l'unité de vues, une affection profonde qui unit les membres de l'Alliance atlantique. Je crois que, dans ce différend, pénible dans un certain sens, qui oppose deux alliés, notre sentiment, à nous Belges - et nous l'avons dit plusieurs fois - est qu'il est nécessaire pour la solidarité de l'Alliance d'aboutir à un arrangement.

Le Secrétariat général, conformément d'ailleurs à sa mission, n'a pas cessé d'agir dans le sens que je viens d'indiquer. Eh bien, nous soutenons son action et nous lui demandons de la poursuivre et nous approuvons les suggestions qu'il a faites aux deux parties. Je vous remercie, Monsieur le Président.

M. LUNS

Merci beaucoup Monsieur le Ministre. Maintenant, je donne la parole à M. Scheel, Ministre fédéral des affaires étrangères de l'Allemagne.

Mr. SCHEEL

Mr. Chairman, you know that we are in a similar situation to that of the United Kingdom and we regret very much the present situation. I would like only to express my strong desire that the Foreign Minister of Iceland should find a positive reply to Sir Alec's question.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you, Herr Minister. I now give the floor to Mr. Rogers.

Mr. ROGERS

Mr. Chairman, I would like to just say a word or two about discussions that the Foreign Minister and I have had over a period of time about the base in Iceland. We have had very, I think, good discussions over a period of a year, year and a half, about the matter and I appreciate very much the fact that the Foreign Minister has not moved forward to invoke Article 7. When we were in Iceland recently, I had a very good talk with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister about our base there and I mention these things to emphasize that the two matters are really unrelated. Iceland was talking to us about Article 7 a year and a half or two years, at a time when there was no problem at all about fish. I would hope therefore that we can continue to disassociate the two because fish are obviously very important to Iceland and to people generally but security is very important too and the two really are not associated and should not be and the fact that we have had these discussions over a period of time indicate that the comments by the Foreign Minister, linking the two, just happen to be because they developed at the same time but not because there is any connection between the two.

I would also like to say to the Foreign Minister that all the discussions we have had have been very friendly, constructive and we in the United States have attempted to be sure that there is nothing that happens as far as the base is concerned that causes any trouble for Iceland. I think the Foreign Minister will confirm namely that we have gone out of our way to be sure that there is no trouble between our people and the Icelanders. I think they get along well. We have had a very fine man assigned to be in charge of the base. The financial contributions that are made to the budget of Iceland are substantial, I think, and very helpful and I merely want to conclude by saying that this base is of great significance from a security standpoint as far as this Alliance is concerned. I cannot emphasize that too much and I appreciate very much the fact that the Foreign Minister has not actually invoked Article 7 and I hope that he won't invoke it till some modus vivendi can be worked out on the other issue. It is important to the Alliance that, when we finally get around to talking about any modifications, there should be no public opinion in Iceland which would in any way be antagonistic to the base as a result of the fish dispute.

I just merely close by thanking the Foreign Minister very much for his willingness to talk about this very reasonably over a long period of time.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you very much, Secretary of State. M. Jobert, il serait peut-être préférable que vous parliez avant le ministre islandais, because the Minister of Iceland would like to have the feel of the Council.

M. JOBERT

Monsieur le Président, je m'excuse d'intervenir à ce moment; je voulais simplement dire que cette légère querelle entre deux - et même trois - membres de l'Alliance nous peine beaucoup et que nous souhaiterions que l'Alliance démontre sa capacité à surmonter ces petits problèmes qui sont pour les uns et les autres de grands problèmes, j'en conviens. C'est là néanmoins un exemple dans lequel nous pouvons montrer que nous sommes capables de surmonter quelques difficultés, et je voulais préciser, au nom de mon gouvernement, que nous appuyons entièrement les efforts que vous n'avez pas cessé de déployer au cours de ces dernières semaines en vue d'arriver à un règlement qui soit satisfaisant pour l'un et pour l'autre et qui ne laisse aucune rancune.

M. LUNS

Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Ministre.

Then I call upon the distinguished Foreign Secretary of Iceland.

Mr. AGUSTSSON

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will make it very brief.

First of all I want to thank those who have spoken in support of the Icelandic case here today. In reply to what Sir Alec Douglas-Home said in the beginning about the fisheries dispute, I will only say that my Government has on many occasions explained its views on this matter and I am not going to go into the details of the various aspects. But I do want to emphasize two points which in our opinion go to the heart of the problem.

On the one hand, we consider our coastal fisheries to be a matter of vital interest to us, the very foundation of our economy and our existence, our survival as a nation.

On the other hand, we have tried to negotiate the terms of a practical interim arrangement with the United Kingdom which would take into account the problems of the British trawler industry. At our last meeting with British Ministers in May, proposals were submitted by both parties for further consideration by Governments. The negotiation process was suspended through the appearance of the Royal Navy in the area. My Government would be prepared to continue negotiations when the Navy has been withdrawn, as I said before.

Mr. AGUSTSSON (Contd)

The distinguished Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Sir Alec Douglas-Home, asked me why we did not consider it reasonable that the United Kingdom should withdraw the Navy and at the same time that Iceland should stop harassing British trawlers. My reply is that my Government is obliged to enforce our laws. So far we have only engaged in limited enforcement action. To promise not to enforce our laws is another matter. But given a will on both sides to reach a speedy solution, perhaps we will not be faced with a long period but a very short period, I hope.

It is our firm conviction in Iceland that NATO cannot exist through the threat of war alone. We want rather to look at the Alliance as an organization of like-minded nations which are not only interested in providing defence against external attack but also in respecting and supporting the right of a member country to live within a sensible system of economic co-operation and division of labour.

The Icelandic people must fish or starve and they want to fish in peace. I want to add just one sentence about what Secretary of State Rogers said. I absolutely agree with him that these two items are separate and are unrelated and we will do whatever we can to disassociate the two things. It has been known to this assembly for two years that the Icelandic Government had in its original statement a clause in which it was said that the defence treaty with the United States would be taken up for revision. This we are doing now, regardless of what is happening in this other matter that we have been dealing with at some length here today. I want this to be quite clear to every member of the association. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you, Mr. Minister. Now perhaps you will allow the Chair to say one word?

First of all, I am grateful to those Ministers who have expressed confidence in what I am trying to do behind the scenes and I know that there are quite a few Ministers who have not spoken but who share the views expressed by the Belgian, the Canadian and the French Ministers.

Secondly, I would say that it is my firm conviction that, with some measure of goodwill, understanding for each other's difficulties and some imagination it will, in fact, be possible to bring about a disengagement leading to an absence of warships and an absence of harassment, during which time the bilateral talks might be resumed. And I feel sure all the Ministers around this table, including the Icelandic Minister and Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, share my view that this would lead to a lasting agreement. I will not say any more on this subject.

Sir Alec DOUGLAS-HOME

We have made a little progress, have we not? We have established that security and fish are not one ball of wax.

Mr. LUNS

Well, gentlemen, we now resume the general discussion. I now recognize Herr Walter Scheel.

Mr. SCHEEL

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues, for many years the Federal Government has given the organizers of the Alliance's Ministerial Meetings a classical repertoire and thus relieved them of any worries they may have had about filling their programme. Time and again, our discussions were focused on German problems and it was not until our meeting of last December that this phase, one might say, came to an end. On that occasion, we devoted a great deal of our time to the Treaty on the Basis of Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic which had been initialled a few weeks previously. Since then, the Federal Government has progressed with its policy towards its Eastern neighbours in calmer waters. Soon, my Government will have concluded the bilateral phase of its basic negotiations.

This does not mean that this serious and important piece will disappear from our programme. But there will be more room for other topics. The fact that the Soviet Union's top man was recently our guest in Bonn punctuates the change that has taken place. The Federal Government can now, in step with its Allies, enter into the multilateral phase of East-West talks which has largely been made possible by its bilateral policy. We need the courage to go ahead where co-operation with the East can make peace secure: we must have the courage to resist temptations where our collective security is endangered.

I realize, of course, Mr. Chairman, that security and peace are not the same thing. Security means preserving our external and our internal freedom. But the facade of peace can continue to exist even if that freedom is lost. We must make this distinction clear to our peoples if we want to demand of them the sacrifices and the efforts which will continue to be necessary in spite and on account of our policy of detente.

The next main topic on our Agenda is the development of Atlantic relations. We shall have to intensify our talks so as to achieve concrete results during the American President's visit.

Here we should never forget: today's problems are yesterday's successes - a successful defence policy, a successful detente policy and a successful policy of European unification. Frictions between these three policy sectors are not always avoidable. But I am confident that the basic consonance will be preserved and that useful solutions will be possible.

Mr. SCHEEL (Contd)

And a word or two on specific matters. First, relations with our Eastern neighbours.

The parliamentary procedure for the ratification of the Basic Treaty with the GDR has been completed. The Treaty is about to enter into force. Its purpose is to create the political basis for co-operation and gradually to improve the possibilities of communication between the people in the two States without prejudging or settling the German question and irrespective of the differences resulting from social developments in the two States. Berlin will remain a particularly sensitive barometer for detente.

