



Canada Assumes Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament

Canada assumed the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva at the beginning of August, the concluding month of the 1986 session of the CD. On August 5, Canada's Ambassador to the Conference, Mr. J. Alan Beesley, delivered a message to the CD from the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Following is the text of the message from Mr. Clark.

"Canada feels particularly honoured to be entrusted with the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during its important closing, report-writing and inter-sessional period. We shall endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities in a manner which fully reflects the high value Canada attaches to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

In an era when the awesome realities of existing and emerging weapons technologies are a cause for concern to the peoples of all countries and continents, the task of devising effective agreed arms control and disarmament measures cannot simply be left to those who possess the largest arsenals. The Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole

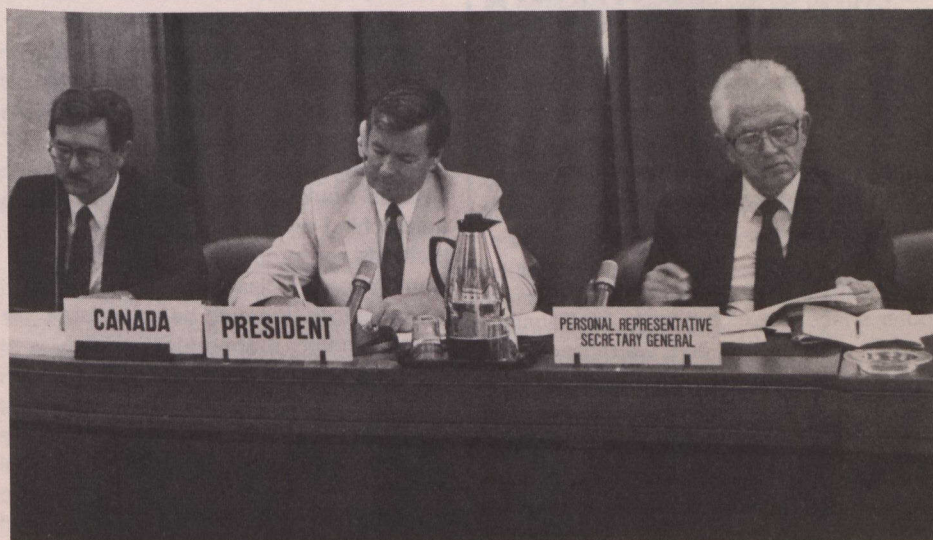
multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, therefore performs an indispensable political and institutional role.

The fact that Canada's presidency occurs during the concluding month of this year's session gives me an opportunity to put forward some reflections on the current international situation in relation to arms control and disarmament, and on the recent work of the Conference on Disarmament in that context.

The attention of the world, understandably, is focussed on the negotiations of the USA and the USSR being conducted, literally, just down the road from the Conference on Disarmament. This attention often takes the form of an impatient clamour for quick results. Such expressions of impatience are politically and humanly understandable. However, we would do well to keep in mind the magnitude and complexity of the agreed objectives which the negotiating parties have set for themselves: no less than 'the prevention of an arms race in space and its termination on earth; the limitation and reduction of nuclear arms; and the strengthening of strategic stability, leading ultimately to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.'

It must also be borne in mind that the issues under negotiation involve vital security interests not only of the negotiating parties themselves but of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament and indeed all the peoples of the world. Viewed in this light, while many may have hoped for more rapid progress, there are no grounds for discouragement at this time; there are in fact hopeful signs. Available evidence strongly suggests that both parties are approaching their task with a seriousness and commitment that bodes well for eventual substantive results. It is particularly encouraging when concrete, substantive proposals are put forward at the negotiating table, as has recently been the case, rather than first being announced in public. I am sure that all members of the Conference on Disarmament would agree on the importance of conducting ourselves in ways which are supportive of continuing, serious pursuit of those all-important negotiations, while not abdicating our individual and collective responsibility to advance our own work with a sense of real urgency.

The arms control negotiations and discussions of the Conference on Disarmament may understandably attract fewer headlines than the bilaterals, but this should not be taken as an indication of their unimportance. It has been your task to address some of the most politically sensitive and technically difficult issues which governments confront in this area. Just as important, in its role as a sounding board as well as a negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament helps in registering emerging issues of concern among political leaders and in defining areas for new negotiated measures. Your work can thus also contribute invaluable to establishing the tone and texture of the broader arms control and disarmament process. Your current session has been characterized by a most welcome lessening of polemics; there appears to be an increasing trend towards thoughtful, substantive statements, coupled with the submission of practical working papers. I applaud this new spirit, and this new approach.



Mr. J. Alan Beesley (centre), Canada's Ambassador to the CD, Mr. Arsène Després (left), Counsellor with the Canadian Delegation to the CD, and Mr. Miljan Komatina (right), Personal Representative of the Secretary General, during recent session of CD.

L. Bianco