

4. The focus of activity has of course centred on the United States of America/Soviet negotiations. The signing of the agreement to eliminate all American and Soviet intermediate-range land-based missile systems in December 1987 constituted a landmark manifestation of progress. Although the treaty affects only about 5 per cent of the combined United States/USSR nuclear arsenals, it is the first ever to actually reduce nuclear arms by eliminating the entire category of such weapons. Furthermore, while it constitutes only one element of a larger process whose aim is to enhance security at lower levels of weapons, particularly in the European context, the treaty is of immense symbolic importance. After a long disarmament hiatus, the treaty has demonstrated that real progress is achievable and has paved the way for more significant reductions of nuclear weapons. The near-term prospect for reaching agreement on a 50 per cent reduction of strategic nuclear arsenals has become, in consequence, a more realistic possibility.

5. A further recent event of major significance was the commencement of full-scale stage-by-stage negotiations between the United States and the USSR on nuclear-testing limitations in November 1987. The first stage concerns the development of improved verification techniques so that the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty can be finally ratified. The negotiations will then turn to consideration of further limitations on the size and number of tests. Canada warmly welcomed the start of these negotiations because early ratification of the two treaties would constitute, in our view, a useful first step in moving toward the widely shared comprehensive nuclear-test ban treaty objective.

6. Since the first special session devoted to disarmament of the General Assembly in 1978, there has been growing international recognition of the importance of confidence-building measures and the step-by-step approach to arms control and disarmament. The agreement reached at the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe in September 1986 recognized that confidence-building measures constitute an essential precursor to complex disarmament agreements - in this case to conventional disarmament measures in Europe. Follow-up work is continuing at Vienna with the aim of outlining mandates for new East/West negotiations on conventional arms control and disarmament in Europe.

7. Recent progress has not been restricted to the East/West arena. In other forums, tangible progress has been achieved at both the regional and global levels. With 138 adherents, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) enjoys the broadest political support of any international arms control and disarmament agreement. Since the first special session in 1978, which called for the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, 31 additional countries have become full parties to the Treaty. The Canadian Government believes that the current special session should provide a solid endorsement of the nuclear non-proliferation objective and of the Treaty as the principal instrument for its achievement.