

Last year when I spoke in the general debate, the United Nations was facing many grave issues, some of which actually threatened its survival. The atmosphere in the Assembly, as those representatives present today who were here a year ago will remember, was one of tension and anxiety. The whole future was uncertain -- the future of this organization and the future of the world. May I suggest that the events of the past 12 months have not dispelled all the difficulties; but neither have they fulfilled the pessimistic prophecies of a year ago. We are living in a world when it pays to be optimistic. I do not believe that the pessimists will ever settle the problems that face the world and I believe that clearly, in this session of the General Assembly, we have a good deal more reason for hope than a year ago.

### Laos

Here I should like to point out that there have been some gains in the complex international endeavour to strengthen the peace. For example, at the beginning of 1962, the situation in Laos seemed far from settled. By July, international agreements providing for a unified, independent and neutral Laos had been signed in Geneva by the 14 nations attending that conference. Those nations included governments which did not recognize each other but which shared a common determination to face reality and find a solution. The result was a positive step toward peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

Canada was one of the signatories of the Laos Agreements and, as a member of the International Commission, Canada was charged, along with India as chairman and Poland, with the task of seeing that the agreements are carried out. We intend to fulfil these responsibilities with fairness and diligence. I emphasize, however, that ultimate success in Laos will depend on the continuing support and co-operation of all the governments concerned. I think we can make Laos an example for the settlement of problems in other parts of the world.

A significant factor in the successful negotiations on Laos was the businesslike procedure evolved. In particular, the device of co-chairmanship proved its worth and the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union deserve much of the credit for the result. I pay tribute to them today for their work as co-chairmen of that conference.

### Disarmament

There is, furthermore, another area in which there has been some progress. After a year of inactivity, steps forward were also taken in the field of disarmament. The United States and the Soviet Union reached accord on a Joint Statement of Agreed Principles and laid it before the General Assembly on September 20, 1961. This was followed by another advance -- which I think should be considered a major advance -- the establishment of the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee which began its deliberations in March of this year in Geneva.