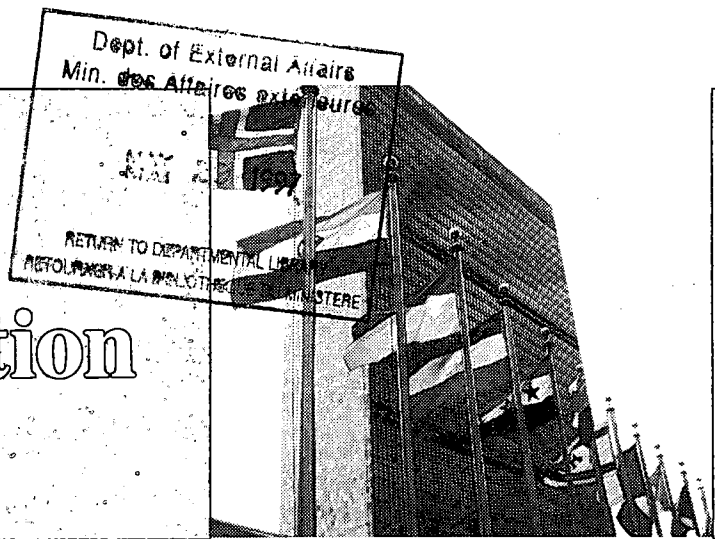


Briefing Paper #2

DISARMAMENT: Canada's Contribution at the UN



UN 57106

In establishing the UN in 1945, Canada and other members of the international community expressed their determination to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and recognized the transcendent need for cooperation between nations in the post war world.

Canada has pursued this tradition of multilateralism in the field of arms control. In fact, Canada has a seat at every multilateral arms control and disarmament forum. Each of these disarmament forums exists by virtue of the UN's mandate to create a world safe from war. These forums include: the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks in Vienna and the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe. Each of these forums is filled with its own set of difficulties and complications. However, each also offers hope and the long-range prospect for progress.

Canada has long been a vocal proponent of these multilateral negotiations. We recognize the true value of the multilateral processes to the international community as a whole and their particular importance as a forum in which smaller and middle powers can make their voice heard and influence arms control issues that affect each and every nation, regardless of size and stature. We also believe that the potential of these bodies for making real progress and effectively negotiating arms control and disarmament questions is far from being realized.

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Canada

THE UN AS A DISARMAMENT FORUM

As a focal point for international relations, it is not surprising that the major multilateral arms control and disarmament forums have emerged from the UN system itself.

The United Nations has stood by the goal, adopted in 1959, of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. A number of limited agreements for arms control have been achieved through UN initiatives - such as the Antarctic Treaty, the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 (UNSSOD I), the 149 participating nations adopted, by what has been called a "historic consensus" a 129-paragraph Final Document containing a Program of Action which listed measures intended to be implemented "over the next few years."

But no progress has been made in achieving agreements since then. The fault lies not with the UN as such but with those governments that use confrontation rather than cooperation. The words at the heart of the Final Document must not be forgotten: "Mankind is confronted with a choice: we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation."

UN FIRST COMMITTEE

The First Committee of the UN General Assembly, which deals with political and security matters, has an agenda comprising the entire range of arms control and disarmament questions. The First Committee is a deliberative body and prepares recommendations and draft resolutions which are then submitted to the General Assembly for adoption on the basis of a majority vote. Of all the activities of the United Nations, those of the General Assembly attract the most public attention.

At the 39th General Assembly, the First Committee considered 72 resolutions ranging from Radiological Weapons to the Reduction of Military Budgets. Among the most prominent in this plethora of resolutions are those that deal with the questions of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty,

Chemical Weapons, Outer Space and a freeze on nuclear weapons.

Most public attention seems to have been fixed on the three UN resolutions which called for a comprehensive freeze on the production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons. Expressing the fear and genuine frustration that the pace of arms control negotiations was too slow compared to continuous upward momentum of the nuclear arms race, it was argued that the superpowers should freeze at existing levels of armaments and then negotiate reductions. While the idea of a comprehensive nuclear freeze has an attractive and almost compelling logic, in the present atmosphere it seems very unlikely that it would be possible to agree to negotiate a verifiable freeze.

There are other ways of stifling the nuclear arms race - and Canada takes the lead on two major issues. These two steps are "freezes" in their own right.

The first is the call for a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB). Canada has been one of the "inner core" of co-sponsors of a UN resolution on the urgent need for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. The resolution reaffirms that a treaty prohibiting all nuclear-test explosions in all environments is a matter of the greatest importance. As the resolution itself states, a CTB would:

...constitute a vital element for the success of efforts to halt and reverse the nuclear-arms race and the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, and to prevent the expansion of existing nuclear arsenals and the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries.

The realization of an effective multilateral Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTB) is a fundamental and abiding objective of Canada's arms control and disarmament policy. Since 1945 there have been 1,522 nuclear explosions, and 53 in 1984 alone. Canada has long been an active advocate of a CTB and has been working consistently within the CD to move discussions forward. We believe that a CTB is a concrete and realistic measure that would contribute significantly to halting the nuclear arms race by prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons. As the Secretary of the UN has stated:

It is of direct importance to the future of humanity to end all nuclear explosions. No