

1991 UNDC Starts With Fresh Slate

The United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) will hold its 1991 substantive session from April 22 to May 13 at UN headquarters in New York. The UNDC is a deliberative body established in its present form in 1979 to give in-depth consideration to a select number of disarmament-related issues.

Recent years saw the agenda of the UNDC expand and consideration of a number of items stall as a result of profound differences of approach among participating members. Alarmed that the UNDC risked losing its relevance to multilateral disarmament altogether, following the 1989 session many countries urged the implementation of reforms to revitalize the institution. This culminated in agreement on a set of reforms, approved by consensus, that were brought into effect at the 1990 session. Primary among these was the decision to conclude all outstanding items at the 1990 session so that the UNDC could begin anew in 1991 with a clear slate. To the credit of its members, the UNDC lived up to this commitment and terminated at the 1990 session its consideration of all carry-over items.

As agreed in the reform package, beginning with the 1991 session the UNDC will limit the number of items on its working agenda to four. One of these, "Objective information on military matters," received preliminary consideration at last year's session and will be examined in greater depth this year. Canada, like many other countries, was very satisfied with the initial discussion of this subject under the chairmanship of Austria, and is optimistic that the UNDC's eventual conclusions on this item will be of value.

Three new items appear on the 1991 working agenda. The item entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security" will offer an unprecedented opportunity — in a global, multilateral forum — to thoroughly examine issues of regional disarmament, including, no doubt, confidence- and security-building measures.

The item on "The role of science and technology in the context of international

security, disarmament and other related fields" will provide a forum for debate of an important issue that has yet to receive in-depth consideration at the multilateral level. Under this subject, it is expected that the issue of modernization of weapons systems and its impact on the international security environment will be examined.

The final item on the 1991 working agenda is entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons." Nuclear disarmament has been considered at length in the past by the UNDC and has been an issue on which progress has proved to be most difficult. This divergence of views at the multilateral level has continued despite unprecedented progress in nuclear arms control at the bilateral level.

The Canadian delegation to the 1991 UNDC session will be headed by Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason. Canada views the session as an opportunity to solidify the gains made last year at reinvigorating the UNDC, and looks forward to participating actively in discussions on all items. ■

NIAG Study Status

By Dr. F.J.F. Osborne. Dr. Osborne, a space consultant with Spar Aerospace Limited of Montreal, is Deputy Chairman of the NIAG study group. This article is extracted from a presentation given at the Eighth Annual Ottawa Verification Symposium in March.

Background

The NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) study on conventional disarmament verification originated as an industrial initiative proposed to NIAG for submission to NATO (see Fall 1990 *Disarmament Bulletin*, p. 15). The study proposed the development of a comprehensive data base of technologies presently available or projected

to be so within the NATO partners and applicable to conventional arms control and verification.

The study is the responsibility of and directed by a Study Management Group, with representatives of the industries of the participating nations. Work is divided amongst five study teams, dealing respectively with: (1) Integrated Systems Requirements; (2) Integrated System Design; (3) Space Technologies; (4) Aerial Technologies; and (5) Land Technologies. The study was initiated in late May 1990. First total report integration is to take place in April 1991.

Integrated requirements

The study is unusual for NATO in that, as an industrial initiative, the work did not respond to a NATO requirements document, nor was there a single clear sponsoring group within NATO. Consequently, Team 1 was charged with developing the study requirements to be used by the other teams, which it did by studying arms control treaties under discussion and/or negotiation. This team also had to develop general technical specifications regarding the needs, the time scales of verification and processing, the confidence levels required, the definition of militarily-significant deviations, and related matters.

Integrated systems

Team 2 was charged with developing the verification system concept. Thus Team 2 interpreted the requirements of Team 1 in terms of general technologies applicable, or of potential interest, and assigned responsibilities for the requirements across the technology teams. Because the study involves not only present capabilities but also those projected as available a decade or more from now, it was anticipated that alternate total systems configurations would be available, depending on the actions allowed by the treaties of differing eras.

As the study progressed, it was found that the technological assessments could be made against a set of six generic problems. These were: to monitor infrastructure; to monitor Treaty-limited equipment (TLE) parking areas; to