

UNGA 45 First Committee Holds Productive Session

The 45th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 45) was held in New York from September to December 1990. As usual, issues related to arms control, disarmament and international security were considered in the First Committee, where national delegations make statements about, debate and then vote on the resolutions introduced. Resolutions passed by the First Committee are forwarded to the UNGA plenary, where they are officially adopted. At UNGA 45, the First Committee recommended for adoption to the plenary over 50 resolutions and four draft decisions.

In keeping with a trend evident during the past several years, the First Committee conducted its work in a business-like manner with a minimum of

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ideological rhetoric. This set the stage for serious and constructive debate on the issues at hand, and contributed to the successful adoption of about half of the resolutions by consensus. Another encouraging development was that of placing several previously perennial resolutions on biennial or triennial cycles. This helps to reduce the number of resolutions under consideration at any one session, thereby allowing more focused discussion and negotiation of the draft resolutions that remain.

The Canadian delegation was also pleased with the fact that the First Committee no longer seems disinclined to deal with issues lying outside the East-West context. There was greater willingness to allow the consideration of regional arms control and disarmament measures, as evidenced by the wide support accorded to Belgian and Pakistani resolutions on regional disarmament, including from states in conflict-prone regions.

Led by Ms. Peggy Mason, Ambassador for Disarmament, the Canadian

delegation monitored and participated in the debate on all issues dealt with by the UNGA 45 First Committee. Canada provided leadership on four resolutions in particular.

One of these was the resolution on the subject of verification (see article elsewhere in this *Bulletin*). As a result of all sides demonstrating flexibility, it was possible to reach agreement on a single verification text that the First Committee adopted by consensus. Canada was highly satisfied with this outcome, particularly in light of the fact that there exists a range of views among UN members on this issue, which made seeking consensus a considerable challenge. In a manner consistent with their approach to a number of areas of the First Committee's work, member states demon-

strated a willingness to focus and build on their common views and concerns about a UN role in verification

rather than to dwell on their differences. The resolution that emerged from this process (45/65) requests the Secretary-General to take appropriate action on the recommendations of the Group of Experts' study on verification. These include the establishment of a UN consolidated data bank of published material on verification and the organization of exchanges between experts and diplomats on issues related to verification.

Resolution 45/65 also requests the Secretary-General to report back to the General Assembly at its 1992 session on progress made towards the implementation of the recommendations. Canada looks forward to contributing to the consolidated data bank and to assisting the Secretariat, where appropriate, in its endeavour to respond to the other recommendations.

As in the past, Canada introduced to the First Committee a resolution on the prohibition of the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes. This resolution calls for the Conference

on Disarmament, at an appropriate stage in its work, to "pursue its consideration of the question of adequately verified cessation and prohibition of the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons." This resolution again received overwhelming support, with 146 votes in favour, one opposed and six abstentions.

The issue of a comprehensive nuclear test ban (CTB) maintained a high profile in the work of the First Committee. The early conclusion of an effective and verifiable CTB treaty being a fundamental Canadian arms control objective, Canada was active as one of the six countries drafting one of the two resolutions adopted on this subject. This resolution (45/51), urges the Conference on Disarmament to continue its substantive work on issues related to a CTB treaty, and was adopted in plenary by a vote of 140 in favour, two opposed and six abstentions.

Each year Canada, jointly with Poland, sponsors a resolution on the subject of a convention to ban the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. At the 1990 session of the First Committee, Poland assumed the lead on this initiative. Canada worked intensively with the Polish delegation and others in an effort to achieve a text that would attract unanimous support. This goal was met, and the resolution adopted strongly urges the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts to resolve outstanding issues and to conclude its negotiations on a chemical weapons convention.

Positive as the trends and atmosphere were at the UNGA 45 First Committee, Canada is convinced that this forum has the potential to play an even more productive role in contributing to global and regional disarmament. The First Committee is unique as a disarmament and international security forum in that its membership is nearly universal. In Canada's view, the First Committee must seek to intensify further its efforts to fulfil its potential in encouraging disarmament and fostering international peace and security. ■