

European Community

News Release

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DEMANDS SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

At their meeting on 15 January 1980, the Foreign Ministers of the nine member states of the European Community reaffirmed their grave concern with regard to the crisis created by the Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan. They described the Soviet intervention as a serious violation of the principles of international relations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and as flagrant interference in the internal affairs of a non-aligned country belonging to the Islamic world. The Ministers stated furthermore that the Soviet actions constitute a threat to the peace, security and stability of the entire region, including the Indian sub-continent, the Middle East and the Arab world.

The Council of Ministers rejected the explanations given by the Soviet Union seeking to justify its intervention in Afghanistan as unacceptable. All nine members expressed their great concern at the Soviet Union's decision, despite the almost universal protests against the Soviet military intervention, to exercise its veto to defeat a United Nations Security Council resolution on the Afghan crisis, a resolution which was sponsored by non-aligned countries and supported by a large majority of members of the Security Council.

The nine Foreign Ministers of the European Community urge the Soviet Union to act in conformity with the Resolution on the Afghan crisis adopted with an overwhelming majority by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan.

The Council of Ministers of the European Community emphasized the past and continuing efforts of the European Community in the cause of détente and reaffirmed their conviction that this process is in the interests of all members of the international community. They are firm, in the belief, however, that détente is indivisible and is global in its dimension. They therefore urge the Soviet Union, in conformity with the standards and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to allow the Afghan people to determine their own future without foreign interference.

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In formulating their position on this important question, the Foreign Ministers have been keenly aware of the sufferings borne by the Afghan people as a result of the crisis, including those Afghans who are being forced to leave their country.

The Council of Ministers of the European Community also agreed to cancel the Community's food aid programme for Afghanistan and will decide as rapidly as possible on the EC Commission's proposals for emergency aid to be made available to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to relieve the situation of Afghan refugees. This aid will be in addition to similar aid which individual Community members will be according the relief programme.

Following the measures taken by the United States on the delivery of agricultural products to the USSR, the European Community has stated that Community shipments will not replace, either directly or indirectly, the suspended American shipments to the Soviet Union. The Council of Ministers has urged the Commission of the EC to take all necessary measures to effect this decision as concerns grain and grain products, and to propose measures for other agricultural products. A consultation mechanism has been established with other grain exporting countries in order to avoid disturbances of the world market. The Council has also decided to look into the question of export credits.
