

Mr. Steingrímur HERMANNSSON (Prime Minister, Iceland): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I start by thanking President Mitterrand and the French authorities for organizing this Meeting and for the welcome that they have extended to us. I would also like to thank President Gorbachev for the initiative that he took.

The road from Helsinki to Paris has been both long and bumpy. The journey has taken 15 years and it has, indeed, been full of disappointments and setbacks. It is a wonder that the nations of Europe did not give up on that difficult road. It was the high ideals of the Helsinki Final Act that kept the train going. It was the vision of a better Europe, a Europe free from fear of war, free from violence and torture, a Europe of human liberties and human rights and dignities.

Little progress was made until the last two or three years. The removal of intermediate-range missiles and nuclear warheads was the turning point, but the real breakthrough came when the winds of freedom started blowing through Europe, when the walls and fences were torn down and neighbours were allowed to become acquainted again.

The very important chapter in security and co-operation in Europe, which we are now signing and celebrating, is the work of the people of this continent. The people of all countries are long since fed up with the cold war and the nuclear arms race. They demand to be allowed to live in peace and dignity as human beings, without the fear of war.

The first step is being taken to achieve this goal and it is, indeed, an important one

The Icelandic people support wholeheartedly the agreement that has been reached and are proud to be among the signatories of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and the Declaration, and other papers that we shall sign here.

Iceland does not have any military force of its own and has never taken part in any offensive military action. By signing this Treaty, we confirm that conviction of ours that problems which may come up in Europe shall be solved through consultations between nations, through co-operation rather than confrontation.

We attach great importance to plans for extensive confidence-building measures. Especially, we believe that an honest and open exchange of information on military forces and capabilities will strengthen trust between nations and thus reduce the danger of military conflicts.

In this process of establishing security and co-operation in Europe, the security part has been given a certain priority. This is understandable. Without security there will be no co-operation.

On the human side, the Copenhagen Meeting contributed much. We trust that at the meeting in Moscow next year, another milestone will be reached. We must not relax until all countries of Europe and North America have agreed on a declaration on human rights guaranteeing to all people the rights granted by law, the rights of free opinion and free speech, and freedom of movement, without the fear of oppression and torture, and that we shall indeed achieve.

Iceland supports plans for establishing the CSCE as a permanent institution for security and co-operation in Europe. Care must be taken not to duplicate existing institutions. Its staff should be kept at the smallest possible level and its primary objective should be to establish a forum for Heads of State and Government and for Ministers to meet to review the overall situation with respect to the agreements made, and seek solutions to problems before they develop into a conflict.

The proposal to create a Conflict Prevention Centre is an interesting one. Certainly, we must admit that conflicts will arise. That may be in connection with exchanges of military information, or with respect to human rights. As a matter of fact, there are conflicts these

very days between minorities and majorities and between nations where people are struggling to regain independence lost through a forceful and unwarranted division of Europe after the Second World War. The rights of self-determination of all people must be honoured.

In order to prevent duplication, close co-operation should be established with existing European institutions, such as the Council of Europe. We should consider expanding its Parliamentary Assembly to include all 34 countries. Also, co-operation in the field of human rights is to be strongly recommended.

Although much has been achieved, there is no time to relax. Though the most difficult and steepest part of the road may be behind, there are many obstacles ahead. There are many pressing problems to be solved before true security and co-operation have been firmly established in Europe.

I would like now to turn to some of the important tasks that lie ahead.

We all agree that arms control and confidence-building measures must still be strengthened. There is every reason to believe that agreement can be reached among all 34 nations on further disarmament. This must, of course, be stressed. Preferably, arms should be limited to defensive weapons, and inspections should be free and open to all participating countries.

We trust that an agreement will soon be signed between the United States and the Soviet Union on a 50% reduction of long-range missiles. Also, we urge that an effective agreement be concluded banning chemical weapons on a global and comprehensive basis.

Obviously, arms control must also include the skies. Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to stress once more that arms control is certainly not complete without also covering naval forces.

My country, Iceland, is an island surrounded by the North Atlantic, as you can see on the map here in front of you.

