

Disarmament Commission

The Canadian Government continued to press for an early meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, a body comprising all members of the General Assembly, which was established for the consideration of disarmament questions. Despite opposition from the Soviet bloc, which argued in favour of a "comprehensive discussion" of disarmament by heads of government at the General Assembly, the majority of members were agreed on the desirability of such a meeting, and the Commission was therefore convened on August 16. Speakers from a large number of states, including all members of the Ten-Nation Committee, were heard during the course of the debate.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, who headed the Canadian delegation, made it plain that the Ten-Nation Committee had been making some progress—though not with sufficient speed—toward a position that would have brought closer together the views of the two sides. For this reason, he argued, the work of the Committee should not have been interrupted. Emphasizing the importance of a return to negotiations at the earliest possible date, and the important role of the Disarmament Commission in bringing about this result, he spoke as follows at the opening meeting of the Commission:

...it is the firm view of the Canadian Government that in the broad and complex field of disarmament the world is facing a very grave situation. The quickening pace of arms development and establishing of the means of delivering nuclear weapons is producing risks and dangers which demand immediate attention if we are to prevent a catastrophe in the world...

No matter how difficult the task of achieving agreement may appear or how slow progress may seem, there can be no valid reason for not pursuing disarmament negotiations with perseverance and patience. Those countries which have been given and which have accepted responsibility for negotiations, and that of course includes Canada, are bound to continue their search for agreement. World opinion expects no less of them...

In large measure as a result of continued efforts on the part of the Canadian Delegation, a resolution was unanimously adopted by the Disarmament Commission that called for "continued efforts to be made for the earliest possible continuation of international negotiations" on disarmament. Despite this encouraging recommendation, disarmament negotiations remained suspended when the General Assembly convened in December.

UN General Assembly

Debate in the United Nations General Assembly was characterized from the outset by close attention by all delegations to the question of disarmament. Continuing to believe that an early return to negotiations represented the only chance of progress in disarmament, the Canadian Delegation submitted a draft resolution, together with Norway and Sweden, whose main purpose was to facilitate the realization of this aim. After consultation and discussion with a wide selection of delegations, a revised version of this proposal, co-sponsored by Canada, Chile, Malaya, Norway, Pakistan and Sweden, was introduced in the First (Political) Committee of the General Assembly on December 8.