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STATEMENT ON INF NEGOTIATIONS TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, MR RICHARD LUCE MP, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1983.

WITH PERMISSION, MR SPEAKER, I SHOULD LIKE TO MAKE A STATEMENT ABOUT THE INF NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA.

AS HONOURABLE MEMBERS MAY BE AWARE, THE SOVIET DELEGATE TO THE INF TALKS HAS MADE IT CLEAR THIS MORNING THAT THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT INTEND TO CONTINUE THE PRESENT ROUND AND HAS GIVEN NO DATE FOR THE RESUMPTION OF THE TALKS.

HER MAJESTYS GOVERNMENT REGRET THIS SOVIET DECISION AND CAN SEE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR IT. AS RECENTLY AS 15 NOVEMBER THE UNITED STATES TABLED A FURTHER CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL IN THE NEGOTIATION WHICH WAS REJECTED OUT OF HAND BY THE SOVIET UNION. THE RUSSIANS MAY SEEK TO JUSTIFY THEIR INTERRUPTION OF THE TALKS BY THE FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR INITIAL WESTERN INF DEPLOYMENT. BUT THE HOUSE WILL RECALL THAT THE WEST HAS REMAINED AT THE CONFERENCE TABLE WHILE THE SOVIET UNION HAS INCREASED ITS OWN DEPLOYMENTS OF SS20S BY OVER 40 PER CENT.

THE NATO ALLIANCE HAS MADE ITS FIRST PRIORITY THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A BALANCED AND VERIFIABLE AGREEMENT TO REDUCE AND IF POSSIBLE TO ELLMINATE THESE WEAPONS WORLDWIDE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT UNTIL SUCH AN AGREEMENT CAN BE ATTAINED THE ALLIANCE WILL PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS DECISION IN 1979 TO WORK TOWARDS A BALANCE WHICH WOULD SAFEGUARD WESTERN SECURITY.

WE WILL NOT BE DEFLECTED FROM ACHIEVING THE FIRST STAGE OF THIS OBJECTIVE BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

BUT I WISH TO EMPHASISE THAT THE ALLIANCE REMAINS READY TO HALT OR REVERSE AT ANY TIME THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE MISSILES IF ONLY WE CAN SECURE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION WHICH WOULD ALLOW US TO DO SO. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT REMAINS OUR UNSHAKEABLE OBJECTIVE. THE ALLIANCE WILL SPARE NO EFFORT TO SECURE IT. WE REMAIN CONVINCED THAT AN AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE AND THAT IT REMAINS IN THE INTERESTS OF EAST AND WEST THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD RESUME AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. WE THEREFORE URGE THE SOVIET UNION TO DEMONSTRATE AN EQUALLY SINCERE COMMITMENT TO ARMS CONTROL BY RETURNING TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE.

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