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SECRETARY GENERAL'S OPENING PRESS STATEMENT

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to our Ministerial Conference which will begin tomorrow. I appreciate the large attendance at this traditional Press Conference and the interest you thereby show in the work of the Alliance. This year's December Ministerial Meeting will prove to be an important one because it is held against the background of many far-reaching developments over the past six months. Some of these developments have given rise to hope, others to apprehension; some served to strengthen Western unity, others put it to test.

2. I trust you will find that everything possible has again been done to facilitate your work in the coming days. During the meeting, at the end of each session, the NATO spokesman will meet and brief you. I myself will have the pleasure of meeting you again once the Conference has ended and the Final Communiqué been published.

3. Before dealing with some aspects of the Agendas for the meetings of the Defence and the Foreign Ministers, I should like to draw attention to the economic and trade problems confronting member nations which, if left unsolved, might impair the solidarity and the common defence efforts of the Alliance. It is not NATO's task but that of other specialized international organizations to solve these issues and we are all conscious of the serious and promising efforts already being undertaken. It is, however, NATO's duty to be keenly aware of the existing economic problems and of their implications; and to help create the political will without which the remedial measures so urgently required cannot be brought about.

4. Turning first to tomorrow's meeting of the Defence Planning Committee, I recall that in 1967 NATO adopted a new strategy, shifting the emphasis from the nuclear to the conventional component of the deterrent. This implied that the resources made available for conventional forces, particularly

by the European members of NATO, should have been kept up to a certain level which on the whole they have not been. As you know defence expenditure in the West has been declining in relation to the rate of growth of GNP while the Warsaw Pact's defence expenditure has unabatedly grown. This state of affairs was analyzed in the AD 70 Study approved last December, and a first follow-on report giving guidelines to countries for remedial measures will be discussed by Ministers tomorrow as their most important Agenda item. Under NATO's twin policy of defence and détente, the Alliance must not be placed in a position of having to negotiate détente from a posture of weakness. Furthermore, the AD 70 follow-on studies have an important bearing, because of burden-sharing, also for the relations between the North American and European members of the Alliance. The studies call for qualitative rather than quantitative improvements in NATO's forces. Many of the AD 70 improvement measures are already apparent in the Defence Plan 1972-1976, which Ministers will be specifically invited to endorse and under which they will be firmly committing their national forces for the first year.

5. Let me now turn to political developments since the Lisbon Ministerial Meeting in June. The period under review was one of intensive diplomatic activities, some of which I may recall in no particular order of priority. We witnessed the signing of the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin and are now following with great attention the intra-German talks related thereto. Alliance consultations on these developments were and continue to be as comprehensive as those on the talks on Strategic Arms Limitations pursued between the United States and the Soviet Union. The impending meetings of Allied Heads of State and Government will serve Alliance solidarity; President Nixon's visits to Peking and Moscow may open new avenues towards the Alliance's goal of East-West détente, as may the other important contacts between Western and Eastern statesmen which have recently taken place or are about to occur. Last but not least, the House of Commons' vote for Britain's entry into the Common Market was a cause of great satisfaction for the entire Alliance.

6. When Ministers discuss policies to be adopted by the Alliance, three subjects will be foremost in their minds: the Berlin Agreement; the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe; and Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions.

7. The Alliance has welcomed the Four-Power Agreement which constitutes the first phase of a Berlin settlement. The second phase - the intra-German talks - seems not far from its conclusion. The Berlin agreement in its entirety would be completed when the Ambassadors of the Four Powers initial the final protocol. Against the background of these developments Ministers will examine where their governments will stand in regard to a successful conclusion of the Berlin negotiations and what the implications will be for entering into multilateral preparatory talks intended to lead to a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, as stipulated in paragraph 9 of the Lisbon Communiqué.

8. The Alliance in the past six months has continued its studies of the complex issues involved in the preparation, convocation and successful conclusion of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Ministers will have before them a report in which these issues are identified, analyzed and weighed from a negotiator's point of view. The report testifies to the desire of the Allied Governments that a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe be carefully prepared, and shows that they are indeed doing their homework to be ready when the time comes.

9. Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions was another field of intensive work by the Alliance over the past six months. The meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers and other high officials of 5th and 6th October appointed Mr. Brosio as Explorer and provided him with guidance for talks with the Soviet Government and possibly with other interested governments. It is disappointing that the Soviet Government has not yet declared its readiness to receive Mr. Brosio, and one hopes that this lack of response does not indicate a lack of interest. Ministers will probably find the delay in the Soviet reply all the more regrettable as their governments, in numerous bilateral contacts with the Soviet Government, have hitherto received only a very sketchy picture of the Soviet attitude with regard to force reductions in Central Europe. Nevertheless we still hope to find adequate common ground for the preparation of negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions.

10. I think I have sufficiently outlined the subjects which will be of primary concern to Ministers. May I now invite your questions?