We also see as an element of international co-operation the proposed accession of the two German States to the United Nations. The fact that the German question has still not been resolved is no reason why they should not participate fully in the work of the world organization. The Federal Government will therefore apply for admission to the United Nations. We hope that the Federal Government will be able to attend the next General Assembly.

If I may briefly refer to Mr. Brezhnev's visit to the Federal Republic, I must say that in spite of the often difficult talks, especially over the Berlin question the atmosphere was good all round. This was clearly reflected in the media, which gave the visit wide coverage. I, myself, took the Bible as my guide: remember to show hospitality, there are some, who by so doing have entertained angels without knowing it.

Our bilateral talks were mostly concerned with economic co-operation. Here the Soviets' interest was wide-ranging and focused particularly on large-scale projects, but in many cases they over-estimated our possibilities. I shall come back to our talks on multilateral questions in the appropriate context.

The Federal Government will continue to pursue its policy of detente and co-operation in relations with the other countries of Eastern Europe. The treaty with Czechoslovakia, which has been one of the missing links in our system of agreements on the renunciation of force with East European countries, has now been drafted. It constitutes a well-balanced whole which allows for the interests of both sides. We are confident that the treaty will form a solid basis for the development of our relations with Czechoslovakia. We reckon with the establishment of diplomatic relations in the next few months. The same applies to Bulgaria and Hungary who had been hanging back on the question of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany until after our relationship with Czechoslovakia had been clarified.

By means of our bilateral decisions we have opened up the way to multilateral detente in Europe. But we cannot rest content with that as long as there remains a source of tension in our neighbourhood which can have repercussions on Europe. That is the fundamental concept of our Middle East policy and it is the one which the Federal Chancellor followed on his visit to Israel and I on my visit to the Arab countries.

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Part II

Mr. SCHEEL (Contd)

This, Mr. Chairman, brings me to the multilateral projects. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is due to begin in Helsinki early in July, represents an attempt to formulate in a joint declaration the tendencies towards detente that have developed in recent years so as to create a better basis for more co-operation and communication in Europe, whilst at the same time preserving the security of all concerned.

At the preparatory talks just ended in Helsinki, the Alliance has gained acceptance for its demand that there should be thorough discussion of the substantive questions. This was a success because it was only by intensive discussion that a common language, and in some cases even a common understanding, could emerge. But even where that understanding did not materialize, participants were compelled to examine in the debate the credibility and power of conviction of their arguments.

As a test of the Alliance's own coherence Helsinki has been encouraging. Co-ordination within the Alliance and among the Nine through their machinery for political co-operation was without doubt better than expected. We should not, however, forget the constructive part played by the non-aligned countries. Their intermediary proposals have often led us out of a corner. We should therefore intensify our contacts with them.

The preparations in Helsinki have shown how important it is that participants should not allow themselves to be put under pressure of time. Only results the effects of which will be felt beyond the Conference itself will count, and such results need time. Only two months for the commission phase is, we feel, simply not realistic. The Terms of Reference for the commissions only touch upon many of the problems, which means that when we get down to drafting the actual resolutions, which will be a question of hammering out every word, the going will become harder and therefore take more time.

If the Conference is to prove successful it must be something more than a mere stock-taking exercise. We have set out on a journey towards detente and stable peace in Europe which will certainly be a long one. This calls for greater circumspection and attentiveness on the part of all concerned.

This applies in particular to MBFR. Since our last meeting in Brussels, MBFR has entered the phase of multilateral East-West talks. The exploratory talks in Vienna have confirmed our view that this is going to be an extremely difficult and protracted undertaking which calls for vigilance, patience and perseverance on the part of the Alliance. But it has also become clear, and this was confirmed during Mr. Brezhnev's visit to Bonn, that the other side are also interested in serious MBFR talks.

Though the date for the commencement of negotiations has not yet been fixed, agreement has been reached on a draft communique which, in the opinion of the Federal Government, gives due consideration to the interests of the Alliance.

Mr. SCHEEL (Contd)

The Alliance has learned a great deal in these preparatory talks. The work of the ad hoc group and the continuous co-ordination within the NATO Council have proved their value. What we must now do is draw the right conclusions for the negotiation of substantive questions. In my view, the most important lesson to be learned from our experience up to now is that the Alliance must speak with one voice making full use of the most expedient procedures, and must prepare its negotiating positions as comprehensively as possible. The guidelines paper we have before us will be the basis for our preparations for these substantive negotiations. We would like to see this Ministerial Conference reach agreement on the questions that are still open, principally as regards the area of application of arrangements on stabilizing measures and the inclusion of stationed and indigenous forces in the MBFR process.

We have long held the view that MBFR might have the best stabilizing effect if the arrangements on stabilizing measures do not rigidly follow the geographical sphere of application of reduction agreements. This point is clearly illustrated by the Hungarian problem which was discussed at length in Vienna and Brussels. We think that the best approach to this problem is a pragmatic one, and that we should not tie the Allies' hands for the negotiations.

The Federal Government welcomes the American paper on "The United States approach to MBFR", which has laid the foundation for the development of joint options for negotiations.

The Alliance must now go full out to make its preparations on the basis of that paper. In the course of our preparations, we shall also see how best to fit in the principle of the phased inclusion of stationed and indigenous forces. I feel that the guidelines paper could contain a reference to this question that would be satisfactory to all if the formula which we find for this important point is flexible enough.

At the meeting of the DPC in Brussels, my colleague Defence Minister Leber gave a detailed account of our position on the inclusion of indigenous forces, so that I can confine myself to repeating here what he outlined as the position of the Federal Government on this question.

We should reach an understanding, along the lines of option I of the American paper, to seek an arrangement in one paper for stationed and indigenous forces. The reduction of stationed forces could take place before a second phase involving the reduction of indigenous forces. Elements of option III could be added to this arrangement. Another field of negotiation which is of special importance to us Allies is SALT. About a month ago, our Permanent Representatives were informed that the American SALT Delegation were now, after, all, considering that United States non-central systems should be included.

Mr. SCHEEL (Contd)

These systems are, as we all know, a crucial element of our collective deterrent capability which cannot be detached from the whole. I am sure that our colleague, Mr. Rogers, will therefore understand our wish that the consultation should now assume a more substantial and specific form than in the past when European interests were not so directly affected. I wish to emphasize this point all the more as I am convinced that these European interests can be brought into unison with those of the United States.

The development of East-West relations is only a part of a comprehensive process of change which today influences the totality of Atlantic relations. Overriding common interests continue to exist on both sides of the Atlantic: that is beyond doubt. All the same, the further improvement of economic co-operation between North America and a Western Europe going through a phase of unification is urgently necessary and raises complex problems. The changed military balance of power between East and West confronts us with the problem of how to maintain our present level of security. Moreover, we are also experiencing social changes in our countries which suggest a challenge to our free democratic structure.

We have heard a number of interesting American comments on all these points and we feel that a positive European reply is now due. The best opportunity for this would be during President Nixon's forthcoming visit. My Government would like the President to meet the North Atlantic Council and the European Community and these meetings should lead to initial concrete results, to joint declarations or Communiqués. I say declaration or Communiqué since it does not matter very much what you call the procedure with which we would reaffirm the principles and objectives of Alliance solidarity. I cannot see why there should be objections from one or other Ally to such reaffirmation.

I know that quite a number of Alliance members including the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany would appreciate it if such a statement could be agreed upon by all of us, especially in a period of momentum and fluidity in East-West Relationship. This should be possible if we push on with our preparations quickly. I suggest that we instruct our Permanent Representatives to make an immediate start.

We have sometimes heard undertones of disappointment from the United States at the fact that economic integration has not yet been followed by political integration, but I don't see any real justification for this disappointment. Economic integration already contains major political elements and is moving in a continuous process towards political integration.

Mr. SCHEEL (Contd)

Relations between Europe and North America will have to be shaped on the basis of equal partnership. Indeed, I feel that even now those relations should be developing in the perspective of the European union which the members of the Community have set themselves to accomplish by 1980. This should be the focal point of our constructive dialogue and our important trade partner, Japan, should also play a role in this process. However, there would be little benefit to be derived from treating problems in their own right such as security, trade and monetary matters as linked together. This could result in possible progress in one field being blocked by difficulties in others, especially as the time factors differ. For this reason, the Federal Republic would like to see these three sets of problems discussed separately in their respective forums: security and defence policy within the Alliance, trade within GATT, and monetary problems within the International Monetary Fund.

A well-ordered economic and monetary system is the basis of the Alliance and of its solidarity. It must not be endangered by occasional differences of opinion or even quarrels within the Atlantic family, for without that solidarity there can be for us neither a reliable basis for our security nor progress in pursuit of our policy of detente. In view of the present state of nuclear strategy concern was expressed in the Defence Planning Committee a few days ago at the development of the conventional balance of power between East and West in Europe. My Government realizes that nuclear parity affects the application of the NATO strategic concept. It welcomes the fact that President Nixon has reaffirmed his determination to maintain the American commitment in Europe with an adequate presence and to guarantee a credible deterrent in Europe. This American commitment remains the cornerstone of our collective security, precisely with regard to the negotiations on MBFR and SALT. At the same time, my Government feels that it is more necessary than ever before that all member states should bear an appropriate share of the burden of maintaining this collective security and that co-operation on defence matters by all European members of the Alliance should be intensified.

