

17. Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe 7 June 1991

Statement issued by the North Atlantic Council Meeting in Ministerial Session in Copenhagen 6-7 June 1991 Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

The long decades of European division are over. We welcome the major increase in the contacts by the Alliance and its members with the Soviet Union and the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as they accept the hand of friendship extended by Alliance Heads of States and Government in London last year. We welcome the progress made by the peoples of these countries towards political and economic reform. We seek to build constructive partnerships with them in order further to promote security and stability in a free and undivided Europe which will recognise the political, economic, social and ecological elements of security, along with the indispensable defence dimension. President Gorbachev's Nobel lecture in Oslo yesterday strengthens our belief that this objective is within reach.

The changes that have occurred in Europe since 1989 have substantially increased the security of all European states. We have seen the end of East-West antagonism, progress towards democracy, major achievements in arms control, the adoption of the Charter of Paris and the signature of a Joint Declaration of 22 States, whose continuing importance we underline. We note, however, that concerns about security remain in some countries.

Our own security is inseparably linked to that of all other states in Europe. The consolidation and preservation throughout the continent of democratic societies and their freedom from any form of coercion or intimidation are therefore of direct and material concern to us, as they are to all other CSCE states under the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. Our common security can best be safeguarded through the further development of a network of interlocking institutions and relationships, constituting a comprehensive architecture in which the Alliance, the process of European integration and the CSCE are key elements. Emerging frameworks of regional cooperation will also be important. Consistent with the purely defensive nature of our Alliance, we will neither seek unilateral advantage from the changed situation in Europe nor threaten the legitimate interests of any state, but rather pursue our efforts to ensure that all peoples of Europe can live in peace and security. We do not wish to isolate any country, nor to see a new division of the Continent. Our objectives is to help create a Europe whole and free.

The CSCE process – and its institutions created in Paris last November – play a central role in expanding the network of cooperative relationships across Europe. It provides a framework within which we will actively seek, as individual Allies and through institutions, including the European Community and the Council of Europe, the development of closer relations with the states of Central and Eastern Europe as they pursue their democratic development. The Allies have a clear interest in the observance of the principles and provision of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. We remain fully committed to the CSCE as political process. We have played a key role in its development, and our consultations within the Alliance continue to be a source of initiatives for strengthening CSCE.

We are committed to work with the other CSCE participating states in making the forthcoming meeting of Foreign Ministers in Berlin a decisive new step in reinforcing CSCE's role and in consolidating its new institutional component, especially by enhancing its capacity for political consultation. In particular, we will seek to reinforce the CSCE's potential for conflict prevention, crisis management and the peaceful settlement of disputes by appropriate means, such as creating a suitably structured emergency consultation mechanism and strengthening the Conflict Prevention centre. We seek an architecture for the new Europe that is firmly based on the principles and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.

We will continue with all available means to support reforms undertaken in the Central and Eastern European states to establish democratic systems of government based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights, as well as the related efforts to create modern competitive market-oriented economies. We are convinced that, notwithstanding present transnational hardships, it is only on those foundations of political and economic freedom that the legitimate aspirations of peoples of those states can be met and grave economic disparities increasingly overcome. We support also the wide range of bilateral and regional contacts, treaties and programmes which are developing between our countries and those of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as positive developments in relations between those countries.

We reaffirm our wish to see difficulties accompanying political and economic reform in these countries resolved in a peaceful manner and to satisfaction of all concerned. In this context, we support the expectations and legitimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples. We call on the Soviet authorities to continue to seek through dialogue and genuine negotiations with the democratically elected leaders of the three Baltic republics a negotiated solution based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and on all concerned to exercise restraint.

In the context of the developing network of European security relationships, we welcome the success of the initiative by the Alliance Heads of State and Government last year in London to establish regular diplomatic liaison with the states of Central and Eastern Europe. It has proved its value in fostering new patterns of constructive dialogue and bonds of friendship. President Havel's recent meeting with the North Atlantic Council was an important symbol of the new undivided Europe that is emerging. We look forward to future visits by the leaders of the Soviet Union and the other Central and Eastern European States. To ensure full mutual understanding of legitimate security interests and policies, we intend to develop further our regular diplomatic liaison along the lines foreseen in the London Declaration in fields of interest to the Alliance and its new partners and also to intensify our programme of military contacts at various levels. These efforts underscore our intention to contribute to the development of peaceful and friendly international relations, consistent with the spirit of Article 2 of the Treaty of Washington.

We see the strengthening of our relations with these countries as a process over time, designed to promote both mutual reassurance and increasingly close ties. In doing so, the Alliance will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CSCE while preserving its responsibilities and mechanisms. While pursuing our present programme of high-ranking political visits and regular diplomatic liaison, we are determined to make the best possible use of our resources to give expression to our commitment to an evolving security partnership through the implementation of a broad set of further initiatives, including:

The organisation of meetings of officials and experts to exchange views and information on security policy issues, on military strategy and doctrine and on other current topics in the security files, such as exchange of experience in the domain of arms control, and non-proliferation and the conversion of defence industries to civilian purposes.

Intensified military contacts between senior NATO military authorities and their counterparts in the Central and East European states, discussion at NATO Headquarters, SHAPE and major NATO commands with military officers from those countries on matters of mutual concern, and invitations to military training facilities for special familiarisation programmes, including issues connected to civilian oversight of defence.

Participation of Central and East European experts in certain Alliance activities, including those related to NATO's "Third Dimension" scientific and environmental programmes, and exchange of views on subjects such as airspace management.

Gradual expansion of NATO's information programmes in the region, support for discussion of security issues in a democratic context within those countries and invitations to parliamentary, educational and media groups and delegations of young leaders to visit NATO Headquarters.

Encouragement of greater contacts between Central and East European parliaments and the North Atlantic Assembly, to be agreed among the parliamentarians concerned.

On this basis, we are determined that our Alliance shall make its full contribution to the building of stable and durable peace and security in all countries of Europe. We invite all European states to join with us in realising this shared objective.
