

The First Committee, which Canada expects to chair at UNGA 43, will be an especially important forum for the pursuit of this broad objective. Canada should take advantage of the opportunity to encourage some fundamental rethinking within the First Committee. Its relevance to the ACD process could be enhanced by the implementation of reforms for which Canada and others have long pressed. The careful assessment of global ACD priorities should be a central task. To the extent that this question can be addressed in a satisfactory manner, problems such as the proliferation of contradictory resolutions will be more easily resolved.

For Canada, a particularly welcome development at UNSSOD III was the clear emergence of a consensus on both the vital importance of effective verification of arms control and disarmament agreements and on the need for a careful, practical study of the role of the UN in the verification of multilateral agreements. The Canada-Netherlands initiative for a UN experts study on the question gained broad support and will be pursued at UNGA 43.

More broadly, the outcome of the Special Session - especially when coupled with the failure of UNSSOD II - raises a number of basic questions: What is the relevance of the UN in the field of ACD? How can this be enhanced? Can the UN become an effective instrument for reinforcing and stimulating progress in ACD at the bilateral, regional and global levels? What is the significance of First Committee resolutions and decisions? How important is the role of consensus to the ACD process? Should UN member states strive for consensus where none exists? What is the role of a UN Special Session on Disarmament? When should a decision for a further UNSSOD be taken?

While there are no easy answers, an early and honest effort by the international community to address such questions could yield benefits and go a long way toward retrieving what will be widely seen, with considerable justification, as a disappointing UNSSOD III outcome.

Finally, there can be no doubt that, for Canada, the preparatory process for the Special Session, involving extensive consultation between government officials and actively interested NGOs and individuals, was a highly valuable process in itself. It facilitated better awareness and understanding of the range of views of concerned Canadian citizens on major ACD issues, and strengthened the ability of the Canadian Delegation at UNSSOD III to articulate Canadian positions forcefully.