

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

- John F. Kennedy

It seems to us that it could be possible to set up under the aegis of the United Nations a mechanism for extensive international verification of compliance with agreements to lessen international tension, limit weapons, and to monitor the military situation in conflict areas.

- Mikhail Gorbachev

I INTRODUCTION

Disarmament *under effective international control* has been a goal of the international community for decades. Each year, the UN General Assembly reaffirms it in resolutions, and the ultimate objective of "general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control" is cited in most multilateral arms control treaties. Although almost all governments support the development of international control of disarmament in principle, there has been little opportunity, until recently, to carry it out.

During the first two decades, UN disarmament negotiations were deadlocked because the West charged that the East wanted "disarmament without control" and the East charged that the West wanted "control without disarmament." In the early sixties, both sides began to display some flexibility and minimal arms control measures have been possible, accompanied by weak verification provisions and strong reliance on limited surveillance by the superpowers. Table 1 lists the existing multilateral treaties, summarizes their verification provisions and describes the UN role in their implementation.