

It is, of course, too early to offer more than this tentative assessment of the proposals. They contain some intriguing new elements alongside well-worn positions and some disturbing preconditions that could hamper negotiation. They clearly warrant very serious consideration, but there are also many aspects that require clarification in the on-going negotiations. The real test of the Soviet Union's commitment to radical and verifiable arms reductions will come when it moves from the stage of public diplomacy to the confidential confines of the negotiating room.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

The Geneva Summit and the decision to hold regular high level talks do improve our chances of progress in arms control. Besides getting the leaders together, these regular meetings pave the way for annual assessments of progress made in arms control and encourage the leaders to settle matters which cannot be resolved by their negotiators.

Through avenues open to us, Canada will actively promote the holding of serious and meaningful negotiations. The House should note that the United States made it a point to inform and consult its allies since negotiations resumed in Geneva. Meetings and discussions between the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and President Reagan have enabled Canada to influence the positions of the Americans on arms control.

In Brussels last December I called a special meeting of Canadian ambassadors on arms control with a view to pinpointing specific fields where Canada might contribute to the achievement of concrete results. One such means consists in requesting more frequent NATO meetings focused on the status of the various arms control negotiations and their impact on the policies of the Alliance.

[*English*]

We will not, however, be talking only among ourselves. This Government is committed to promoting a more active and meaningful dialogue with the countries of the Eastern bloc. In September, the Prime Minister wrote to General Secretary Gorbachev outlining Canadian views and priorities in respect of arms control and disarmament. Last month I sent a team of Canadian officials to Moscow for consultations on arms control with top Soviet experts, Ambassadors Petrovsky and Karpov. Similar consultations are planned with other East European countries this year. We are ensuring that the key players in international security affairs are made directly aware of Canadian views.

It is important that the House consider what else Canada can do. What specific practical contributions can we make to arms control? This Government's activity will be focused in three directions—first, encouraging compliance with existing treaties; second, developing verifications mechanisms; and, third, building confidence between East and West.

To deviate from a policy of full compliance is to threaten the credibility and hence the viability of arms control. Canada

*Statements by Ministers*

firmly supports the regime created by the AMB treaty and the existing SALT agreements on limiting strategic forces. Our stance toward SDI research is rooted in the need to conform strictly with the provisions of the ABM treaty. We will continue to urge the parties to these treaties to do nothing to undermine their integrity but, rather, to work to reinforce their status and their authority.

Effective verification provisions can help ensure compliance with arms control treaties as well as facilitate their negotiation. Verification is an area where Canadian expertise and diplomacy come together. At the UN this fall, a Canadian initiated resolution on verification was unanimously adopted. We are second to none in our activity to develop verification procedures and technology which meet the practical requirements of arms control agreements actually under negotiation or envisaged.

To cite only the most important projects recently completed or under way, let me note first the Peace Satellite or PAXSAT project which examines the technical feasibility of a satellite-based system for monitoring potential arms control agreements covering outer space or conventional forces in Europe; second, research into seismic technology for detecting low-yield nuclear tests which pose a major obstacle in the way of agreement on a nuclear test ban; third, the elaboration of operational procedures for effective investigation of incidents or alleged chemical weapons use, the results of which have recently been handed over to the UN Secretary General; and, fourth, the tabling at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva of a working paper on the nature of the legal regime governing outer space.

We must not forget that the prospects for progress on arms control are clearly linked to an improvement in the general East-West relationship. Confidence can be gradually generated through political actions which promote East-West consultation and co-operation.

The enhancement of the political dialogue with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, and the inclusion in it of a healthy element of people-to-people contact, are major objectives of our Government. This past year has seen an impressive number of high-level visits between Canada and Eastern bloc states.

Canada was host to the human rights experts' meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and is playing an active part in the other CSCE mandated meetings which are working to realize the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. Canada believes the CSCE can be an important vehicle for advancing our security and humanitarian goals.

So, as the fourth round of Soviet-American nuclear arms talks get under way in Geneva, this Government will assist, in every way possible, the process of negotiation toward an equitable agreement. By encouraging compliance with the fundamental arms control treaties, by developing practical solutions to verification problems, and by supporting an improvement in the East-West political relationship, Canada can make a distinctive and significant contribution to achiev-