



SSEA Tables Government Response to Report of Special Committee on Canada's International Relations

On December 4, the Secretary of State for External Affairs tabled in the House of Commons the Government's response to the Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Canada's International Relations. Following are excerpts from the Government's response to the arms control recommendations of the Report.

“Conclusion/Recommendation

16. We recommend that Canada intensify its efforts, multilaterally within NATO, the United Nations and in disarmament forums and bilaterally with the United States, the Soviet Union and other countries, to win acceptance for a comprehensive set of arms control measures. These measures, which have been enunciated by the government, are as follows:

Response

The government welcomes the committee's support for its six arms control and disarmament objectives and intends to pursue them energetically through all appropriate diplomatic channels.

Conclusion/Recommendation

16a. A mutually agreed and verifiable radical reduction of nuclear forces and associated measures to enhance strategic stability. The latter should include, in particular, reaffirmation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, interpreted strictly as prohibiting all but basic research on defensive systems.

Response

The government believes that the first priority of the international community should be to bring about a mutually agreed and verifiable radical reduction in nuclear forces of the superpowers. The government will continue to press both the United States and the Soviet Union to maintain the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty until an updated treaty is in place.

Conclusion/Recommendation

16b. The maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation régime.

Response

The government welcomes the committee's support for the importance Canada attaches to the maintenance and strengthening of the non-proliferation régime. The emergence of new nuclear suppliers and new technologies has increased the urgency of finding a means of curtailing proliferation. At both the political and technical levels, Canada has sought to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons from one country to another — 'horizontal proliferation' — while seeking equally to curtail the accumulation of more, and more advanced, weapons in the hands of the nuclear powers — 'vertical proliferation'....

Conclusion/Recommendation

16d. The achievement of a comprehensive test ban treaty that will be mutually verifiable.

Response

The negotiation of an adequately verifiable Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty remains a fundamental Canadian policy objective. In the meantime, Canada is presenting proposals in various bodies designed to lead to such a treaty and is developing the necessary techniques of verification....

Conclusion/Recommendation

19. Decisions about defence policy, including the military decisions in which Canada participates as a NATO member, should not be taken without due regard to their consequences for arms control. Arms control and disarmament policy, on the one hand, and defence policy on the other, should move in tandem.

Response

The government's ongoing examination of defence policy is taking full account of its policy on arms control and disarmament. Both are essential components of Canadian security policy and neither can be pursued without taking into account the other.

Conclusion/Recommendation

20. We have concluded that the government's capacity for formulating policy on arms control and disarmament needs improvement. We are not in a position to specify the manner in which this capacity could be improved, but one essential requirement would be a new policy development mechanism designed to reconcile the views received from the Departments of External Affairs and National Defence. We also believe that foreign policy is conducted in a more coordinated and energetic manner if it is exposed regularly to public examination. For this reason, the new mechanism should be directed to report periodically to Parliament.

Response

While policy on these issues is ultimately coordinated in the Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Defence Policy, the government recognizes the need for close dialogue with Parliament. Henceforth, should Parliamentarians so desire, External Affairs and National Defence could make periodic joint presentations to joint meetings of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on National Defence. By this means and the use of existing mechanisms for interdepartmental liaison the objectives of the committee's recommendation would be met. Provision is already made for public participation in policy development in these areas, among other ways through the work of the Ambassador for Disarmament and the Consultative Group on Disarmament and Arms Control, and in the availability of ministers in Parliament. In the last analysis it is the responsibility of ministers to ensure the proper consideration of national security policy and defend that policy in Parliament.”