

Chemical weapons

Canada is a party to both the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits the use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons, and the 1972 Convention, which bans the production and possession of bacteriological weapons. In 1977, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. began negotiations on a joint approach to solving problems that had impeded earlier progress towards the banning of chemical weapons, not the least of which was effective verification. In order to maintain the momentum towards achieving agreement on effective measures to prohibit the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and to bring about their destruction, Canada successfully co-sponsored a resolution at the 1977 UN General Assembly urging the vigorous pursuit of this object. It is expected that the Geneva Disarmament Conference will continue to give special attention to this area in 1978.

UN special session on disarmament

The Canadian Government views the UN special session on disarmament, to be held in New York from May 23 to June 28, 1978, as an opportunity for the international community to provide new impetus to efforts towards greater progress in curbing and reversing the arms race. Consequently, as a member of the preparatory committee, Canada has been actively engaged in preparations for the special session. It submitted to the Secretary-General a number of action-oriented proposals, which included: 1) the establishment of an international register of arms transfers to which all UN member states would submit full information; 2) a conference between recipients and suppliers to restrict such transfers on a regional basis; 3) regional arms-control conferences to deal with local arms races through agreed measures of restraint; 4) the holding of a follow-up special session, after an unspecified interval, to review progress towards the specific targets to be set by this special session. (See also "United Nations".)

Mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR)

Canada has participated directly in the second principal East-West arms-control negotiations now in progress, the Conference on the Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe. In these negotiations, which began in Vienna in 1973, NATO and the Warsaw Pact have been seeking agreement on ways to reduce the level of armed confrontation in the area of its greatest concentration. The negotiations were made possible by a general relaxing of Cold War tensions and an improvement in the relations between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., reflected in the 1972 SALT agreements and the agreement to convene the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. As had been expected, there has been considerable difficulty, and progress has been slow. By the end of 1977, no agreement was yet in sight. Canada has expressed the belief that a balanced reduction in the level of armed confrontation between East and West will improve the political climate and reduce the possibility of war, and has remained convinced that its security is inseparable from that of Western Europe. Accordingly, within the NATO alliance Canada has been a consistent supporter of MBFR and has contributed as far as possible to the formulation of policy and the conduct of the negotiations.

Seabed treaty review conference

As a party to the 1970 Seabed Treaty, which, in effect, made the seabed and ocean-floor beyond a 12-mile coastal band a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Canada participated in the review conference held in Geneva from June 20 to July 1, 1977. The conference was convened pursuant to Article VII of the treaty, five years after the treaty entered into force, to review its operation and to ensure that its purposes were being successfully realized. The Canadian delegate was unanimously elected chairman of the drafting committee, which successfully carried out the principal work of the conference in preparing its Final Declaration. This document, which was adopted by consensus, concluded, after a clause-by-clause examination of its provisions, that the treaty had been implemented satisfactorily and reaffirmed the commitment of parties to its aims, notably that of preventing an arms race in nuclear weapons or any other type of weapon of mass destruction on the seabed.