My colleague, M. Jobert, has rightly emphasized that the state of the Alliance is good. We all know how important such reassurance is. But, of course, nothing is in such a good shape that it could not be improved upon. I am certain many of us around this table would be even more confident about the state of the Alliance if the French co-operation was still closer than it is already today. One might raise the objection "mais tout cela va sans dire", but to this I would reply with Monsieur de Talleyrand "cela va meme mieux en le disant".

Mr. SCHEEL (Cont'd)

It is a dictate of the hour to impress on the public the continuing need for defence efforts. With our detente policy, we have opened up the way to direct encounter and competition between the societies of East and West. We have wanted this because we believe in the power of conviction of our ideals and because we trust in the inner strength of our system, which is based on democratic liberties, human rights and social justice.

It must be our concern today to ensure that our peoples remain prepared to defend those values if necessary and keenly aware that this calls for sacrifices. Thus it is one of the Alliance's central tasks to reaffirm convincingly the principles with which we identify ourselves and the political aims we together pursue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

M. LUNS

Je donne maintenant la parole au Ministre des affaires étrangères du Royaume de Belgique.

M. VAN ELSLANDE

Monsieur le Président,

Qu'il me soit permis tout d'abord de remercier sincèrement le Président d'honneur, ainsi que le Secrétaire général de notre Organisation, des aimables paroles qu'ils ont prononcées ce matin à mon égard à l'occasion de ma première participation à nos travaux.

Monsieur le Président, depuis notre dernière réunion, nous avons pu enregistrer une nouvelle étape dans la voie de la normalisation des relations Est-Ouest. Certains faits se placent sur le plan bilatéral, par exemple l'aboutissement heureux des négociations entre la République fédérale et la Tchécoslovaquie, dont vient d'ailleurs de parler notre collègue Monsieur le Ministre Scheel, l'établissement de relations diplomatiques entre la plupart de nos gouvernements et celui de la RDA, la prochaine entrée en vigueur du Traité fondamental entre Bonn et Pankow. Sur le plan multilatéral, la recherche collective d'une réduction des tensions en Europe a pris la forme de la préparation de la CSCE, dont le début est maintenant proche.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

Dans l'ensemble, on peut considérer les résultats atteints à Helsinki au cours des travaux préliminaires comme satisfaisants. Ils permettent de dessiner déjà les contours de ce que pourraient être les réalisations de la Conférence. Ils ont été atteints largement grâce à la coopération très étroite qui a existé tout au long des PMP entre les Occidentaux. Certains avaient, lors de notre dernière réunion ministérielle, fait état de réserves sur la possibilité de concilier la coopération qui se fait sur le plan de l'Alliance avec celle qui se place dans le cadre de la coopération politique des neuf Etats membres des Communautés européennes. L'expérience a prouvé que, grâce à la bonne volonté de tous, le travail des Neuf a été, au contraire, un élément de dynamisme supplémentaire pour la consultation à Quinze.

Dans le programme de la Conférence, tant sur le plan des relations humaines que dans le domaine économique, des ouvertures sont apparues. Les contacts doivent se multiplier directement entre individus, et non se faire par les voies contrôlées des organismes étatiques spécialisés, comme le voudraient les pays de l'Est. Nous devons évidemment savoir que la philosophie politique de ceux-ci limitera les résultats que nous pouvons attendre. Cela ne doit pas nous empêcher de poursuivre avec force nos objectifs. Ceux-ci ont également des implications très importantes pour nous-mêmes. Nous ne pouvons persuader les autres de la justesse de nos thèses si nous ne les appliquons pas de manière exemplaire. Le Traité de Washington prévoit que nos sociétés sont fondées sur les principes de la démocratie, des libertés individuelles et le règne du droit. Il est, dès lors, indispensable que chacun d'entre nous se conforme à ces engagements. Sans cela, nous serons en peine de maintenir la crédibilité et la vigueur de notre Alliance et nous parviendrons encore moins à persuader les autres de suivre notre exemple. Notre pays attache à cette question la plus grande importance.

Dans le domaine de la sécurité, la Conférence essaiera de préciser les règles de conduite qui doivent régir les relations entre Etats, et notamment empêcher l'usage ou la menace de la force contre n'importe quel Etat, quel que soit son régime politique ou social. Mais nous nous refuserons, pour notre part, à participer à la création d'un système juridique particulier à l'Europe qui nous mènerait progressivement vers la création d'une organisation pan-européenne qui entraverait l'intégration européenne et porterait atteinte à la cohésion atlantique.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

Nous avons la même méfiance à l'égard de la création d'une organisation politique permanente qui prolongerait la Conférence, ce qui n'écarte pas l'idée qu'après les travaux de la Conférence puissent être organisées, si les modalités sont acceptables, des consultations politiques entre pays qui y ont participé. Nos négociateurs à Helsinki n'ont pris aucun engagement à ce propos et, à mon avis, ils ont eu raison.

La Belgique attache enfin une grande importance à la possibilité d'évoquer à la Conférence les aspects politiques de la confrontation militaire en Europe. Grâce à la compréhension de tous, les travaux des PMP ont pu aboutir à une solution satisfaisante à cet égard.

La Belgique conclut donc qu'elle peut marquer son accord sur le document final de ces PMP et accepter d'aller à la Conférence sur la base de ceux-ci.

Je pense qu'il serait, dès lors, opportun que les pays de l'Alliance se préparent dès maintenant à déposer à la phase ministérielle de la Conférence des documents, qu'il s'agisse d'études d'orientation ou déjà des projets de résolution, afin que l'effort de réflexion des pays participant à la Conférence puisse, dès le début de la deuxième phase, se faire au départ de projets qui reflètent nos conceptions.

Les réductions mutuelles et équilibrées de forces en Europe centrale font l'objet, pour la Belgique, d'une attention particulière depuis nombre d'années. Nous y attachons en effet une grande importance.

Notre Alliance est maintenant appelée à déterminer sa position de substance en vue de la négociation et, dans cette perspective, un projet de directives est soumis à notre approbation.

Ce projet de texte est bon. La Belgique peut s'y rallier.

Pour ce qui regarde la question des forces à réduire, nos collègues de la défense ont eu, la semaine dernière, sur le plan qui est le leur, une discussion féconde. La possibilité se fait jour de s'entendre sur une formule proche de celle qui figure en deuxième rang au paragraphe 9 du texte soumis à notre approbation. Selon cette formule, un programme d'ensemble MBFR comporterait une première phase consacrée à des retraits de forces étrangères, essentiellement des forces américaines, et réserverait, à tout le moins, la possibilité de consacrer une phase ultérieure à des réductions de forces autochtones. Cette thèse concilie la nécessité de traiter par priorité des forces américaines et soviétiques stationnées en Europe centrale avec celle de ne pas restreindre la négociation MBFR à ces seules forces; on ne peut en effet exclure la possibilité de traiter d'autres forces stationnées, ni des forces autochtones.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

La position de la Belgique sur le plan de la procédure en matière de MBFR est tout aussi clair; elle est d'ailleurs entièrement conforme aux idées qui se sont formées à ce propos au sein du Conseil. Les Alliés se sont entendus pour qu'à Vienne, l'on s'efforce d'obtenir l'accord de l'Est sur un ordre du jour pour la future négociation MBFR. Un tel accord se révélant impossible à obtenir, nous avons reporté nos efforts sur un texte de communiqué conjoint décrivant l'objet de la future négociation, prévoyant un lieu où se réunir et, surtout, fixant une date pour le début de la négociation.

S'il se confirme, d'une part, qu'il est impossible de s'entendre à ce stade sur un ordre du jour et, d'autre part, que le problème de la date pour le début de la négociation ne peut être résolu, il nous paraît s'imposer d'informer l'autre partie que les conversations dans la capitale autrichienne n'ont plus d'utilité tant que l'on ne pourra convenir d'une date acceptable pour tous et l'inscrire dans le communiqué final. Si aucun accord n'est intervenu avant l'ouverture de la première phase de la CSCE, un consensus pour fixer la date de la deuxième phase serait, à mon avis, difficile à atteindre.

De ces pourparlers exploratoires, on peut retenir que les pays de l'Est paraissent intéressés à engager des négociations sérieuses et qu'il a été possible de recueillir un nombre appréciable d'indications au sujet des conceptions de ces pays concernant les problèmes des réductions de forces.

Si, donc, ces discussions ont donné certains résultats positifs quant au fond de l'exploration, nous avons constaté qu'il conviendrait de préciser nos procédures internes. Il faut tenir compte de l'expérience que nous avons faite et tirer les leçons de cette période de rodage.

