

"What particularly concerns me is the technological impulse that continues to lie behind the development of strategic nuclear weaponry. It is after all, in the laboratories that the nuclear arms race begins. The new technologies can require a decade or more to take a weapons system from research and development to production and eventual deployment. What this means is that national policies are pre-empted for long periods ahead."

Since the first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament in 1978, which I would like to refer to in future as UNSSOD I, there has been little progress in international disarmament negotiations. There is an urgent need for a new impetus to be given. UNSSOD II this year presents such an opportunity. Hearings in the standing committee, like other organized consultations elsewhere, provide the means by which citizens may express through their parliamentary representatives their concerns, their hopes and their practical suggestions for advancing the cause of arms control and disarmament.

Background

It is a sombre picture I have painted at the outset but it could have been worse. Europe, for example, has enjoyed a longer period of peace in the last three decades than in any other period this century; not because the expansionist ambitions of some have been quenched, nor alas because sufficient confidence has been built between East and West, but rather, because the strength and resolve of the North Atlantic alliance has deterred potential aggression.

After the enormous destruction of the Second World War, Canada, like many other countries, hoped for the creation of a new world order under the United Nations, through which peace and security would be assured by the Security Council, whose five permanent members were given veto powers.

The permanent members of the Security Council were unable to agree on ways to implement the provisions of the Charter relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. For this reason, and having regard to mounting tensions in Europe, Canada became one of the original signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. The purpose of this regional collective security organization is to band together to deter potential aggression. Until the arrangements for maintaining international peace and security contained in the United Nations Charter are made effective, I assume that it will continue to be the policy of Canadian governments to rely on the regional collective security arrangements of NATO.

Vital though a credible deterrent is to the avoidance of war, it cannot by itself build a peace or resolve the underlying differences between East and West that are the root cause of the instability. Herein lies the great conundrum of security policy. On the one hand an effective deterrent is maintained by an adequate level of up-to-date armaments, and yet the cycle of armaments modernization breeds fear and mistrust which exacerbate instability. It has been my experience that it is impossible