

Peace-keeping  
and security

While we are exploring these and other ways of making progress on disarmament, we must also strengthen our joint capacity to maintain international peace and security. Substantive progress on disarmament is at best a matter of years, if not of decades. Meanwhile the security of nations is bound to remain precarious. In a world of a 150 or more states, many of which have claims upon their neighbours, and where resource shortages and population movements raise questions of life and death for millions of people, violence within and between states is a regrettable fact of life.

The United Nations was created to restrain and, if possible, to prevent war. Its record is a mixed one. But, whatever we may think of its capacities, we must work as best we can to improve and to strengthen them. Recent events have demonstrated once again both the uncertainties of peacekeeping operations and the continuing need to make these operations a success. It must be our objective to create the conditions that will permit all members to respond quickly, impartially and effectively to threats to peace whenever they are called upon by the United Nations to do so. I make this plea on behalf of a country that has made peace-keeping a special plank in its defence policy and has participated in every major peacekeeping operation of the United Nations.

I want to add a brief postscript on the matter of institutions, which is also before our special session. It is easy enough to change institutions. It is important to recognize, however, that new institutions do not necessarily make intractable issues less intractable.

I believe that it is right for the United Nations to deal with disarmament at two levels. Disarmament is a common concern of the world community, and there must be a deliberative body in which the member states, in their totality, can periodically bring their views to bear on the disarmament process as we are doing here. Actual negotiations, however, must continue to be pursued in a body of more manageable size, operating on a basis of consensus. Canada considers it of major importance that France has decided to rejoin the disarmament dialogue. It is a promising omen for the success of our deliberations. We also hope that the People's Republic of China will see its best interests served by joining its efforts to those of others in advancing the cause of disarmament.

Proposals have also been made to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for research on disarmament matters and to make the results of such research more widely available. We welcome proposals of this kind. In this as in other matters of public policy, governments can only benefit from more informed discussion. Disarmament is the business of everyone, but only a few are able to follow the issues. The consequence is that special interests dominate the debate and distort the conclusions. We must make sure that they do not carry the day. Dispassionate research and analysis, presented in terms that people can understand, would do much to right the balance.

As long ago as 1929, that most eloquent of advocates of disarmament, Salvador de Madariaga, spoke of disarmament as being "really the problem of the organization of the world community". In the larger sense of the word, history has proved him right.

---