LETTER DATED 11 MAY 1983 FROM THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

I should like to refer to document A/CN.10/39 of 9 May 1983 containing two letters by the Government of the German Democratic Republic related to a proposal by the Government of Sweden for the establishment on a subregional level in Europe of a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons.

In order to inform delegations more fully on the various views pertaining to that proposal and to enable them to form a considered opinion, I have the honour to enclose the note in reply of the Federal German Government of 16 February 1983 to the note by the Government of Sweden dated 9 December 1982, as well as the reply of Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl of 16 February 1983 to the letter addressed to him by General Secretary Erich Honecker of 4 February 1983, as reproduced in document A/CN.10/39.

I would request that these documents be circulated as official documents of the Disarmament Commission.

(Signed) Henning WEGENER
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
Annex I

NOTE VERBALE DATED 16 FEBRUARY 1983 FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY ADDRESSED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SWEDEN

The Federal Government has carefully examined the proposal to create a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons reaching from Central Europe to the southern and northern flanks of the two alliances.

The main criterion applied in this examination was the effectiveness of any such measure toward the prevention of any war, including a conflict with conventional weapons in Europe. In the opinion of the Federal Government, the proposal to create a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons raises a number of problems in this respect. In view of the conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact in Europe, such a zone could actually increase the risk of a military conflict.

The Atlantic Defence Alliance maintains its nuclear weapons arsenal, including battlefield nuclear weapons, exclusively for the purpose of deterrence in order to ensure that war, in whatever form, will no more be considered as an instrument of policy. Every potential aggressor must be faced with an incalculable risk of nuclear escalation. The establishment of a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons might render the risk of an aggressor more calculable and lead to the mistaken conclusion that a surprise attack based on superiority in conventional armaments might be successful, at least within such a zone. The attempt to raise, by this measure, the nuclear threshold harbours the risk of contributing to the lowering of the threshold of aggression.

This possibility alone - quite apart from the purely military problems which the proposal raises - would have politically destabilizing effects. Furthermore, such a zone with a special security status would, on the Western side, essentially be limited to the Federal Republic of Germany. This would be incompatible with the concept of indivisible security for all States members of the Atlantic Alliance, which guarantees stability and peace in Europe even beyond its membership.

Quite apart from the misgivings this proposal raises when viewed in the context of a policy aimed at preventing war, it does not appear conclusive in terms of its own arms control policy conception. The compliance with agreed reductions and the prohibition of stationing could not be verified in a reliable way.

Even assuming that verification would be feasible in normal times, battlefield nuclear weapons, especially warheads, could be redeployed in a very short time during a crisis or after a conflict with conventional weapons had started. The agreement on such a zone would therefore only create an illusion of security.

The determinant for a territory to be under nuclear threat is not where nuclear weapons are stationed but above all which targets they can reach. The proposal for the creation of a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons in Central Europe does not take into account the fact that the majority of Soviet nuclear weapons - though to date stationed outside the proposed zone - are aimed at targets within the zone.

...
The Federal Government holds the opinion that an effective reduction of the nuclear threat can only be achieved by the reduction and limitation of existing potentials through concrete and verifiable agreements aiming at a stable balance at the lowest possible level of armaments and taking into account the strategic context. The efforts of the Atlantic Alliance in the field of arms control are focused on this object.

In this context, the endeavours currently undertaken in the framework of the intermediate nuclear force negotiations in Geneva for a complete renunciation of land-based intermediate-range missiles by the United States and the Soviet Union are of a priority character.

In the opinion of the Federal Government, negotiations on arms control aiming only at nuclear disengagement in a small zone de facto limited to Central Europe could distract from the priority of these negotiations and make speedy results more difficult.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the Federal Government is not in a position to support the initiative of the Swedish Government for the creation of a zone free of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Thank you for your letter of 4 February 1983.

I know we share the view that the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic bear a grave responsibility for the preservation of peace in Europe and in the world. We should therefore earnestly try to provide positive impulses for the situation in Europe. It is my firm conviction that dialogue and co-operation, the implementation of existing treaties and increased contacts between people constitute an important contribution toward peace.

Mr. General Secretary, all efforts at arms control by the Federal Republic and the entire Atlantic Alliance - in Geneva, in Vienna, in Madrid and in the United Nations - are aimed at the goal of preserving the peace. We want to safeguard the peace with fewer and fewer weapons. We desire a stable military balance between East and West at the lowest possible level of armaments.

At present, our expectations are focused especially on the negotiations in Geneva on nuclear intermediate-range weapons. The United States, in concurrence with its allies, has proposed that the United States and the USSR renounce their land-based intermediate-range missiles. Such a result would demonstrate that it is possible for East and West to agree on genuine disarmament measures, and would be a decisive contribution toward eliminating the nuclear threat to Europe.

The determinant for a territory to be under nuclear threat is not whether nuclear weapons are stationed there but whether nuclear weapons are aimed at it. Negotiations that merely result in moving the nuclear arsenals in Europe farther apart would therefore not enhance stability but would only create an illusion of greater security. They would detract from the ongoing negotiations on the reduction of nuclear weapons, thereby making it more difficult to reach prompt results.

Our main criterion for all arms control policy proposals is what contribution they make toward the prevention of any war, including a conflict with conventional weapons in Europe. The initiative for creating a zone in Central Europe that is free of battlefield nuclear weapons does not meet this requirement. We therefore do not find ourselves in a position to support it. In view of the conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact in Europe, such a zone would actually increase the risk of a confrontation. We cannot overlook the fact that in the area alone that is covered by the Vienna negotiations on mutual and balanced reduction of troops, the Warsaw Pact has at its disposal more than twice as many divisions, tanks and cannons as NATO.
I consider it necessary that we should concentrate all efforts on those
endeavours in the field of disarmament and arms control that are apt to bring about
concrete, balanced and verifiable results. For this reason, we attach the greatest
importance to progress in the ongoing negotiations.

Representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic
Republic are participating in a number of negotiations of this kind. I consider it
useful to conduct a direct and objective exchange of views about basic questions
concerning these negotiations. I therefore propose that our disarmament
representatives meet for the purpose of continuing the discussion of those topics
that have already been the subject of a mutual exchange of ideas. In our view,
such a meeting could take place in April or May in Bonn.

(Signed) Helmut KOHL