

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the United Nations some nations have argued that the two central problems facing humanity, armament and underdevelopment, should be addressed together. Some claim that disarmament, especially disarmament by the large military powers, would facilitate economic and social development. Money freed by disarmament could be transferred to development needs. There has been support for the establishment of a United Nations fund that would be the depository for disarmament savings and the source for new development assistance. It is also argued that development progress would reduce international disparities, tensions and local instability and would thus facilitate disarmament.

Throughout the 1980s the United Nations studied this potential approach to solving the world's most serious problems. Some nations advocated this approach, demanding quick disarmament measures and the creation of a fund to transfer disarmament savings to the poorest nations. Other nations dismissed it as naive, unrealistic and dangerous.

This attempt to link disarmament to development as a remedy for the troubles of our changing world deserves attention for two reasons. First, the political failure of the international community to recognize such a link is an important conclusion for those seeking solutions to humanity's great problems to heed. Second, this political failure offers an important example of how the United Nations continues to be frustrated in its important tasks of preventing war and promoting global well-being.

This paper reviews the origins of disarmament-development advocacy, examines some of the efforts to establish a link, including UN studies, and reviews the debate at the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development (ICRDD). This look at the 1987 UN Conference reveals the various national points of view about this relationship, and provides a window on the larger international tensions that are at the root of much of international relations today. The examination ends with a look at Canada's position in the debate.