Tout ne fut pas parfait, et nous avons eu l'occasion de le dire, de sorte qu'il n'est pas indispensable d'y revenir ici. Nous en avons cependant conclu, pour notre part, que la négociation ne pourrait se dérouler de façon satisfaisante que si tous les participants alliés sont pleinement associés à l'élaboration des positions de fond et à celle de la tactique de négociation. Il faut qu'à cette fin, le Conseil définisse des règles précises sur nos procédures internes et sur ses relations avec les négociateurs sur place.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

Je voudrais aborder maintenant les problèmes internes de l'Alliance. Le Secrétaire général a adressé à chacun de nous une lettre à ce sujet.

La fidélité à l'Alliance, que je tiens à réaffirmer ici, n'exclut pas - bien au contraire - la nécessité de faire une analyse critique de son évolution pour déterminer les aménagements qui s'imposent dans les relations entre Alliés. Il importe notamment de confirmer la nécessité de traiter tous les Alliés d'une manière telle que leur participation à l'étude des problèmes et à la solution soit garantie.

M. le Président, je crois personnellement - et j'ai eu l'occasion de le dire en public - que l'Europe doit saisir l'occasion de dialogue qui lui est offerte par les déclarations récentes du Président Nixon et de Messieurs Rogers et Kissinger. Ce dialogue a pour objectif une réflexion conjointe consacrée aux problèmes que l'Europe et l'Amérique du Nord ont en commun. De ce dialogue, il faut qu'à la fois l'Alliance et l'Europe sortent renforcées.

Ceci m'amène à parler de nos problèmes de défense qui doivent être résolus dans le cadre de notre Alliance, et de la charge que représente pour nous tous cette défense commune.

La défense des Etats-Unis commence en Europe, et le bouclier américain renforce la crédibilité de la défense européenne. Cela signifie que la présence des troupes américaines sur le continent européen ne revêt pas seulement un intérêt pour l'Europe, mais aussi pour l'Amérique. Il devrait dès lors être possible de définir, à l'issue de notre dialogue, ce que comporte cet intérêt commun pour chacun de nous, et de quelle manière une répartition équilibrée des charges peut être assurée.

Nous nous réjouissons, dans cette perspective, de l'affirmation répétée du Président Nixon et de ses collaborateurs que les troupes américaines ne seront pas retirées unilatéralement d'Europe.

En échange, nos Alliés américains demandent que l'Europe prenne à sa charge une part plus large de la défense commune. A mon tour, je demande à nos partenaires américains de prendre en considération l'effort que fait l'Europe dans le domaine militaire et qui représente - je crois - une part appréciable du fardeau.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

Je leur demande aussi de comprendre les difficultés qu'auront nos Gouvernements, dans le climat actuel, d'obtenir une augmentation des crédits pour la défense. Je crois cependant qu'il faut que nous poursuivions nos efforts pour nous assurer que les fonds affectés à la défense soient utilisés de manière plus rationnelle, et veiller à ce que la répartition des charges entre les membres de l'Alliance soit équitable.

Tel est l'un des problèmes essentiels auquel nous sommes confrontés. Il y a en a d'autres qui concernent les relations atlantiques et que, dans notre communiqué, nous ne pourrions passer sous silence. Au contraire, comme le suggère notre Secrétaire général, nous devons les aborder franchement et saisir cette occasion pour confirmer une fois de plus notre solidarité.

Trois idées, qui ne font qu'un concept, pourraient être développées - me semble-t-il, dans le communiqué.

1. A travers les changements profonds de ces vingt-cinq dernières années, à cause de ces changements, l'Alliance atlantique, face au futur, unit plus que jamais des partenaires qui ont - comme l'a très bien dit le Président Pompidou à Reykjavik - des conceptions semblables de la vie et de la paix.

2. Les espérances de la paix et les progrès des organisations universelles et régionales dans le monde font naître les problèmes qui sont le défi de l'avenir. Dans le domaine qui est le sien, l'Alliance a les moyens pour y faire face, sans qu'il soit nécessaire de modifier le Pacte Atlantique.

Mais il peut être utile, à la suite de nos consultations, de réaffirmer dans une déclaration de portée générale notre solidarité devant les grandes interrogations de l'avenir. Ne devrions-nous pas fixer un terme pour cette déclaration ? Pourrions-nous, par exemple, en discuter au mois de décembre ?

M. le Président, j'ai écouté avec attention ce qui s'est dit autour de cette table et particulièrement par notre collègue français, M. Jobert. Peut-être, nos travaux n'aboutiront-ils pas à une autre constatation que celle de M. Jobert : que nous avons une bonne Alliance et que nous devons la garder. Mais il vaut la peine, je crois, d'examiner la meilleure manière de tirer parti de cette affirmation et de le dire. C'est d'ailleurs, je crois, ce qu'a voulu souligner également notre collègue, Monsieur le Ministre Scheel.

M. VAN ELSLANDE (Suite)

Quant aux problèmes eux-mêmes, bien qu'ils concernent les mêmes pays, ils sont de nature différente.

Ils doivent être affrontés selon leurs mérites et suivant des procédures multiples et dans les enceintes appropriées. Ceux qui concernent l'Alliance - la défense du monde libre et les rapports Est-Ouest en corrélation avec sa sécurité - rentrent dans sa compétence et seront traités par elle. Merci, M. le Président.

M. LUNS

Merci beaucoup, M. le Ministre. Je me propose de donner la parole au Ministre des affaires étrangères du Luxembourg, à celui de l'Italie et à celui des Pays-Bas, avant que nous séparions et, si possible encore, au suivant. Je donne donc la parole à son Excellence le Ministre des affaires étrangères du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg.

M. THORN

Monsieur le Président, Messieurs, après les interventions de mes collègues qui m'ont précédé, je pense pouvoir être très court. Je crois toutefois qu'aujourd'hui il est important que notre Conseil ait plus que jamais présent à l'esprit que si l'Alliance atlantique a pu s'affirmer pendant près d'un quart de siècle, c'est avant tout parce que notre Alliance, comme certains l'ont répété, a su s'adapter constamment à l'évolution internationale, qu'elle n'a jamais failli à sa tâche de rechercher et de trouver, chaque fois qu'il le fallait, des réponses constructives aux problèmes nouveaux avec lesquels nous étions confrontés et même de prendre les initiatives nécessaires quand il le fallait, parce que je pense qu'aujourd'hui aussi, on attend cela de nous.

Des changements d'attitude assez profonds se dessinent en ce moment dans la politique étrangère, tant du côté des pays de l'Alliance que parmi les pays membres du Pacte de Varsovie. La diplomatie multilatérale mise en branle entre l'Ouest et l'Est dans les domaines de la politique, de la sécurité et l'économie nous permet d'espérer, mais seulement d'espérer, que nous nous engageons dans une époque de plus grande compréhension réciproque et de coopération constructive entre toutes les parties intéressées. Quelque prometteur que le changement qui se dessine puisse paraître, il ne faut pas pour autant qu'il fasse reléguer au second plan de notre attention le problème de la cohésion nécessaire entre les membres de l'Alliance, même, et je dirais presque surtout, en période de détente. Si nous ne retenons de notre séance d'aujourd'hui que cela, je pense que ce serait essentiel.

M. THORN (Suite)

Notre éminent collègue, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, a procédé ce matin à une brillante analyse de la situation, en attirant notre attention sur le fait que l'Union soviétique et ses alliés pouvaient d'un côté proclamer et prôner la détente et en même temps redoubler leurs efforts dans la course aux armements, alors que, dans nos démocraties occidentales, si nous reconnaissons et si nous clamons la détente, nous risquons, pour des raisons de popularité et de facilité - encouragés, comme il l'a dit, par tous les membres du gouvernement et notamment par les ministres des finances - de désarmer et de courir en ordre dispersé au devant de nos adversaires ou de nos antagonistes. C'est pourquoi, je crois qu'il faut que chacun d'entre nous soit conscient du fait que cette détente que nous avons tous souhaitée, et pour laquelle nous avons tant entrepris, ne peut être couronnée de succès que si vraiment nous manifestons en cette période autant de solidarité et d'unité que nous l'avons fait dans les années précédentes. Ce processus de détente engagé entre l'Est et l'Ouest, le renforcement économique de l'Europe occidentale ainsi que les problèmes qui se posent dans les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l'Europe soulèvent deux types de questions, à savoir, la redéfinition des relations des pays de l'Alliance avec les puissances tierces et aussi la redéfinition des relations entre nous.

