



General view of the opening of the 46th session of the UN General Assembly (September 1991).

UN photo 177993/M. Grant

disarmament and help them gain international attention and acceptance.

Even though UN resolutions don't always lead to the action they call for, they show clearly that Member States consider the issues to be important. And, when states do manage to agree on a disarmament issue or measure through the UN, that agreement carries a lot of weight. Resolutions adopted by consensus express the objectives, concerns and priorities of the international community. This helps to maintain the pressure for disarmament on all Member States.

Often, measures agreed to by UNGA or the UNDC help to lay the ground for further measures. For example, in 1985 Canada succeeded in persuading the General Assembly to adopt by consensus a resolution on verification. This led to a special UN study of verification issues and, eventually, to agreement by Member States on 16 verification principles. Member States also agreed to establish a database of verification material at the UN. Since verification, or checking to make sure that parties are carrying out the terms of a disarmament agreement, is a key part of disarmament treaties, this UN consensus will have benefits in many negotiations.

The General Assembly took another important step forward at its 1991 session, when it voted by a large majority to establish a UN arms register. This means that Member States will be in-

ited to provide the UN with data about their arms exports and imports, as well as with information about their overall arms holdings and their arms purchases from domestic sources. Canada was a strong supporter of this measure, which may eventually lead to international controls on the arms trade.

Although the UN disarmament process may be slow, the value of having all states involved should not be underestimated. Some disarmament agreements affect only certain states or regions and thus are best negotiated by the states involved. However, other disarmament agreements, to be effective, must include virtually all states of the globe. This is true of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was negotiated through the UN and has helped to stop the spread of nuclear weapons (see the Focus article in *Bulletin 14—Fall 1990*). It is also true of the chemical weapons convention now being negotiated by the CD.

The efforts of the UN in the disarmament field reflect the importance of disarmament to the entire international community, as well as the difficulty of reaching international agreement on issues so close to the heart of security as traditionally understood. The end of the Cold War should make it easier for Member States to make real disarmament progress through the UN. Canada is encouraging Member States to move in this direction. ■

Acronyms

- BTWC — Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
- CD — Conference on Disarmament
- CFE — Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
- C(S)BM — confidence- (and security-) building measure
- CSCE — Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
- CTBT — comprehensive test ban treaty
- CW — chemical weapons
- DDA — (UN) Department for Disarmament Affairs
- DND — Department of National Defence
- EAITC — External Affairs and International Trade Canada
- ENMOD — (Convention on the) Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques
- G7 — Group of Seven leading industrialized countries
- IAEA — International Atomic Energy Agency
- MTCR — Missile Technology Control Regime
- NPT — Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
- OAS — Organization of American States
- SSEA — Secretary of State for External Affairs
- START — Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
- UNDC — UN Disarmament Commission
- UNGA — UN General Assembly
- UNSCOM — UN Special Commission ■

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