

Collateral measures

To round out my survey of developments in the past year I might also mention both the signature by more than 30 governments of the Environmental Modification Treaty and the successful completion of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Seabed Treaty. These treaties are, we all know, limited agreements that deal with only hypothetical areas of arms control. While they are peripheral to the central issue of disarmament, they are worthy of our support as desirable ancillary measures. Nevertheless, we should not allow the negotiation of such agreements to distract our attention from the need for other measures that will tackle the more urgent problems. Indeed, the scope for further collateral measures of this kind seems very limited. We now have the opportunity to negotiate much more significant measures, such as a comprehensive test ban and a chemical-weapons convention.

New weapons of mass destruction

The Geneva Conference has also given careful consideration in the past two years to the best means of preventing any development and deployment of so-called "new weapons of mass destruction" — that is, categories of weapons that might conceivably be developed in the future having effects analogous to the mass-destruction weapons with which we are only too familiar. Those deliberations have, in our view, tended to clarify the very serious problems of trying to address this matter on what I might call a broad generic basis. I think it would be fair to say that we have been left in a state of considerable confusion as to just what hypothetical, futuristic weapons such a treaty would be supposed to deal with. Any attempt to base a comprehensive treaty on such a conception gives rise to serious problems of knowing what could be actually prohibited and how to verify compliance with such prohibitions. We note that the Soviet Union has presented a revised draft, and some elements of obscurity that many states found in the original draft have been somewhat diminished. Nevertheless, the view of my Government, following the intensive study that has been given to this problem in the Geneva Disarmament Conference, is that there are very serious practical difficulties standing in the way of making the Soviet proposal effective as an arms-control treaty. In sum, we believe the soundest way to proceed is to consider specific agreements to prohibit, on a case-by-case basis, particular new categories of mass-destruction weapons when such specific weapons can be identified.

At the same time, we fully recognize the hypothetical element of risk a future development of such new categories of mass-destruction weapons might pose. We are, therefore, prepared to support a resolution that would call upon states to abstain from the development of new categories of mass-destruction weapons and would request the Geneva Conference to consider specific international agreements.

Conventional weapons

Without in any way diminishing the importance Canada attaches to these areas involving mass-destruction weapons, it is our conviction that the international community must begin to address the problem of conventional weapons, and the production and transfer of such weapons, which has been ignored for so long. In our view, the special session should take the lead in identifying avenues to be explored in this particular area. The problem of conventional arms, and the escalating transfers of such weapons, including the most sophisticated, is crucial to hopes for the achievement of comprehensive disarmament, or at least getting closer to it.