



Statements and Speeches

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MUTUAL SECURITY: NEGOTIATIONS IN 1983

Address by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Committee on Disarmament, Geneva, February 1, 1983

May I first extend to you, Mr. Chairman, my congratulations on assuming the chair for the first month of this year's session of the Committee on Disarmament. I should also like to extend to Ambassador Garcia Robles my congratulations on his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. The Peace Prize is much more than a personal honour; it is a symbol of the devotion to peace that must be at the heart of our collective work.

I recall the message of the late Lester B. Pearson, a friend and Cabinet colleague of mine, when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957. He said that, in the nuclear age, nations face a choice between peace and extinction. In the 25 years since then, nuclear war has been avoided, but at the cost of an awesome build-up of nuclear arms. The horrible instruments of destruction, so terrifying in the 1950s, have been replaced by new and more deadly successors. The threat of a sudden, total collapse into nuclear suicide has been overlaid with an equally chilling prospect of suicide by stages, of nuclear war that could never be "won".

The government of Canada believes that 1983 must be a crucial year in reviving the momentum of arms control and disarmament negotiations.

Just a little over a year ago there were no negotiations on nuclear weapons. Since then, the United States and the Soviet Union have begun negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) and, more recently, have resumed talks on strategic nuclear arms (START). The emphasis not just on limitations but on reductions is most welcome.

Recently, there have been signs that the negotiating process is beginning to work. The leaders of both super-powers have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to serious negotiations. Proposals have been made by both sides, some of which have been vigorously promoted in public. A greater sense of urgency appears to be developing. In the meantime, both super-powers continue to agree informally to abide by the main provisions of the SALT agreements.

This is not the forum for those negotiations, though we all realize that unless concrete progress is achieved in those talks, our collective fate will be at risk no matter how much may be achieved in this forum. What we can draw from past experience is a fundamental conclusion that must apply if arms control and disarmament negotiations — bilateral or multilateral — are to succeed.

Reviving the
momentum of
negotiations