

30 April 1986

VENICE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

29-30 April, 1986

COMMUNIQUE

1. Foreign and Defence Ministers of Western European Union met in Venice on 29 and 30 April 1986. They recalled the important role of WEU in the process of European construction. They reaffirmed their attachment to WEU as a forum in which the Governments concerned can address specific European concerns in the security field within the framework of their membership of the Atlantic Alliance. These concerns relate both to the need for effective and appropriate defence capabilities and to the specific implications for security and stability in Europe of developments in the various arms control negotiations.

2. The Ministers stressed the importance of the contribution to common security made by the member States and expressed their appreciation of the contribution which the independent nuclear forces of France and the United Kingdom make to deterrence. They recalled the indivisible nature of Western security and their firm determination to strengthen the ties and the solidarity which bind them together and to the other members of the Alliance.

3. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the improvement of East-West relations through the promotion of contact and dialogue. In this respect they recalled the importance of the CSCE process.

They emphasised that a climate of confidence is important for progress in the field of arms control and disarmament. They noted the need to find solutions in all negotiating fora that take full account of the security interests of their countries.

The Ministers recalled that the fundamental objective of arms control, both conventional and nuclear, must be to strengthen security and stability at the lowest possible level of forces.

4. The Ministers expressed their support for the efforts made by the United States in the talks with the Soviet Union about their nuclear weapons and space. They welcomed the various ongoing and close consultations among the Allies and the American resolve to take European concerns fully into consideration.

They expressed the hope that the Soviet Union would give practical effect at the negotiating table to its stated intention to reach equitable and verifiable arms control agreements.

5. The Ministers stressed that the ongoing negotiations on US and Soviet longer-range intermediate nuclear forces are of particular interest to Europe. They recalled the importance they attach to the objective of progressive reductions leading to the global elimination of this category of weapons within the framework of effectively verifiable agreements. In this context the emergence of new areas of instability should be prevented by adequate measures

6. The Ministers underlined that imbalances in the field of conventional forces throughout Europe equally constitute a factor of instability. Progress towards balanced and verifiable reductions of conventional forces would thus represent a very significant contribution to the strengthening of security and peace in Europe. The Ministers hope that, in this field the Soviet Union will translate into deeds at the negotiating table its recent statements. They underlined their countries' continued efforts in the context of negotiations in multilateral fora such as those on a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons in Geneva (CD) and on mutual and balanced force reductions in Vienna (MBFR). The Ministers considered it necessary to intensify the negotiations at the Conference on Confidence- and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE) taking place in Stockholm, in order that substantial results can be achieved before the third CSCE Follow-up Conference in the autumn of this year

7. The Ministers recalled the increasingly complex problems caused by the cost of research, development and production of weapons systems particularly those involving emerging technology. They underlined the importance of cooperative efforts designed to help strengthen their defence capabilities

The Ministers welcomed the progress which had been made in the IEPG on harmonising military requirements and in launching cooperative research projects. They particularly welcomed the decision taken in Madrid on 28 April concerning cooperation in the military aeronautics sector.

The Ministers requested that studies be undertaken on the management of resources and the implications of rising defence costs.

8. The Ministers also considered an up-to-date report on issues relating to the SDI research programme provided by a working group of the Permanent Council. They decided that the work of WEU should continue to deal with questions related to participation in the SDI research programme and the politico-strategic implications for Europe of possible developments in the field of ballistic missile defence.

9. The Ministers exchanged views on security in the Mediterranean and the risks of destabilization in this region. They stressed the role which Western European countries can continue to play in order to reduce tension in the area. They agreed to examine this point in greater depth.

10. They gave special attention to the threat to security posed by international terrorism and underlined the importance of early and effective action to implement the measures that the countries of western Europe have agreed upon to combat this scourge

11. The Ministers also reviewed the progress made since the October 1984 meeting in Rome in relaunching the Organization and exchanged views on its future prospects. In this spirit, they recognised the importance of good coordination among the various institutions capable of contributing to a Western European dimension of common security.

12. The Ministers mandated the Permanent Council to make proposals, at their next meeting, on ways of strengthening cooperation between existing European academic and research institutions in the field of security and defence, thus improving the quality of their research relevant to WEU.