

Finally, there were strong differences of view concerning the status of the UNSSOD I Final Document of 1978. Some participants refused to accept any language which, in their view, could be interpreted as constituting a derogation from the UNSSOD I Final Document. Others considered that UNSSOD III language should reflect new developments and trends and not be limited by perceptions in 1978.

### OUTLOOK

The manner in which the UNSSOD III outcome is interpreted by both governments and publics will largely determine its significance for the ongoing multilateral ACD process. There is need to ensure that the natural response of frustration and disappointment does not lead to prolonged bitterness and recrimination.

It is well to remember that the Special Session was not an isolated event but rather one phase in a long-established, continuing and diversified process. With or without an agreed document, special sessions perform an invaluable communication function, not only between and among governments, but between governments and their respective publics. A special session inevitably registers the central political realities, both current and prospective, that characterize the international ACD process at a given moment.

The generally positive atmosphere which prevailed at UNSSOD III has been noted. Further, the strongly held differences of view and approach which persist within the international community were clearly registered in generally forthright, non-recriminatory ways. This "air-clearing" may, in the longer run, serve the multilateral ACD process better than would a bland, watered-down consensus document which projects a misleading impression of agreement.

A major Canadian objective will be to ensure that the UNSSOD experience leads to a broader acceptance of a pragmatic, step-by-step approach to the ACD process. Genuine progress toward a more secure and less heavily armed world hinges on such measures. This can only occur to the extent that current ACD realities (including national, regional and global positions and goals, and ongoing processes and differences) are objectively assessed and understood. There was considerable evidence at UNSSOD III that the merits of such an approach are increasingly recognized and accepted by governments from all regions and groups.