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DISARMAMENT

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A REVIEW OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL ACTIVITIES



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UNSSOD II and Canada

The Second UN Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD II) took place in New York from June 7 to July 10. It did not succeed in properly completing the items on its agenda, but the official Canadian view, in retrospect, is that the tasks the Session set for itself were too ambitious.

UNSSOD II, during three preparatory conferences in the preceding year, prepared for itself an arduous agenda containing six complex tasks. The two most lengthy and controversial were to reach unanimous agreement on: a review of the implementation of the recommendations of UNSSOD I in 1978; and a "comprehensive programme of disarmament", which some wished to see as a legally binding disarmament schedule, complete with dates for specific agreements to be concluded. It was not surprising that the drafting of the review document became a finger-pointing exercise. The drafting of a comprehensive programme of disarmament, the forward-looking equivalent of the review document, was an exercise of even greater futility, although all delegations continued to hope, until the last week, that the necessary compromises could be made. Although far from homogeneous, the NNA, during the preparatory drafting in the Committee on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, had recognized the comprehensive programme of disarmament as a means of using its numerical superiority in the UN to somehow pressure both East and West into committing themselves to progress in disarmament. However, because of the poor state of East-West relations, a spirit of compromise was in short supply. Having received a 44-page draft of mostly unagreed language from the 40-member Committee on Disarmament, the 157 delegations at UNSSOD II decided, after countless hours of unsuccessful negotiations, to return the comprehensive programme to the CD for further elaboration.

Canada used its position as a middle-power, and its reputation as a progressive member of NATO, to good advantage. Prime Minister Trudeau's speech was seen



as statesmanlike. It built on the "strategy of suffocation" elaborated at UNSSOD I, recognized what may be a sign from the USSR of willingness to allow a degree of on-site inspection to verify a treaty on chemical weapons, and pointed to the urgent necessity to agree on arms control measures related to outer space. The Prime Minister also stressed the importance of verification in negotiating disarmament agreements, and announced that Canada would be substantially increasing research in verification. He also announced that increased Canadian funding for arms control and disarmament would allow Canada to join the international verification mechanisms which would form part of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The Canadian Delegation exercised a leadership role by its chairmanship of the "Barton Group", an informal consultative body grouping the sixteen NATO members plus Ireland, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The Ambassador for Disarmament, Mr. A.R. Menzies, while guiding discussions in the Barton Group, attempted to find compromises among the often markedly different outlooks of its members and to work toward positions which could serve to advance work in the Session's various drafting groups. Canadian leadership was also instrumental in reaching agreement on the guidelines for an increased UN role in information dissemination on disarmament, one of the few areas in which agreement was reached. Considerable efforts were also made to maintain a dialogue with the large number of Canadians in New York for the Special Session.

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