



Disarmament: The Western Approach

Canada, along with other members of the Western Group, submitted the following working paper on Agenda Item 4 of the Disarmament Commission entitled "The general approach to nuclear and conventional disarmament negotiations."

Working paper: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

"1. The objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control, proclaimed for many years now, still appears remote in the light of the international situation and the current arms build-up.

2. In order to define a coherent and realistic approach to the problem of disarmament, the first question that must be asked is what were the determining factors in this course of events.

3. Most States have always considered their own military means of defence, or those of the alliances to which they belong, as an essential factor in their security and their independence.

4. The process of arms accumulation, triggered by a particular concept of defence requirements, is brought about by the mutual distrust which, in turn, it helps to aggravate. The sponsors of this document are aware of the risks stemming from the arms race in various sectors. Under these circumstances, general and complete disarmament cannot be envisaged in the absence of effective measures to eliminate the threat or use of force. Fundamental provisions in this respect were laid down by the founders of the United Nations, who called for peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereign equality and cooperation, and a collective security system.

5. For this reason, it is essential, in order to arrive at general and complete disarmament, to enhance the role of the United Nations, particularly the role which derives from the above provisions.

6. The countless violations of these prin-

ciples and the consequent realization that effective means of preventing or punishing them are lacking have given rise to an increase in the mistrust which is one of the basic causes of the arms build-up. The restoration of a climate of trust must be sought in specific commitments which would strengthen the principles already solemnly established so as to eliminate the gap between outward intentions and reality.

7. Solving the problem of disarmament must therefore necessarily entail a search for all possible means of ensuring that the solemn commitments already entered into are respected, and that the respect for them is not seen as lacking credibility.

8. The sponsors of this document are convinced that the objective of disarmament can be attained only in an international environment of increased stability and equilibrium, as well as through the application of balanced and verifiable reductions in all sectors of armaments.

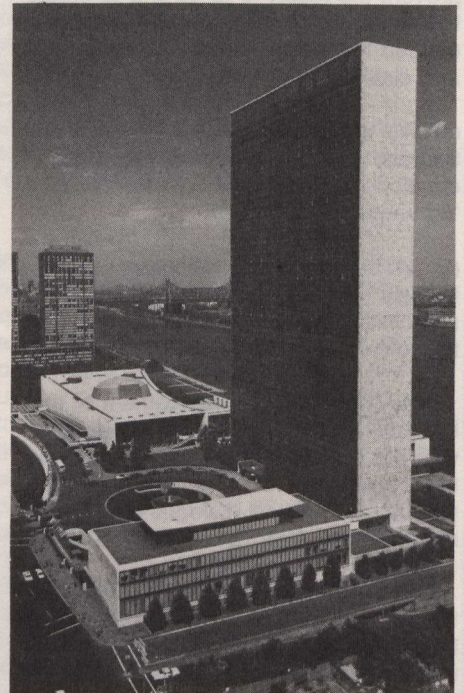
9. They are equally convinced that all States have a vital interest in disarmament, and that each State therefore bears a share of the responsibility for efforts towards reducing armaments.

10. In the opinion of the sponsors, negotiations are the only realistic way of achieving progress in the sphere of disarmament. There is thus an urgent need to step up and broaden bilateral, regional and multilateral negotiations aimed at a balanced and verifiable decrease in the level of armaments.

11. The sponsors feel bound to emphasize their satisfaction at the resumption in Geneva of the bilateral negotiations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on nuclear and space weapons.

12. The vital importance of these talks should, however, not divert attention from all the efforts that must be made in other forums, or from the need for balanced and verifiable reductions in all types of armaments.

13. In this context, the sponsors of this document consider that the United Nations, as well as the Conference on



General view of the United Nations headquarters in New York. UN Photo

Disarmament at Geneva, have a basic role to play so as to make a decisive contribution to the attainment of the objective of disarmament under effective international control.

14. Since the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all their aspects is a matter of universal concern, all States are urged to contribute to the attainment of the objective of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. States should implement fully all the provisions of the relevant international treaties to which they are parties.

15. Under current international circumstances, it would appear that a general approach to disarmament negotiations can only envisage gradual or sectoral measures, which would, however, contribute to the objectives of balanced and verifiable reduction of the general level of armaments, to stability and to an improvement in the international climate.

16. To this end, it is essential to ensure that the application of future agreements should not give rise to doubts as to their effectiveness and to questions regarding compliance, since this would have the effect of increasing distrust and making the search for subsequent progress still more difficult.