



## Canada Pleased with Outcome of First Committee Deliberations at UNGA 41

The following article was prepared by the Arms Control and Disarmament Division of the Department of External Affairs.

At the United Nations, subjects relating to arms control and disarmament (ACD) are assigned to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). This is one of seven regularly constituted UNGA committees. The UNGA meets in New York from September to December every year. Since the UNGA is a deliberative rather than a negotiating forum, its principal function with respect to arms control and disarmament is to articulate the views of and convey advice from the community of nations. It does not have the power to compel member states to take specific actions. Nevertheless, the moral weight and public relations value of UNGA resolutions and decisions can often have a significant influence on international behaviour. Notwithstanding that the UNGA in plenary session gives final approval to all resolutions, the substantive consideration takes place in committee. It is therefore the developments within the First Committee that are most relevant.

Canada was pleased with the outcome of the First Committee's deliberations at UNGA 41, as the session was largely characterized by a businesslike atmosphere and spirit of compromise. This was manifested in a certain moderation of unproductive rhetoric and apparent efforts to steer a middle course. For example, a resolution sponsored by the Non-Aligned Members (NAM), calling for the cessation of all nuclear tests, moved closer in tone and approach to the more pragmatic Western resolution on the "Urgent need for a comprehensive test ban treaty."

The Canadian delegation played a particularly active role at the 1986 session. Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, Mr. Douglas Roche, was elected Vice-Chairman of the First Committee and was also a member of a special group established to rationalize the work of the Committee. In addition, as Head of the Canadian delegation, Ambassador Roche chaired the Barton Group — an

informal group of delegates to the First Committee which meets periodically to discuss developments. The group was named for its first chairman, former Canadian Ambassador to the UN William H. Barton, and includes the 16 NATO members, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Ireland.

Canada acted as lead sponsor for resolutions on "Verification in all its aspects" and the "Prohibition of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes" (FIZZ). Canada regards verification as a crucial requirement for meaningful progress in arms control and disarmament and devotes considerable effort and resources to the improvement of verification techniques and to the strengthening of international support for the concept. As a result of extensive Canadian lobbying and the willingness of several interested delegations to compromise, the Canadian verification resolution was adopted by consensus with, for the first time, two East bloc delegations agreeing to co-sponsor. The resolution provides *inter alia* that the subject of verification will be included for in-depth study on the agenda of the UN Disarmament Commission. As in past years, Canada's resolution on fissionable material was adopted by a large majority (120-1 (France)) with six abstentions.

Significant progress was made at UNGA 41 with respect to the achievement of an increasingly practical and realistic approach to a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT). The realization of an effective CTBT remains a fundamental Canadian arms control objective. Canada resumed co-sponsorship of a resolution on the subject which *inter alia* urges the Conference on Disarmament to commence practical work on a CTBT, with the cooperation of the nuclear weapon states. It was adopted in the First Committee by a solid margin of 117-1 (France) with 16 abstentions. The USA moved from a negative vote the previous year to an abstention. A competing NAM resolution on the subject, although more moderate in tone than similar NAM resolutions in previous ses-

sions, failed to secure the same level of support. Canada also took particular interest in the resolutions relating to chemical weapons and to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The "traditional" resolution on chemical weapons, for which Canada and Poland alternate as lead sponsors (Poland had the lead this year), again achieved consensus, with a useful change to incorporate the question of "use" in the operative paragraph referring to the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. On outer space, Canada was pleased that a modified NAM resolution was adopted in committee by a large majority, with no negative vote (130-0-1(USA)).

UNGA 41 voting statistics reveal some interesting facts. Sixty-seven arms control and disarmament resolutions were adopted by the First Committee, an increase of only one over 1985. Canada believes that a reduction in the number of resolutions would enhance the impact of the Committee's decisions, and is thus encouraged that the high proliferation rate of past years was held in check.

Canada supported 45 resolutions, that is 67 per cent of the total number adopted by the Committee, and co-sponsored 12 of these. This is the highest proportion of resolutions supported by Canada in recent years. By the same token, Canada opposed a smaller proportion (9) at UNGA 41 while the rate of Canadian abstentions (13) declined marginally. With regard to those resolutions which came to a vote, Canada's voting pattern was closest to that of the Benelux states (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), West Germany, and Italy as well as Iceland, Japan and New Zealand.

The Canadian Government will turn its attention next to the implementation of the relevant arms control and disarmament resolutions within the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission, hoping to build on the progress achieved at UNGA 41.