Permettez-moi, Monsieur le Président, de dire un mot de deux conférences qui nous préoccupent tous, les conférences d'Helsinki et de Vienne. J'aimerais à ce sujet rappeler qu'il y a un an à Bonn, nous avons fixé comme but des pourparlers multilatéraux préparatoires, d'obtenir que les propositions occidentales fassent l'objet d'un examen approfondi à la conférence elle-même, et qu'il existe entre tous les participants un degré d'entente suffisant pour avoir quelque espoir raisonnable de succès. Certes, si l'on jette un coup d'oeil, même rapide, sur les mandats élaborés aux PMP, il nous faut convenir que ceux-ci ne reflètent pas les positions occidentales avec autant de netteté que nous l'aurions souhaité, notamment en ce qui concerne la teneur et l'agencement des principes devant régir les relations entre Etats participants et surtout la libre circulation des personnes et des idées. Mais nous pensons objectivement et avec réalisme - et cet élément me paraît essentiel - qu'aucune position occidentale importante n'a été abandonnée au cours des PMP, toutes les questions qui nous tiennent à coeur pouvant être utilement discutées au cours de la phase des commissions de la Conférence elle-même; c'est la raison pour laquelle, sans optimisme exagéré, nous nous félicitons du travail de nos collaborateurs, de leur solidarité, et c'est pourquoi nous devons être en mesure de ratifier l'approbation du document final des PMP.

M. THORN (Suite)

Maintenant, on propose comme début de cette conférence la date du 3 juillet prochain. Je suis entièrement d'accord avec Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat Rogers et beaucoup d'autres, pour dire que cette première phase de la Conférence au niveau ministériel doit être aussi brève que possible, ne serait-ce que par souci de calendrier. Je ne pense pas que ce sera le moment de faire d'énormes progrès et de s'engager dans des négociations pénibles. Il s'agit de savoir quand commencera la deuxième phase, combien de temps elle durera, quand et à quelles conditions elle sera suivie éventuellement d'une troisième phase. C'est là, je crois, le gros problème que nous devons examiner et sur lequel nous devons prendre position, premièrement, parce qu'il serait dangereux, à notre avis, que cette conférence ministérielle de l'OTAN se termine sans que nous ayons pris position et deuxièmement parce que nous devons aussi savoir qu'il est dangereux de prendre position et de rectifier notre attitude, c'est-à-dire de céder par la suite.

Je n'ai, je crois, entendu personne ni ce matin ni cet après-midi demander qu'on n'aille pas à la première phase de la conférence du 3 juillet. A mon avis, il serait prématuré de dire que nous n'allons pas nous engager dans la deuxième phase de la conférence, en pensant que l'Union soviétique ne va pas poursuivre les pourparlers sur les MBFR en temps voulu. Mais je crois qu'il faudrait dire aujourd'hui que nous ferions assumer la responsabilité à l'Union soviétique si elle maintenait son refus de poursuivre en temps utile les conférences de Vienne et de s'engager en octobre dans les MBFR, et je voudrais expliquer surtout pour notre éminent collègue, M. Jobert, qui ne voudrait pas établir un lien aussi étroit - pourquoi cela. Bien sûr, certains d'entre nous peuvent avoir des opinions différentes sur l'utilité des MBFR. Je dois dire que là, sur le fond, ma position ne s'identifie pas à celle de tous nos collègues autour de cette table, mais nous en avons ainsi décidé. Nous nous sommes engagés dans ces pourparlers et aujourd'hui la réponse, l'attitude soviétique vis-à-vis de cette conférence est un élément indispensable du climat de détente et il faut clairement faire sentir à l'Union soviétique que si, aujourd'hui, elle essaie de se dégager et de tergiverser, elle assume l'unique responsabilité d'avoir contrarié ce climat de détente et nous devons, comme Mitchell Sharp et tant d'autres l'ont demandé, dire que nous restons toujours maîtres du rythme auquel nous allons procéder à la CSCE et, au cours de la deuxième phase, sans en faire dépendre le début, préciser que c'est l'Union soviétique qui assumera l'entière responsabilité de la suspension, voire de l'échec de cette deuxième phase. Je crois, Monsieur le Président, que c'est là ce qu'il faudrait essentiellement dire.

M. THORN (Suite)

J'ajouterais à l'adresse de mon excellent collègue français que je ne conçois pas trop d'optimisme en ce qui concerne les négociations sur les réductions mutuelles et équilibrées de forces. Mais je crois qu'avec un certain réalisme ici entre nous, nous devons envisager un aspect assez pratique des choses et dire que tous - et, je crois, Sir Alec, une fois de plus l'a souligné ce matin - nous voulons absolument éviter qu'il y ait de notre côté un retrait unilatéral des forces, ce qui eût été extrêmement dangereux pour l'Alliance. Voilà pourquoi essentiellement, et pas pour d'autres raisons, mon gouvernement s'engage dans des négociations sur les MBFR, et voilà pourquoi nous attachons un grand prix à ce que les décisions prises à ce sujet et à ce que l'orientation dans laquelle nous sommes engagés soient suivies.

Un mot maintenant en ce qui concerne le fond de ces MBFR, vous pensez bien, mes chers collègues, qu'avec le rôle minime que le Luxembourg joue dans la défense de l'Occident, je ne vais pas m'étendre de manière très détaillée sur nos idées de la façon dont doivent se dérouler ces négociations sur des réductions mutuelles et équilibrées des forces, mais je crois pouvoir constater que nous avons tous eu sensiblement la même approche, celle que vient de redéfinir M. le Président Van Elslande et que mon collègue M. Scheel a développée tout à l'heure : il faut commencer par une phase où l'on aborde d'abord la réduction des troupes étrangères stationnées tout en annonçant tout de suite la phase successive de la réduction des forces nationales. J'aimerais ici souligner - je crois qu'il n'en est pas besoin - que si nous pensons à la réduction des forces stationnées, ce n'est pas, comme certains l'ont dit, des forces stationnées américaines et canadiennes en Europe, mais nous voulons voir essentiellement réduire les forces soviétiques stationnées en Europe, et nous savons quelle est la contrepartie qu'il faut payer. C'est par ce bout uniquement que je voudrais envisager cette réduction des forces stationnées en Europe et réaffirmer avec M. le Ministre Jobert, et avec tous ceux qui sont intervenus avant moi, qu'une réduction unilatérale des forces américaines nous semblerait le plus grand péril pour les Etats-Unis et pour l'Europe, et nous sommes heureux que tant le Secrétaire d'Etat Rogers que le Président Nixon lui-même aient affirmé qu'il ne saurait en être question. Voilà pour la réduction mutuelle et équilibrée des forces.

Rendant une fois de plus hommage à ceux qui ont assumé, comme négociateurs, et surtout comme porte-parole, la responsabilité de ces négociations, j'aimerais espérer qu'à l'avenir, nous suivions l'exemple d'Helsinki, où vraiment notre position unie et notre solidarité ont fait notre force, et nous avons vu, même si ce ne fut qu'un incident de parcours, combien certaines hésitations, sur les obligations subsidiaires, sur la Hongrie, ont pu faire apparaître certains flottements et ont pu fournir autant de prétextes à nos adversaires pour faire traîner les négociations en longueur ; je pense que nous devrions tirer la leçon de cette expérience pour en éviter autant que possible la répétition à l'avenir.

M. THORN (Suite)

Maintenant, comme tous mes collègues, Monsieur le Président, je voudrais aborder la question de la redéfinition du rôle entre Alliés au sein de l'Alliance. Nous avons entendu dire, de par M. le Président Nixon, par notre collègue, le Secrétaire d'Etat Rogers, et à la suite de l'allocution de M. Kissinger, que, du côté des Etats-Unis - et M. le Ministre Jobert l'a rappelé ce matin - on entendait consacrer plus ou moins cette année comme l'année de l'Europe. J'espère que ce ne sera pas la seule, mais enfin, fermons là cette parenthèse.

Maintenant, quelle doit être notre réaction à cet égard ? Je ne vois pas pourquoi on tourne tellement autour du pot, et comment on craint tellement de donner une réponse. Quand une tierce puissance et quand un adversaire s'adresse à nous pour entrer dans des négociations et pour redéfinir notre rôle vis-à-vis de lui, nous répondons d'habitude positivement par des négociations. Il ne m'est jamais venu à l'esprit de répondre négativement à l'invitation d'un membre de l'Alliance de discuter avec lui et de voir comment on pourrait préparer l'avenir. Et c'est ainsi que j'interprète, d'ailleurs, les interventions de tous mes collègues autour de cette table : il ne saurait être question de ne pas répondre positivement. Cela n'empêche que, bien sûr, on doit s'interroger d'abord sur ce que l'on veut, quand on le veut et comment on veut y arriver, à la lumière de la meilleure préparation possible.

Alors, d'abord le premier point, celui du réexamen de la Charte Atlantique, d'une nouvelle définition, d'une déclaration d'intention. Permettez-moi de donner modestement mon appréciation à ce sujet. Là, je crois que nous serons tous d'accord avec M. le Ministre Jobert pour dire : "l'Alliance est bonne ; de grâce, il faut absolument la maintenir". Comme l'a ajouté M. le Ministre Scheel, dans une solidarité franco-allemande que j'ai toujours respectée, cela n'empêche que demain on devrait tirer le parti maximum de toutes les possibilités pour améliorer encore l'Alliance et la renforcer. Je pense qu'il ne peut pas être superfétatoire ou superflu de réaffirmer cette année - surtout cette année - à la lumière des négociations entre l'Est et l'Ouest, combien nous sommes attachés à l'Alliance, voire combien nous voulons l'améliorer et l'adapter aux exigences nouvelles. Cela doit être préparé, cela pourra être préparé ; où ? Mais dans aucune autre enceinte que dans celle-ci. Mais qu'il soit bien clair que nous nous devons tous de lever une équivoque et de ne pas donner l'impression au-dehors que nous allons réexaminer l'Alliance dans son ensemble et jusque dans ses bases fondamentales ; non, là, je suis entièrement d'accord avec M. Jobert, et je crois, comme Sir Alec Douglas-Home, que si nous cherchions à retrouver une nouvelle Alliance, très probablement cette nouvelle Alliance ressemblerait comme un frère jumeau à l'ancienne.

