

Perhaps they believe we should stop making these agreements and get out of the international field entirely. I want to tell them that safeguards are an extremely important aspect of the international non-proliferation system. There are others, of course. It must be recognized that proliferation is a political problem, one which stems from inequalities and imbalance within the international community.

If we want to succeed in the task of ensuring non-proliferation, we must cast the net wider. We must consider the causes of international tension and do something about the disparities which exist in the world. We must do something to bring about a better and more equitable international economic system. The safeguards constitute a system of legal commitments and a system of verification. The recipient state undertakes, legally, to observe certain pre-conditions and in particular commits itself not to undertake any explosive activity. In every negotiation in which we engage we attempt to add to the strength of this legal commitment.

As Honourable Members know, adherence to this legal commitment is verified by an international inspection system. Unfortunately, that system was downgraded by the Honourable Member in his speech. It is being constantly improved. It is implemented not only by personnel but by mechanisms. No one has ever said - and the Prime Minister made this clear in the speech to which I referred a few minutes ago - that it is 100 per cent foolproof. But the degree of statistical certainty is high and there is a high level of inhibition against diversion. We have recently completed a series of meetings with other nuclear suppliers in an effort to improve our system of international safeguards.

International standards, as Honourable Members will realize, are not static. They have been in evolution since the first agreements for co-operation in the peaceful application of nuclear energy were concluded in the 1950's. The trend in safeguards evolution has been one toward increased stringency both in the legal commitments and verification mechanisms which are required.

The most significant development, of course, that has taken place in the evolution of the safeguards system was the entry into effect of the non-proliferation treaty in 1970. Nuclear suppliers, who have certain generally defined obligations under the NPT, met for a number of years in order to define these obligations to a satisfactory working level. In August, 1974, countries that shared or were about to share these obligations, including the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R., the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Canada, reached a basic consensus, one which was notified to the International Atomic Energy Agency on August 22 of that year, setting out their interpretation in some detail.

The policy of the countries which accepted this consensus required, as a minimum, that in transfers of certain nuclear equipment and materials to non-nuclear weapons states not party to the NPT the safeguards system of the IAEA applicable to individual projects be applied. The participating countries, which were later joined by others, also started an undertaking by the recipient not to use the supplied items for any explosive or other non-peaceful purposes as a prerequisite for the transfer. Recognizing the non-proliferation tre: