

First Committee Meets With Success

The First Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), which *inter alia* considers disarmament and international security issues, held its 43rd session October 17 to November 30, 1988. The Committee was chaired by Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, Douglas Roche. A very positive atmosphere prevailed, which facilitated an unusually productive session. Of the 67 arms control and disarmament resolutions adopted, a record 27 were by consensus.

Mr. Roche visited selected capitals from all five continents in August and September 1988 in preparation for assuming the Chairmanship. Despite some concern expressed at the possible implications for the First Committee of the failure of the UN Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD III) in June 1988 to reach agreement on a final document, there were high expectations for a positive and productive First Committee Session. Recent international developments, for example, the establishment of UN peacekeeping forces in Iran/Iraq and Afghanistan and the ratification and implementation of the Intermediate-Range (INF) Treaty, were expected to have favourable implications since, as is frequently the case in multilateral arms control and disarmament forums, the atmosphere tends to be responsive to progress.

The atmosphere was businesslike and cooperative. Of 75 resolutions tabled at UNGA 43, 67 were adopted. The slight increase in number over UNGA 42 reflected the addition of new agenda items, for example, the Dumping of Nuclear and Industrial Wastes in Africa, and the Illegal Transfer of Prohibited Weapons. At the same time, a number of successful mergers of competing resolutions were achieved, including in the areas of verification, outer space, arms transfers, nuclear freeze proposals, and objective information on military matters.

The First Committee also recommended that UN studies be conducted on the role of the UN in verification (based on terms of reference developed by Canada, the Netherlands and France), on nuclear weapons (proposed by

Sweden), on arms transfers (proposed by Colombia), and on scientific and technological developments (proposed by India).

Mr. Roche devoted considerable effort in pursuit of Canada's objective of rationalizing and enhancing the effectiveness of the First Committee. The Committee's agenda was revised to allow for a 25 percent increase in the time available to delegations for consultations. Although further proposals to rationalize the substantive agenda did not receive the consensus required for implementation, they are expected to receive further considerations in the future.

The Canadian Delegation, as in past years, played a very active role. Canada's new Ambassador to the United Nations in New York, Yves Fortier, delivered the main Canadian Statement on October 18 (separate article refers), stressing the importance of patience, persistence and realism as the central ingredients of success in arms control and disarmament. More specifically, Canada again acted as lead sponsor of resolutions on verification (see separate article) and the prohibition of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes. A competing Swedish resolution on verification was subsequently merged with the Canadian. We also played a major role in drafting and co-sponsoring resolutions on the urgent need for a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and, with Poland, on chemical weapons. In the international security area, Canada was able to vote in favour of the Soviet resolution calling for a comprehensive approach to strengthening international peace and security in accordance with the UN Charter as a result of several major changes in the text over last year's version, on which Canada abstained.

In his up-beat closing remarks, Mr. Roche indicated that the Committee had helped to improve the international situation and that he would leave the Chair in the knowledge that this process was well underway. □

Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, announced January 16, 1989 Canada's agreement to participate in the new Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The mandate for this negotiation provides for talks among the 23 states that are members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The talks will be aimed at strengthening security in Europe through the establishment of a stable balance of conventional armed forces at lower levels. Canada was an active participant in the discussions leading to the agreement on this mandate.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years in improving East/West relations, Mr. Clark noted. He expressed the expectation that the new negotiations on conventional forces will focus on those weapons systems which are capable of mounting large-scale offensive operations and of seizing and holding territory, effectively eliminating once and for all the danger of surprise attack in Europe. Europe is today a heavily militarized region, with over five million men and women of the armed forces of two opposing military alliances facing each other.

Mr. Clark noted that the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is expected to begin in Vienna in March of this year, within the context of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). He emphasized the importance Canada attaches to the negotiation as providing a unique opportunity for furthering the cause of European security. He confirmed that every effort will be made by Canada's delegation to the negotiation to ensure its success. □