M. THORN (Suite)

Donc, cela revient essentiellement à réaffirmer notre solidarité dans l'Alliance, notre attachement pour celle-ci, voire son caractère évolutif qui s'est manifesté au fil des ans, et bien sûr, à cette occasion comme à d'autres, il convient de rappeler - et je suis heureux que mon collègue M. Van Elslande l'a fait - que cette Alliance, que ces principes sont toujours valables, qu'ils sont fondés sur les principes de la démocratie, sur les libertés individuelles et le règne du droit. Nous avons vu, à la lumière de ces discussions que nous avons eues au début de l'après-midi, sur une querelle importante, je ne veux pas dire grave, mais importante, entre partenaires de l'Alliance, combien il est utile de rappeler tous ces principes et de se laisser guider par eux à chaque occasion.

Maintenant, M. le Président - et j'en arrive au dernier point - il reste d'autres soucis qui peuvent, je ne dirai pas nous opposer, mais nous amener à nous affronter des deux côtés de l'Atlantique : problèmes économiques, problèmes monétaires et autres. Il me semble que le rapport du Comité dit des Trois Sages, de 1956, approuvé d'ailleurs par notre Conseil, énonce le principe d'une solution valable, disant qu'il serait sans profit pour la Communauté Atlantique que l'OTAN se chargeât d'une tâche qu'assument déjà d'autres organisations internationales, créées en vue de diverses formes de coopération économique, et encore, que l'on ne gagnerait rien à reprendre simplement à l'OTAN des discussions qui ont leur place dans d'autres organisations techniquement plus compétentes. Voilà pourquoi, d'accord avec notre collègue français, et avec beaucoup d'autres, je crois que les différents aspects doivent être préparés dans les différentes enceintes qui ont été créées à cette fin. Mais, bien sûr, comme M. Sharp nous l'a rappelé à tous ce matin, personne, et surtout aucun homme politique, ne saurait perdre de vue, au moment de n'importe quelle négociation, ce qui nous lie. Nous savons tous qu'un problème qui reste sur le plan économique ne facilite pas nos relations, notre entente et notre solidarité sur d'autres plans. Et voilà pourquoi je me demande si nous n'attachons pas trop d'importance aux querelles de procédure ; le Secrétaire d'Etat Rogers a dit qu'il était ouvert à toutes les procédures ; je suis heureux de l'entendre dire. En tant que représentant d'un petit pays, je n'ai pas d'idée très exactement arrêtée sur la façon dont Washington, et surtout M. Kissinger, entendait la préparation de ces négociations. Je sais qu'on fait beaucoup de préparations bilatérales, et j'en reconnais l'importance. Mais je dirai à notre collègue M. Rogers, qui est ouvert à toutes les formules de procédure, que si des préparations bilatérales sont importantes, on pourrait quand même créer certains malentendus en les poussant trop loin, et cela dans un certain secret, car pour moi, et pour nous tous, je l'espère, en tant qu'Alliés, la procédure doit être une possibilité, un moyen de garantir le succès, non pas de cacher les problèmes, de les masquer et de créer des malentendus entre nous.

M. THORN (Suite)

Je pense donc que nous sommes conscients de notre solidarité, de ce qui doit être présent à l'esprit de chacun en négociant par plans séparés, une préparation globale étant exclue, mais j'espère qu'ainsi, nous en arriverons à ce qu'a préconisé mon collègue, M. Walter Scheel, c'est que lors d'une visite du Président Nixon, qui se situera quand il le jugera opportun et quand la préparation aura été utilement poussée, de la façon la plus souple et la plus efficace possible, qu'alors il y ait une réunion entre le Président des Etats-Unis et le Conseil de l'Atlantique Nord, comme entre le Président des Etats-Unis et la Communauté européenne, qui réaffirme ce qui nous unit et qui ouvre de nouvelles perspectives d'avenir. Je vous remercie, Monsieur le Président.

M. LUNS

Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Ministre. Je donne maintenant la parole au Ministre des affaires étrangères de l'Italie, M. Medici.

M. MEDICI

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I too would like to join my colleagues in thanking the Danish Government for the warm hospitality and the many courtesies granted to us.

Our Agenda indicates that we should especially dwell on the two main issues which characterise the present international situation. The state of our Atlantic ties and the evolution of East-West relations, these are the main issues which we must face, having in mind that these two fundamental aspects of the current political situation are closely interdependent.

Experience has shown that an absolute clarity of ideas and unity of purpose among the countries of our Alliance are necessary if we want to develop durable relations of detente and co-operation between East and West, still so deeply separated by so many differences. In the course of the last quarter of a century peace has been guaranteed by our cohesion. Upon this same cohesion must be based any effort to create a new possibility of progress, in the spirit of peace and co-operation.

Mr. MEDICI (Contd)

It is, therefore, from the present state of our Alliance that I shall begin my considerations.

I am convinced that, if we wish to evaluate the tasks which face us, we should devote ourselves to a process of reappraisal; a process certainly not involving our basic objectives, which constitute the very expression of our peaceful and democratic vocation, but concerning the instruments by which we carry out our common commitments. Secretary Rogers, recalling in this morning's speech, some ideas already expressed at the highest levels of the American Administration, has again emphasized the need to verify together whether our Alliance fully responds to the requirements of its fundamental role within the framework of the world equilibrium. This is moreover, a topic to which you, Mr. Secretary General, expressly and rightly called our attention a few days ago.

I believe I can state that we, as Europeans, are equally convinced of this need. In order that our Alliance may continue to be, as we intend, a determining factor of peace, it is necessary that we keep in step with our changing times. This applies to all human institutions which will progress only inasmuch as they renew themselves.

The problem is to examine ways, means and timing for the reappraisal of our instruments. As regards Italy, we are ready to continue the dialogue which has begun within NATO. Our aim must be to verify whether our defence capabilities correspond to the requirements of the present strategic concept, which we consider still fully valid; to examine how our common defence efforts can usefully adopt new technologies; to strengthen the premises for a balanced sharing of tasks and responsibilities.

We are ready, moreover, to discuss in the same spirit and in the appropriate fora, the other great issues which affect our mutual relations. And we intend to do so inspired by two concepts which are both fundamental to us: first the dialogue between Europe and the United States of America in its various aspects must take place with full awareness that between us there exists a substantial convergence of values and interests; second, the formation of a European union, - whose balancing role will be all the more significant in so far as its identity will acquire growing authenticity, - should be enhanced by our contacts.

This commitment is so complex and important that it is in our common interest not to embarrass ourselves with fixed deadlines, which could prejudice the validity of our conclusions. We should however take advantage of every favourable occasion to pursue the work which will bring us closer to our goal of reappraisal and renewal.

Mr. MEDICI (Contd)

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In the one or the other of these occasions, a statement on the present and on the future of the Alliance, be it in the form of a declaration or of a joint communique will be agreed among us.

Mr. Chairman, the other issue concerns the development of East-West relations. Important progress has been achieved in this field during the last six months and the Alliance - as a stimulating and co-ordinating factor - has once again played a fundamental role.

I would like to make a few brief remarks on the two negotiations that are likely to begin very soon and in which we must participate with confidence in detente, combined with a clear view of our common interests, as well as of the high stakes involved.

The complex and difficult negotiation in Helsinki for the preparation of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has offered a new and convincing evidence of the validity of the ideals of our Alliance. In the same spirit, we must now prepare to participate in the coming Conference.

In this framework, we should realistically assess what we have achieved during the Helsinki preliminary talks. On the one hand, we can note with satisfaction that the strategy set out through our constant consultation has proved adequate to the goals we intend to reach.

On the other hand, we must take note that some of our expectations were not fulfilled. Indeed, we would have wished the Conference to represent the first step towards the beginning of qualitatively different relations among the European countries; we must however conclude that, for the time being, the countries of Eastern Europe wish above all to consolidate the political as well as the territorial status quo, and are opposing steadfastly the establishment of free relations among individuals and the open exchange of ideas.

Whatever the assessment of the documents agreed upon in Helsinki, their structure does not preclude the possibility that some positive elements may materialize during the Conference. Careful attention should be devoted to the proposals for a declaration on relations among European States. We must ensure, in any case, that this will not entail some special European system of international law, but will bring about a more effective method for the implementation of universally recognized principles.

