

Horizontal Proliferation Focus of Consultative Group Meeting in Saskatoon

Members of the Consultative Group on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba met with Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason in Saskatoon on October 4, 1990 to discuss a range of arms control and disarmament issues. In addition to Consultative Group members, the consultation included several others from the region who are knowledgeable about and interested in arms control and disarmament issues, as well as officials from EAITC and the Department of National Defence.

The consultation focused in particular on the theme "Beyond East-West Arms Control: Horizontal Proliferation." Ambassador Mason gave a brief overview of the Fourth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. She outlined the Conference's accomplishments, such as the elaboration of language on full-scope safeguards as a condition of supply and on the extension of export controls on nuclear materials to include tritium, and expressed Canada's regret at the lack of a final document. While the Conference's advances can be built on by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, the Ambassador observed that non-parties to the NPT are already using the fact of no final document to undermine developments they dislike.

Dr. Ron Sutherland of the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Chemistry spoke about the control of chemical and biological weapons. He opened with a discussion of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, noting the inadequacy of the Convention's verification provisions and cautioning that advances in biotechnology make verification of the Convention even more difficult. Turning to chemical weapons, he observed that negotiators are close to reaching a chemical weapons convention, although negotiations are currently in a state of waiting while differences on several "soluble" problems — related mainly to verification — are being worked out. Dr. Sutherland addressed the problem of chemi-

cal weapons proliferation, noting that an estimated 15 to 20 states possess or would like to possess chemical weapons. He argued that while export controls imposed by chemical suppliers can halt proliferation in the short-term, the only real solution to the problem lies in a verifiable, global chemical weapons ban.

Dr. Jim Fergusson of the Program in Strategic Studies at the University of Manitoba gave a critique of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). He argued that the MTCR is not likely to be effective in stopping the proliferation of missile technology, since several technology transfers took place before the regime was established and since several key suppliers remain outside the regime. Insofar as the MTCR does make it more difficult for states to acquire missile technology, it is likely to freeze existing regional asymmetries, which may be destabilizing and may push countries towards acquiring nuclear weapons capability to compen-

sate for inaccurate delivery systems. Dr. Fergusson argued that a more responsible approach would be to promote the creation of relative balances in missile capabilities — in other words, to promote systems of stable regional deterrence. He observed that arms control in the East-West context followed, rather than preceded, the acquisition of missile technology and the achievement of relative equality in these systems.

During the subsequent discussion, there was some disagreement with Dr. Fergusson's assessment, although the opinion was also voiced that weapons systems are not necessarily destabilizing and that promotion of regional deterrence may be desirable. Some participants noted that many less-developed countries may start to want to acquire their own sources of intelligence and will try to enter the satellite-launching business for this purpose, which could complicate implementation of the MTCR. The creation of an inter-



At the Consultative Group meeting in Saskatoon, from left to right: Dr. Peter Lockwood, Defence Research Establishment Suffield; Dr. Jim Fergusson, University of Manitoba; Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason; Major-General John Sharpe, Department of National Defence; Dr. Ron Sutherland, University of Saskatchewan.