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MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR
FORCE MODERNIZATION AND ARMS CONTROL

The Allies who participated in the December 1979 decision on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) modernisation and arms control welcomed the opening of the United States-Soviet negotiations on INF arms control in the strategic arms control framework on 30th November. They expressed their conviction that a positive outcome of these negotiations would contribute to greater East-West stability and progress in other East-West arms control negotiations. They fully support the US negotiating approach, which was developed in the course of intensive consultations among them.

The decision of December 1979 was taken against the background of a growing threat to Alliance security posed by Soviet long-range INF missiles, in particular the SS-20, each with three independently targetable warheads. Since that time the number of Soviet long-range missiles has grown rapidly. Deployments of SS-20 missiles continue. The Soviet Union now possesses some 1100 warheads on long-range INF missiles which threaten the Alliance.

The dual-track decision of December 1979 opened the way to reducing the threat through arms control negotiations. Based on that decision, and with the full support of its Allies, the US has made a far-reaching proposal to eliminate all US and Soviet long-range land-based INF missiles. It has offered to cancel its deployments of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles if the Soviets will dismantle their SS-20 missiles, and retire their SS-4 and SS-5 missiles. This historic offer is straightforward and equitable, and would eliminate the systems of greatest concern to both sides. If the Soviet Union shows a similar willingness to secure far-reaching measures of disarmament, elimination of these long-range missiles on both sides can be a reality. Reductions in other US and Soviet nuclear systems could be sought in subsequent phases.

Determination in implementing both tracks of the December 1979 decision has been a key factor in convincing the Soviet Union to negotiate without preconditions, thus creating the opportunity to achieve genuine arms control. This same resolve will remain essential in reaching concrete results in the negotiations. Implementation of the modernisation programme is continuing and can be altered only by a fair and effective arms control agreement.

The Allies welcomed the US commitment to make every effort to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion within the shortest possible time. They also noted that the US intends to negotiate in good faith, and will listen to and consider Soviet proposals, with the objective of reaching an equitable, effective and verifiable agreement that will enhance the security of the Alliance, and thus contribute to a more stable military relationship between East and West. The achievement of such an agreement requires a similarly constructive approach on the part of the Soviet Union.

US consultations with its Allies in the Special Consultative Group on INF arms control contributed significantly to the preparations for the negotiations and will continue as the negotiations progress. These consultations are an expression of Alliance solidarity and reflect the US commitment to take Allied views into account as well as the close association of the Allies with the US negotiating effort.