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1110 BRUXELLES ■ TELEPHONES : 241.00.40 - 241.44.00 - 241.44.90 TELEX : 23-867

SECRETARY GENERAL'S OPENING PRESS STATEMENT
MINISTERIAL MEETING, BRUSSELS, 11TH DECEMBER 1974

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most pleased to welcome you all to NATO Headquarters as we round off the Alliance's 25th Anniversary year. You are aware that Defence Ministers have been meeting here for the past two days in the Defence Planning Committee and other bodies. I believe that a great deal of sound work was accomplished, but I do not intend to go into any detail, since a comprehensive briefing was given earlier this afternoon on the Defence Ministers' discussions, and the DPC Communiqué is available. I shall concentrate on the meeting of Foreign Ministers that will take place tomorrow and on Friday. I might recall at this point that the Foreign Minister of the new and democratically-elected Government of Greece, Mr. Bitsios, has assumed the position of "Président d'Honneur" of the North Atlantic Council.

2. The forthcoming meeting of Foreign Ministers is likely to be rather exceptional in that the important issues which they face, in relation to defence and the East/West situation, are increasingly affected by the prevailing difficult economic conditions, of which they will wish to take account. This is one of the reasons that compel the Council also to give attention to the Middle East, since developments in that area have had - and could have again - a serious impact on the bases of our economies. It is not for the Council to come to grips with the underlying problems, which fall outside its responsibilities, but Ministers have to bear in mind the need to ensure as far as possible that our position - including that in the range of ongoing East/West negotiations - is not substantially weakened. Their discussion may be seen, I might add, within the framework of the improved consultations that have flowed from the Ottawa Declaration on Atlantic Relations signed six months ago.

3. As you know, under the impact of events in Cyprus, relations between Greece and Turkey were adversely affected. I hope that the opportunities provided by our meetings here this week will be used by the representatives of Greece and Turkey, perhaps assisted by one or another of their colleagues, to see what can be done. I, myself, under the terms of the Watching Brief on Greek-Turkish Relations held by the Secretary General of NATO since 1964, intend to contribute as much as possible in this regard.

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4. Ministers will conduct their normal review of the state of East/West relations, their discussion being nourished by the outcome of the meeting in Vladivostok between President Ford and Soviet leaders, particularly as regards SALT, and by the recent talks at Rambouillet between President Giscard d'Estaing and Mr. Brezhnev. In that overall context, Ministers will take stock of the position reached at the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations in Vienna and will consider how best to ensure that these talks move ahead. They will also review the current situation at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Progress to date in the second phase of the Conference in Geneva has remained uneven and it would appear that we are still some way from the kind of full and balanced conclusion of phase two that would permit a satisfactory conclusion to the Conference as a whole.

5. Ministers will also have before them a report on the situation in the Mediterranean which they regularly receive on such occasions.

6. Finally, I expect Ministers to discuss recent activities of the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS). They probably will endorse the recommendations and resolutions which aim at making our roads safer, our air cleaner and the water in our lakes and rivers purer. Ministers will also take note of an important new pilot study initiated on Energy Conservation, in addition to the two ongoing studies on Solar and Geothermal Energy.

7. This is all I wish to say as an introduction. I will now answer whatever questions you may have, after which you will be my guests at the traditional reception that I give for the Press.