



## The 'Canadian Commitment to Arms Control' Theme of Edmonton Address

*Canada's commitment to arms control and disarmament was the theme of an address to the Edmonton Conference, "The True North Strong and Free?", made by Mr. Ralph Lysyshyn, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of the Department of External Affairs, on November 8. Following are excerpts from that address.*

"In arms control, as in any journey, setting your destination is the first, and often the easiest, part. Our goals must be long-range, because I do not believe it is realistic to expect to get there quickly. This is a judgement based on experience and not a statement of policy. Too often when we, the practitioners, urge patience the advocates say this is only because we want it this way. The goal of arms controllers must be to make themselves obsolete — good arms controllers want to do this sooner rather than later.

The failure to put arms control in its proper context can seriously undermine the arms control process.

An arms control agreement that is a disappointment, in that it does not contribute to security in the manner expected, risks becoming a negative factor in East-West relations, and thus in our security. Disappointment and distrust both lead to disenchantment with the arms control process and pessimism about the possibility of progress.

In considering what we hope to achieve in the arms control process it is important to remind ourselves that arms are the result or symptom of international distrust, and not the primary cause. Arms control may limit, and may perhaps even eliminate, some of the symptoms of international distrust but it does not address the core issue.

We must see arms control as what it really is — a tool in the management of East-West competition, a support for our security; it is not an end in itself.

The arms control process is at the heart of the process of reducing tensions, increasing confidence and thus building security. And while we often say that increased confidence is necessary for us to reach arms control agreements we must not fall into the trap of assuming that arms control agreements by themselves can be equated with an absence of distrust. Arms control and arms control agreements, if they are respected, can control and channel the competition; but they do not eliminate it.

Indeed an interesting question is to ask ourselves what the world would be like if some sweeping arms control proposals, such as those discussed in Reykjavik, are agreed to. Some say it would lead to rapid progress in other areas, others say lowering the level of nuclear arms would make the 'rocks' or basic problems more evident — factors such as the conventional imbalance, the Middle East, southern Africa, human rights, would loom larger. I'm not sure what the answer is but both possibilities require serious contemplation.

If the arms control process itself, therefore, is to be evaluated prudently, it is equally important to examine various arms control proposals critically.

It is important to take into account a broad range of factors. The first is that the East-West rivalry has global dimensions. This means that solutions in both international relations and in arms control have to be broadly based and must have wide applicability.

The second is that there is a deep interrelationship among weapon systems. The more radical the arms control proposal, the broader its implication for other weapons. Progress in one area of nuclear weapons changes the significance of the remaining weapons; progress across the whole range of nuclear weapons changes the significance of chemical and conventional weapons.

Finally, weapon systems and weapons exist for different reasons. These include economics, technological capability, geography, tactical and strategic decisions, international politics and on occasion domestic politics. This means that different weapon systems have different values to different countries. It may therefore be impractical to focus exclusively on particular systems. We have seen this in the US focus on Soviet land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and the Soviet attention to cruise missiles.

A responsible approach to arms control — and Canada's approach to arms control is a responsible one — must therefore be a cautious one; arms control proposals that do not do what they purport to do, that are easily circumvented, or that do not take into account the complex interrelationships I just mentioned, have to be avoided as unhelpful or misleading, and perhaps as dangerous.

The complexity and interrelationships involved in arms control account for the slow pace in negotiations, and also for our disdain for arms control by declaration. Declaratory proposals and quick-fixes proliferate in public debates, but experience has shown us that no meaningful arms control measures have been achieved and sustained outside the negotiating framework.

This brings us to the question of the international context of Canada's role in arms control. At this Conference and to an ever-increasing number of Canadians, the sense of Canada as sitting as sort of a no-man's land between the two super-powers is a powerful image. In the age of strategic and cruise missiles this concept has urgent meaning. As neighbours of the USA, and as partners in a democratic value system, we inevitably share the threat to the USA and the West. Geography, the power and effect of nuclear weapons, and the manner in which they are used, make it impossible for people who live huddled to the US border to avoid the threat — to suggest we can is wishful thinking. Our commitment to democratic values augments the