Our task is to create a new atmosphere of trust and co-operation in Europe, without betraying, through deceptive compromises, the ideals inspiring our people and our Alliance. Very rightly, Minister Sharp has stressed the need for vigilance and firmness by all of us on this fundamental point.

Mr. MEDICI (Contd)

It is also for this reason that we believe we must not carry out the future negotiations under pressure of fixed time limits. If the Helsinki preliminary talks have achieved some positive results, this is mainly due to the fact that we acted with deliberation and steadfastness. We must act in a like manner during the second stage of the Conference which should begin next September in Geneva. We are certain that, also in the future, the spirit of initiative and unity of the Alliance will not fail.

As to MBFR, we are in favour of limiting, at least in the first part of the negotiations, reductions of the United States forces, on one side, and of the Soviet Union forces on the other. This explains our definite preference for the second American model, which in principle does not rule out possible reductions of other components of forces of the two Alliances at a later stage.

We think that the constraints should not extend beyond the reduction area that will be agreed upon. We must avoid the risk of enlarging the area to which the negotiations apply, with the result that it could include other NATO countries in Europe, apart from those of the flanks.

Still on the question of application of constraints, we share the American view of a non-circumvention approach, and we take note with interest of the remark formulated this morning by Mr. Rogers, according to which the inclusion of Hungary in the constraints zone would not be the only way to solve the problem. We believe that, for the time being, it would not be advisable for us to stick to a more flexible formula.

In general, we are inclined to share the note of caution expressed by Sir Alec and other colleagues as to the wide implications of the whole exercise.

We must in every case ensure that the negotiations will not create obstacles along our path towards a European union.

Mr. Chairman, I would like now to stress that security and detente in the European continent cannot be attained if peace and co-operation are not restored in the Mediterranean.

I noted with appreciation the report on this important item in our Agenda. Its objectiveness and thoroughness are evidence of the attention with which the Alliance follows events in the Mediterranean, as they weigh heavily and directly on the security and stability of the entire Atlantic area. In particular, I wish to call your attention to the continuing tension in the Middle East.

Mr. MEDICI (Contd)

On the one hand, the sense of frustration which now characterizes the political climate in the Arab world favours the strengthening of the most extreme movements. On the other hand, there are clear indications of the risk that the oil-producing countries of the area may be tempted to utilise their resources in order to exert pressure on the West.

Furthermore, the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict prevents some Arab countries, particularly Egypt, from attaining political stability through economic development. I believe therefore that it is a primary responsibility of European countries to take adequate measures to help, in the first instance, Egypt. Some steps taken by Italian diplomacy and recent statements by authoritative Western statesmen have kindled the hope that we nourished.

Lastly, despite the ups and downs in the relations between the Arab countries and the Soviet Union, the presence of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean continues to be an important factor which the Alliance cannot ignore. Therefore, we must leave no stone unturned to restore peace in the Middle East, and stability in the Mediterranean. Italy is trying to do its part. I am sure that Europe and the United States will not avoid their responsibilities in pursuing this goal.

To this effect, I took note with particular interest of the significance references which Secretary State Rogers made this morning to this important subject.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot close my speech without recalling that the fundamental values proclaimed in the preamble of the Atlantic Charter. These are the very principles upon which our free and democratic society is based, a society in which both individual freedom and the supremacy of the law will always be paramount.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LUNS

Thank you, Mr. Minister, I now give the floor to the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Netherlands. Mr. van der Stoel.

Mr. van der STOEL

Mr. Chairman, being a freshman on this Ministerial Council, at least I cannot be blamed for undue lack of modesty if I begin my contribution to our debate on East-West relations by stating that I believe this meeting to be a model of perfect timing.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

The multilateral preparatory talks at Helsinki have come to a close. The stage has been set for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to begin in a few weeks time. In parallel, the possibility of starting negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions has been explored in another multilateral forum, and this activity too is approaching accomplishment, opening up the perspective of detailed and concrete negotiations later in the year. A more propitious moment for a NATO Ministerial Meeting to draw its conclusions and to announce publicly its intentions for the future in the field of East-West relations could hardly have been chosen and I hope, therefore, that we will use this opportunity to the full.

When I try to evaluate the results of the MPT, I find the most impressive aspect to be that the conditions have been created, exactly as the West wanted them to be, for governments, to take the decision of participation in the Conference in a responsible way. If there is a conference to be, it certainly has been prepared thoroughly. A great deal of substance has been discussed and a conference structure has been devised, giving the best possible assurance that only through further discussion in depth will the conference yield results.

Remembering the position originally taken by the Soviet Union and its partners in this respect, this certainly is no mean accomplishment for which tribute should be paid to the tenacity and close co-operation of our delegations.

No less satisfactory I believe is the result obtained on the Agenda for the conference. Here the West's basic requirement has been met: that the removal of obstacles to an intensification of contacts between people will be the subject of negotiations. Moreover, the Western thesis that the question of the follow-up of the Conference should be discussed only on the basis of the results of the work in the various committees has been accepted.

These I consider to be the main positive results of MPT. Taken together, they can be seen as the perfect environment for a judgement on whether there is, and I quote well known words, "reasonable assurance that a Conference will yield satisfactory results."

Now let me turn to the fine print of the "Draft Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations" for material on which to base that judgement itself.

Turning to the first item of the recommended Agenda for the Security Conference, what we used to call the first basket, I know that Western insistence achieved a listing of principles whose relevance and validity for all participating states, irrespective of their political, economic or social systems, is expressly stated. Furthermore, it is stressed that these principles will have to be respected and applied equally and unreservedly and that the resulting benefits will be enjoyed by all participating states.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

If we then examine which principles are listed as being of particular importance, I think we may in all fairness conclude that we can be reasonably satisfied with the balanced result. Soviet plans to limit these principles to only those which interested the Soviet Union were rather successfully resisted. We had to pay a price to see those principles, to which we attach great importance, included - for example, self-determination respect for human rights and furtherment of freedoms - but on balance we came out rather well. We are justified, I believe, in expecting that a possible application in future of the notorious Brezhnev doctrine will be made more difficult and that the East will not be able to present the Conference as a consecration of the status quo, although I deplore that the principle of inviolability of frontiers appears as a separate principle.

As far as the military aspects of security are concerned, we have reluctantly accepted the present wording of the mandate. We have done so on the understanding that the mandate would allow a full discussion, as we have always advocated, of those military aspects of security which are of interest to all the participants of the CSCE.

As far as the second chapter is concerned, the mandate on economic, scientific and environmental co-operation, it is my impression that we can be reasonably satisfied with the results obtained. Initial Eastern ambitions in this field were reduced to acceptable proportions and essential Western interests were safeguarded.

I now come to the third basket - co-operation in humanitarian and other fields.

To begin with, I cannot say that I am very happy with the title of this chapter. Somehow, it reminds me more of Red Cross activities than of freer movement of people and ideas; also, the title can hardly be considered to cover adequately the chapter's contents.

Fortunately, the mandate on human contacts does mention freer movement and contacts among persons. Theoretically, this mandate opens up enough possibilities, but in the second phase of the Conference the appropriate Committee will have an important and probably difficult task to ensure that these theoretical possibilities will be implemented in practice.

Again, the mandate on Information, in my view, certainly represents not more than a minimum. It is significant that we had to drop our original proposals to include ideas. The present wording: "freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds", can only be considered as a second best. In this field, too, we will have to work very hard in the committee phase to broaden and deepen the potential of these proposals as much as possible.

It can hardly be emphasized enough that it is in the fields of human contacts, ideas and information that lie our best chances for positive results to come out of the Conference.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

Finally, as regards the follow-up to the Conference, I welcome the fact that, as I have said, the Western proposals have been accepted according to which the results of the work of the committees will have to be examined first and that decisions on a possible institutional follow-up should be taken only on the basis of that evaluation.

Summing up these brief comments on the mandates contained in the final MPT document, I find myself not without certain reservations as to the outcome. On balance, however, my Government's judgement is positive. They consider the final document to be an acceptable basis on which to proceed. They are prepared, therefore, to participate in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe as proposed. We are under no illusion that this Conference will create a major break-through in East-West relations. Rather, we see it as a step, a first step, in a process. Only if the participating states will show their will to try for a reconciliation of their various interests, in political stability, in economic co-operation and, not least, in closer contacts among people and in reducing the dangers of the existing military confrontation, only then will it be possible to develop this process further to its objectives of easing of tension and of reducing mutual suspicion and isolation.

An atmosphere has been created rather than concrete results achieved. If we want to achieve satisfactory results, we shall have to work very hard at it during the various phases of the Conference, and particularly the second. It will be essential that we continue the collaboration among Allies which, so far, has been satisfactory, although there remains scope for improvement. In this respect, I may point also to the positive attitude of the neutral states of Europe which on many points supported our positions. We can indeed say that a truly European spirit has already been created, which we should do our best to foster in the coming negotiations.

Mr. Chairman, I went into a detailed analysis of the results of the MPT as they are now before us. And in my evaluation I already stressed their potential significance for the Conference and the future of East-West relations.

