

a year of inactivity, steps forward were also taken in the field of disarmament. The United States and the Soviet union reached accord on a joint statement of agreed principles and laid it before the general assembly on 20 September 1961. This was followed by another advance—which I think should be considered a major advance—the establishment of the eighteen nation disarmament committee which began its deliberations in March of this year in Geneva.

This committee has two important advantages over previous disarmament forums. First, following the precedent of the Laos conference, it has the United States and the Soviet union as permanent co-chairmen and they meet together frequently to arrange agendas and try to resolve differences. I do not suppose that ever before have Americans and Russians spoken together on so many occasions and for such a long time as these co-chairmen have been doing in Geneva. And, of course, these great powers are the key to the whole problem of disarmament. If there is to be a settlement it must be reached primarily by these two nations. Second, the committee has as members eight non-aligned nations—Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and the United Arab Republic. By their impartial and constructive approach to the intricate problems of disarmament, these eight nations have helped to advance the work of the conference. In the opinion of the Canadian delegation these eight nations have made a magnificent contribution at that conference.

For the first time since nations began to debate this all-important question of disarmament, the two major powers have put forward comprehensive treaty proposals. The committee has been examining these proposals for the past five months. One thing shown conclusively is that the dangers caused by the vast array of modern armament cannot be removed at one stroke or by adopting some simple formula. To reach agreement on general and complete disarmament requires the greatest effort and the most painstaking negotiation.

The fundamental problem of course is the distrust and suspicion which have sharply and tragically divided the world since the end of the second world war. Negotiating governments must make greater efforts to overcome this distrust and suspicion.

The committee in Geneva should play its part in this transformation. The Canadian delegation at Geneva has repeatedly emphasized that there are common elements in existing proposals which can be developed into significant measures of disarmament. What is required is a renewed endeavour to achieve acceptable compromises.

Canada welcomes the announced intention of the Soviet union to modify its proposals for eliminating nuclear weapons vehicles. In our view, this may help to remove the block to negotiations in Geneva which was created by the incompatible positions of the two sides on this particular question. Of course, we must reserve our final opinion on this modified Soviet position until we see the detailed amendments to the Soviet draft treaty; and, in addition, agreement on this key disarmament question will inevitably require careful examination in Geneva of all the related factors.

Early in the Geneva conference a committee of the whole was set up to deal with measures which could be put into effect quickly and would help to relieve international tension and create mutual confidence pending agreement on general and complete disarmament.

Among the subjects this committee has before it are: first, measures to prevent further dissemination of nuclear weapons; second, the reduction of the possibility of war by accident, miscalculation or failure of communications. In order to stop the arms race spreading to outer space, Canada has proposed in this committee that immediate action should be taken to prevent the placing of weapons of mass destruction in orbit. We urge that when the disarmament committee resumes its work redoubled efforts be made to reach agreement on the important questions which are before this collateral measures committee.

This assembly should bring to bear the full force of world opinion to ensure more rapid progress on disarmament. To achieve this we must, first of all here in New York, avoid propaganda exchanges on the question of disarmament. The whole issue could become a propaganda battle here in this assembly, and this would be a tragedy. We must also assess the possibilities for compromise on important points which are still in dispute. Finally, we must recommend as forcefully as possible—I would hope recommend with one voice—that the disarmament committee in Geneva renew its efforts at the earliest possible moment.

The commonwealth prime ministers meeting in London a few days ago recorded their unanimous conviction in this sense. That statement by the commonwealth conference was very significant because the 15 nations there represented all the continents of the world. I quote from the communique:

“The prime ministers agreed that the need for disarmament had been intensified by the steady development of ever more powerful weapons. They reaffirmed the principles laid