We strongly support limitations on nuclear weapons and conventional arms control on land, with appropriate confidence- and security-building measures. But we insist on the same in our own surroundings. Where is Europe's confidence and security if the continued build-up of nuclear submarines and nuclear sea-based weapons is tolerated?

Europe is more than land, it is also the seas. Arms control and confidence-building measures must also, as soon as possible, cover the North Atlantic and other seas of Europe. In this respect, I would like to support President Gorbachev's message to us yesterday.

Furthermore, may I mention the fact that there is every reason to believe that nuclear submarines lying on the bottom of the seas will deteriorate much sooner than has been claimed. They will, sooner or later, spill their nuclear poison into the seas and it will be spread over huge areas by ocean currents. There are now several such nuclear submarines on the bottom of the North Atlantic.

We, in my country, are wholly dependent on the resources of the seas. Nuclear contamination of the North Atlantic would destroy the very basis of our existence. Can we be blamed for insisting on strict control of nuclear submarine traffic?

For security and co-operation in Europe to be successful, the living conditions in the different countries must be comparable. Transition to market economies and free enterprise on a democratic basis should be assisted by advice and aid. In this respect, co-operation in science and technology is of great importance. Strengthening of infrastructure, such as communication and transport systems, is fundamental. Skills of management in a market economy must be developed.

May I suggest that an open and frank discussion of economic development in a market economy between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe might be helpful in this respect.

The human dimension must and will, I am sure, be stressed in the work ahead. In that field there is still much to be done, as I have previously mentioned.

With the new liberties sweeping through Europe, transforming one country after another to a democratic State, I am confident that much progress will be made in securing human rights.

For the welfare of the people, one must bear in mind that economic progress is necessary. Human rights and economic progress must go hand in hand. Extensive unemployment and poverty in a humane democracy is intolerable.

Fortunately, the people of Europe enjoy, in general, a good basic education. Yet, there is no doubt that education can be greatly improved. This, I believe, to be especially true with respect to higher education. It is important to encourage exchange of students and co-operation in the field of education and culture. This will promote better understanding and confidence between nations.

Finally, I would like to mention the environmental problems.

There is, I fear, every reason to believe that deterioration of the environment has become extremely serious and even close to being irreversible.

There is no time to be lost. Environmental problems cannot be brushed aside by claiming lack of scientific proof. Such proof may come too late. There is no doubt that much CO₂ in the air is altering the ecological balance. Destruction of the ozone layer is another fact which cannot be overlooked. Dumping of all kinds of harmful chemicals and even nuclear waste into the seas, is already taking its toll and can have unforeseeable consequences if not immediately stopped.

These are only a few examples of the desperate need for action to save the earth's ecology. All the wealth that we generate in monetary terms is of little use for future generations, if the earth is not habitable.

Mr. Hermansson

The environment and its ecological balance is common to all. No nation will escape its destruction. The 34 countries that form the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe can be a powerful force in this respect. If we stand united, we can enforce through the United Nations an international global treaty and law of the environment. That must be our objective.

Mr. Chairman, it is, indeed, a pleasure to take part in this historic meeting; to take part in the changes sweeping through Europe, restoring in its path human rights and liberties. Although the transition taking place in Europe is far from being complete, much has been achieved in a surprisingly short time.

We must not forget, though, that there are countries in Europe still struggling to claim their proper place as free nations in a free Europe. As a matter of fact we had understood that representatives of the Baltic countries would be present here at this meeting as distinguished guests. We are sorry to find that it is not so. We trust that through friendly and constructive negotiations with their mighty neighbour, the three Baltic countries will soon reclaim their full independence and take their place among us.

The journey from Helsinki to Paris took 15 years. We are planning to make the return trip in less than two years. Yet, in Helsinki we expect to confirm further agreements for security and co-operation in Europe. We want those to be even more extensive and comprehensive than those we are celebrating now, here in Paris.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, among the 34 of us there are two nations outside Europe - Canada and the United States. May I suggest that we extend security and co-operation in Europe to cover the whole northern hemisphere, both land and sea? Then we are well on our way to a global order, which surely will be called for sooner or later.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.