



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

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CANADIAN STATEMENT ON NON-PROLIFERATION

Statement by Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns, Permanent Representative of Canada, before the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, Geneva, February 28, 1967.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada has asked me to make the following statement on his behalf.

We have welcomed the recent bilateral discussions between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. on the treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, which we understand have brought those countries close to agreement. We look forward to the tabling shortly of that draft treaty and to its careful study in this Committee. Like every country represented here, and, indeed, every responsible member of the international community, we hope we are close to reaching agreement on what can be one of the most significant international arms-control measures of our generation.

The urgency and importance of a non-proliferation treaty is clear. We are at an extremely critical point of history, when the decision of one country to join the ranks of the nuclear-weapons powers could trigger an uncontrollable, prohibitively costly and potentially catastrophic arms race. This could be the last chance of preventing such an arms race.

Since the basic purpose of a non-proliferation treaty is to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, a treaty must provide that the control of existing nuclear weapons shall rest incontestably with the present nuclear-weapons powers and that states without nuclear weapons shall renounce the acquisition or development of nuclear weapons. While this is an inherently discriminatory approach to the problem, it is the only rational one. Indeed, in the short run, it is in the interests of non-nuclear-weapon states to renounce nuclear weapons and thus to eliminate the danger of nuclear warfare among themselves and to reduce the danger of smaller conflicts developing into nuclear wars into which the great powers might be drawn. In the longer run, of course, substantial benefits would accrue to all nations if, as we intend, the treaty contributes to international stability and to an atmosphere conducive to more comprehensive measures of arms control.

It is neither unnatural nor unreasonable that countries foregoing their option to produce nuclear weapons should wish to ensure that their act of self-denial should, in turn, lead the nuclear-weapons powers to undertake tangible steps to reduce and eliminate their vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons