

- Nuclear testing would be prohibited; that would significantly contribute to stifling the development of new nuclear weapons.
- Chemical weapons would be prohibited and existing stockpiles destroyed; the world would be freed of the threat presently posed by these horrible weapons of mass destruction.
- An international convention would guarantee a weapons-free space.

These would indeed be historic and extraordinary accomplishments.

The United Nations Disarmament Commission

The present United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was established by UNSSOD I in 1978 as a deliberative body composed of all U.N. members. The UNDC, which meets annually in New York for four weeks in May, operates on the basis of consensus and makes recommendations to the General Assembly on selected items in the disarmament field which the General Assembly has referred to the UNDC for examination.

In 1985, the UNDC discussed six issues: the arms race in all its aspects, the reduction of military budgets, the nuclear capability of South Africa, the role of the U.N. in disarmament, curbing the naval arms race and a review of the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade.

The UNDC has experienced many of the same problems that exist in other U.N. forums and has had difficulty in dealing substantively with its agenda items. At its 1985 session, the UNDC achieved little in substantive terms, except a reaffirmation of the goals of the Second Disarmament Decade. Even perennial agenda items, such as the reduction of military budgets and the nuclear capability of South Africa, remained untouched by progress or movement of any sort. While there was some useful discussion on the role of the United Nations in disarmament, the session was characterized by a lack of urgency.

Nevertheless, the UNDC does have an important role to play in improving and strengthening the manner in which the U.N. deals with disarmament issues. Canada supports the UNDC and believes that if all member-states strive to play a more meaningful role in this process, the Commission could make a real contribution to the deliberation of disarmament questions.