

After some years of discussion and dispute, the member-nations of the CD were able to agree on a mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space. The work in the CD will complement the ongoing bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. As well, there is the hope that these bilateral negotiations will augment and reinforce the work of the Conference on Disarmament. The establishment of a mandate is indeed an important first step in beginning work on the negotiation of a treaty preventing the weaponization of outer space.

Canada has undertaken some basic research projects to facilitate the discussions which might lead to the negotiation of a treaty. These include a survey of existing treaties and international law relevant to arms control in outer space, funded by External Affairs and undertaken with the assistance of the Institute and Centre of Air and Space Law at McGill University; a compendium of statements made in the CD on Outer Space; and a technical feasibility study on space-to-space surveillance conducted by Spar Aerospace again, under contract from the Department of External Affairs.

Although the issues that form the CD agenda are vitally important and have far-reaching implications, they receive little or no public attention or support. Why is this so? Consider the consequences of the negotiation of a CTB, a CW Convention and a Treaty Preventing the Weaponization of Outer Space:

- Nuclear testing would be prohibited; that would significantly contribute to stifling the development of new nuclear weapons.
- Chemical weapons would be prohibited and existing stockpiles destroyed; the world would be freed of the threat presently posed by these horrible weapons of mass destruction.
- An international convention would guarantee a weapons-free space.

These would indeed be historic and extraordinary accomplishments.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission

The present United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was established by UNSSOD I in 1978 as a deliberative body composed of all U.N. members. The UNDC, which meets annually in New York for four weeks in May, operates on the basis of consensus and makes recommendations to the General Assembly on selected items in the disarmament field which the General Assembly has referred to the UNDC for examination.