

Multilateral Forums: Canada's Strength

In March 1985, when the United States and the Soviet Union resumed bilateral negotiations on strategic and intermediate weapons and space weapons, the world momentarily breathed a sigh of relief. However, the difficulties of disarmament negotiations quickly became apparent. The first two rounds of negotiations produced no substantial progress.

The statement by External Affairs Minister Joe Clark on the resumption of talks has proven accurate. Mr. Clark cautioned:

“We should be under no illusion that the course charted at Geneva will be an easy one. What we are witnessing now is the beginning of a long and sensitive process.”

Something more than ordinary negotiation is needed today. That “something” is political will. That is why the world has welcomed the announcement that President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev will meet in Geneva for two days of talks this November. President Reagan has said he regards the summit meeting as “an opportunity to chart a course for the future.” This course, leading to practical steps to improve U.S.-Soviet relations, is urgently needed to unlock the disarmament impasse.

Canada has consistently worked to move forward the bilateral talks with their agreed objectives of preventing an arms race in space and terminating the one on earth; limiting and reducing nuclear arms; and strengthening strategic stability, leading ultimately to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. These themes reflect Canada's own arms control priorities.

The goals of the superpowers are shared by the world and echoed throughout the multilateral disarmament forums. Concern with the problems of the nuclear arms race and reducing the threat of nuclear war are not the exclusive preserve of the superpowers, though they do have a special and leading role to play. It is also the responsibility of other countries — middle and small powers