But it is my Government's strongly-held view that the maintenance vis-a-vis the East of the ideals and principles now successfully embodied in the mandates of the first and especially the third basket has important implications for ourselves as well. For we can hardly appear sincere in the defence of our "freedom, common heritage and civilization of our peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law" - and therefore we can hardly expect to convince - if we ourselves, the members of this Alliance, do not, one for one, practice what we preach.

Mr. Chairman, freedom and democracy are more than lofty ideals; they are, as we know, exacting principles for conducting the business of Government, requiring a constant struggle. And it is here that I address myself to member countries to ask them to ensure that these principles, which I have just quoted straight from the Preamble to the Treaty, do not remain a dead letter.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

I speak frankly, because my Government is supported by a public opinion at home which feels strongly on this subject. NATO needs more than planes and tanks and guns - it needs widespread popular support. In order to maintain the credibility and vitality of the Alliance, it is essential that the basic requirements of individual liberty and political democracy are being respected everywhere.

Mr. Chairman, I now come to the subject of MBFR. We are encouraged by the fact that in Vienna there has finally been some movement on the Soviet side towards establishment of a date for the beginning of MBFR negotiations. However, we feel that the latest Soviet proposal is still far from satisfactory, in so far as there would remain ambiguity with regard to the exact time at which negotiations could start and, accordingly, ambiguity concerning the link which the Soviet side might, during the coming months, still feel it appropriate to apply between the development of the CSCE and the beginning of MBFR negotiations.

Such ambiguity would continue to entail the danger of the second CSCE phase coming under time pressure. I think that we all agree that this danger should be avoided. In my opinion, this implies that we ask our negotiators in Vienna to keep on pressing the Soviets for a specific date to be established at this time for the beginning of the MBFR negotiations. In this context, too, I should like to express my appreciation for the remarks which my Canadian colleague has made on this subject.

The remarks I have just made have already indicated the great value that my Government attaches to the MBFR negotiations. It should prove how far we can translate detente into the real terms of military security. I propose to concentrate my remarks on the Secret Guidelines document before us. In order that preparations in Brussels of our common position can proceed with vigour, it is necessary that today we agree on as many matters as possible. The paper demonstrates that a large number of points have been settled, but also that there remain some important issues to be resolved. I shall do my best to be short and address only those aspects of the paper which appear especially important to my Government, including some points at issue between brackets. With some give and take, it should not be too difficult to reach a common position on the outstanding points. As you know, my Government has expressed from the beginning a positive attitude to the document on the United States approach to MBFR and we also accepted the proposal that on the basis of that study guidelines should be drawn up by the Allies to assist us in our further work. The Guidelines paper rightly puts before us the principal objectives that we should always keep in mind before and during negotiations. Balanced outcome and undiminished security are indeed key words when you want to promote detente through a lowering of the military confrontation. It is also right, as we see in paragraph 3, to stress the continuing validity of the current strategy of flexible response and forward defence with its aim of preventing war and of limiting the risks of major conflict and nuclear escalation by emphasizing the capabilities for crisis management.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

As regards the next section of the paper dealing with geographic and related concerns, I believe that we would weaken our position if we did not keep open the possibility of applying other measures, such as constraints, to a wider area than the reductions. I think it would be unwise to limit our options too much at this stage. The first alternative formula of paragraph 4 would seem to leave adequate flexibility. It is useful that the paper clearly states that MBFR arrangements must not hinder the further development of European defence collaboration. But this need not prevent the countries of Central Europe from participating in MBFR agreements which would be justified in terms of undiminished security.

Turning to the section on reductions, we come to the crucial issue of what kind of reduction programme we would like to have. The many brackets in paragraph 9 create the impression that there are great differences between us on this matter, but I have a feeling that our positions are indeed much nearer to each other than they seem to be. Let me first explain the preferences of my Government. We are positively interested in taking part in arrangements for indigenous forces when the time is right for it. If the movement towards detente continues it will be hard to explain to public opinion at home that there would be no prospect of force reductions in our countries. But we realize that, for various reasons, in particular the position of the United States Congress, the first stage of reductions should be limited to stationed forces; this special emphasis on United States forces on the NATO side.

As a second phase, my Government attaches great value to the mixed package option where a reduction in the United States tactical nuclear forces would be exchanged for the withdrawal of substantial Soviet tank forces. In this way the elements that appear most threatening to either side would be diminished and we feel that it is particularly important to make a start with reducing the nuclear aspects of our defence.

The third phase would then be the reduction of indigenous forces. Now, I think there is wide agreement among us, that stationed forces should be dealt with in the first phase of implementation and that on the Allied side the emphasis should be on US forces. We, for our part, however, would not like to see an agreement on such a first phase signed and sealed without simultaneous assurance that subsequent phases will follow, and particularly a phase concerning indigenous forces. Such an assurance could take various forms; it could, for instance, be in the form of an agreed framework or programme specifying subsequent phases or it might possibly be a simple formula committing the parties to work out further arrangements concerning other forces than those stationed. This could be further discussed within NATO, once the conception I have just advanced has been accepted. It seems to me to be most desirable, however, to use this meeting to reach such a basic agreement.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

I have two further remarks about the paper. In the first place, we attach great value to suitable constraints measures and to adequate verification. I think that in these matters much depends on the contents of the reductions to be agreed and it would be unwise to set our goals for constraints and verification too low before we know what kind of reductions would be arranged.

Finally, as regards the issue of Hungary, referred to in paragraph 14, I think that it should be clearly stated that there would be some adequate non-circumvention arrangements concerning Hungary.

Mr. Chairman, I will now turn to the subject of Atlantic relations. The recent American initiatives on this matter deserve serious attention. I believe indeed that it would be useful to reformulate our common aims since the circumstances of the 1970s are very different from those of 1950. Looking at those problems and tasks of the new age, I think that we are right to conclude that the close co-operation and cohesion of the Western countries are just as necessary now as they were 25 years ago. We have the common task of maintaining our security and of fostering peace, stability and prosperity in the world, and we would not be able to fulfil that task if we allowed Europe and North America to drift apart. It is for those reasons that we welcome the idea of a declaration of principles. We must be very clear, however, about the distinction between formulating such principles and, on the other hand, concrete negotiations about specific problems. Indeed, when I speak in favour of a declaration of principles, I should like to underline that such a declaration may in no way be a substitute for concrete action. There have been some suggestions that the various transatlantic questions, in particular those in the economic, monetary and military fields, should be dealt with as one whole in one overall mutual exercise. I think that there will be wide support among us for the view that such an approach would be neither possible nor desirable; there is no organization which couples those problems together, and I am also convinced that those issues are so different in character that it would be highly unwise to try solving them on the basis of a package deal. We should leave the solution of these questions to the existing frameworks which we have for them, GATT, EEC and the Group of Twenty for the economic and monetary questions and NATO for the security affairs.

The value of the declaration of principles would be that it would provide us with a restatement of our common objectives, and that it would underline for us, in our various activities, that we belong together and that we must not let this basic unity be undermined.

Mr. van der STOEL (Contd)

In this connection, we appreciate the repeated assurances on behalf of the United States that they accept and welcome the movement towards European unification, including the vocation of Europe to play a full role in the world. There is indeed no reason to think that there would be a contradiction between the ideas of Atlantic partnership and European union, and those ideas might well reinforce each other.

The possible contents of the declaration of principles would, of course, have to be the result of our joint thinking. We, for our part, are prepared to contribute to this process. A draft text for the declaration will be circulated in NATO by the Netherlands Delegation in the near future. Some of the elements I have in mind are the following. In the first place: a sketch of the new problems and tasks of the present age. Secondly: the affirmation that the Atlantic countries have an important role to play because of their capabilities, their experience and their common basis of culture and values, including freedom, justice and democracy. Thirdly: the conclusion that the Atlantic countries should stay together and that they should concentrate on finding solutions for the practical problems of various kinds, economic, monetary, military, etc., they are faced with. Fourthly: the pledge by the nations participating in the declaration to commit themselves towards realization of the following aims: (a) the fostering of social justice, democracy and respect for human rights; (b) the furthering of the detente in East-West relations; (c) the support of other peoples in attaining a higher level of prosperity and well-being. Fifthly: the intention of the signatories to meet again periodically in order to take stock of the state of their relationship and to evaluate the progress towards realization of the aims I have just mentioned.

Finally, we have to consider what would be the best procedure for formulating such principles. We can distinguish here between, on the one hand, the preparatory and drafting work and, on the other hand, the kind of meeting which would put them together in the form of a declaration. To my mind, we should approach this question of procedure on a pragmatic basis and not as a matter of principle. It would be conceivable to undertake the preparatory work in some ad hoc combination of North Atlantic and European countries. Much could be said in favour of this. On the other hand, the Alliance offers the advantage of being the only existing political organization combining countries on both sides of the Atlantic and seems, therefore, best suited to start the preparatory work without delay. While going along, the link with other organizations and other countries might then be considered and brought to an acceptable structural solution.