

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 23 FEBRUARY 1984 ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA TRANSMITTING A PROPOSAL OF WARSAW TREATY MEMBER STATES TO THE MEMBER STATES OF NATO ON THE QUESTION OF FREEING EUROPE FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS. PRESENTED AT THE USSR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON 10 JANUARY 1984

I am sending you herewith a proposal of Warsaw Treaty member States to the member States of NATO on the question of freeing Europe from chemical weapons which was presented at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 January 1984, to the embassies of the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Denmark, Iceland, Spain, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States, Turkey and France.

I would ask you kindly to distribute this proposal as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed) Milos Vejvoda
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

THE QUESTION OF FREEING EUROPE FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS

By agreement among the Warsaw Treaty Member States, a memorandum containing a "Proposal of Warsaw Treaty Member States to the member States of NATO on the question of freeing Europe from nuclear weapons" was presented on 10 January 1984 at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the embassies of the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Denmark, Iceland, Spain, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States of America, Turkey and France.

The Warsaw Treaty Member States proposed to the NATO member States the convening in 1984 of a meeting of plenipotentiary representatives for a preliminary exchange of views on the question of freeing Europe from chemical weapons.

Elimination of the chemical threat to the States and peoples of Europe would make possible a substantial reduction in the risk of chemical war on the Continent and, consequently, throughout the world and the start of a reduction of arsenals of chemical weapons, and would help to lessen the threat of war and strengthen mutual trust.

The implementation of such partial measures of a regional character would further the efforts being made on a world scale to accelerate the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which remains the ultimate aim of the Warsaw Treaty Member States.

They expect the Governments of the NATO countries to treat the proposal with all due attention and seriousness.

Proposal of the Warsaw Treaty Member States to the Member States
of NATO on the Question of Freeing Europe from Chemical Weapons

The Warsaw Treaty Member States consider that the presence of chemical weapons on the densely populated territory of Europe constitutes a great danger to all European States and peoples. The use of toxic substances under European conditions would lead to especially serious consequences for peaceful inhabitants and the contamination of large areas. According to some estimates, in the event of a conflict involving the use of chemical weapons the ratio of fatalities among military personnel and civilians might be one in twenty.

The present aggravation of the international situation increases the danger of the use of chemical weapons, particularly in Europe.

The radical elimination of the chemical threat to the States and peoples of Europe and to other regions of the world, can be secured by banning chemical weapons and destroying their stockpiles on a world scale. The achievement of that main goal of the socialist countries is the aim of the concrete, realistic proposals they submit in the Disarmament Committee in Geneva in the course of their persevering and consistent efforts to elaborate an appropriate international convention.

At the same time, prior to the solution of this global task and with a view to facilitating its fulfilment, certain parallel steps can and must be undertaken within the confines of the European continent. That would make possible a substantial reduction of the risk of chemical war in Europe and, consequently, throughout the world and the start of a reduction of arsenals of chemical weapons. Such steps are also urgently necessary in terms of forestalling the possibility of a chemical weapons build-up in Europe and preventing the dangerous cycle of a chemical arms race.

Partial measures of a regional character to limit, reduce and eliminate chemical weapons would concern fewer States than measures of global scope and it would be easier to agree on them and put them into effect. At the same time, such regional measures, by leading to the elimination of an entire type of weapon of mass destruction, would undoubtedly consolidate European security and help to weaken the threat of war, strengthen mutual trust and improve the over-all political climate. Moreover, the implementation of such partial measures would facilitate the efforts being made on a world scale towards the acceleration of the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which remains the ultimate aim of the Warsaw Treaty Member States. It would serve as a stimulus to the adoption of similar measures in other continents as well. The implementation of the idea of freeing Europe from chemical weapons, which would affect the territories of all the Warsaw Treaty Member States, must also provide in full measure for the extension of future measures to the relevant parts of the territory of the NATO member countries.

Taking account of all factors and circumstances, practical measures for the implementation of the initiative of the Warsaw Treaty Member States on the freeing of Europe from chemical weapons should be implemented consecutively, step by step.

The obligations of States with regard to the chemical-weapon-free territory in Europe defined in the agreement might include, for example, the declaration of the presence or absence of chemical weapons in that territory, the prohibition of the deployment of chemical weapons where there are none at present, the freezing of such weapons, the withdrawal or destruction of existing stocks of chemical weapons, and renunciation of their production, acquisition, import or transfer to States within that territory. The obligations assumed must effectively ensure that there are no chemical weapons in the territory defined in the agreement.

The experience acquired in the course of the talks on a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons being conducted in the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva could be of use in the consideration of practical matters connected with the freeing of Europe from chemical weapons. It would, however, seem undesirable to bring in the complex technical questions which are the subject of those talks.

In elaborating an accord on the freeing of Europe from chemical weapons, the States concerned may, as necessary, reach agreement on mutually acceptable, adequate forms of verification which would ensure effective fulfilment of their undertakings by all the parties to the zone-establishing accord.

The status of a chemical-weapons-free zone must be duly respected. Provision should be made for the extension to the States whose territory is covered by such an agreement of appropriate guarantees in accordance with the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, as well as with other international legal instruments which will be accepted.

The accord in question might take the form either of a document having binding legal force, e.g. an agreement, a treaty or a convention, of an appropriate multilateral declaration or of a number of unilateral declarations. The content of the accord would, of course, be of significance in determining its form. A political declaration would make it possible to avoid some complicated questions of a technical nature.

The Warsaw Treaty Member States consider it advisable to convene in 1984 a meeting of plenipotentiary representatives for the purposes of a preliminary exchange of views with the NATO member countries and other interested European States on the question of freeing Europe from chemical weapons.

At that meeting agreement might be reached on various practical issues, including that of the appropriate forum for future talks on the problem in question.