

NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS

Extract from a speech delivered in the House of Commons,
March 23, 1976
by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,
The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen,
on Nuclear Proliferation

We have recently completed a series of meetings with other nuclear suppliers in an effort to improve our system of international safeguards.

International standards, as honourable members will realize, are not static. They have been in evolution since the first agreements for co-operation in the peaceful application of nuclear energy were concluded in the 1950s. The trend in safeguards evolution has been one toward increased stringency both in the legal commitments and verification mechanisms which are required.

The most significant development, of course, that has taken place in the evolution of the safeguards system was the entry into effect of the non-proliferation treaty in 1970. Nuclear suppliers, who have certain generally defined obligations under the N.P.T., met for a number of years in order to define these obligations to a satisfactory working level. In August, 1974, countries that shared or were about to share these obligations, including the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R., the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Canada, reached a basic consensus, one which was notified to the International Atomic Energy Agency on August 22 of that year, setting out their interpretation in some detail.

The policy of the countries which accepted this consensus required, as a minimum, that in transfers of certain nuclear equipment and materials to non-nuclear weapons states not party to the N.P.T. the safeguards system of the I.A.E.A. applicable to individual projects be applied. The participating countries, which were later joined by others, also stated an undertaking by the recipient not to use the supplied items for any explosive or other non-peaceful purposes as a prerequisite for the transfer. Recognizing the non-proliferation treaty as the keystone for international safeguards, Canada participated in these discussions and accepted the norms which were already consistent with Canadian policy as a basic standard for the safeguards it required. We did, as a country, go further than this particular consensus to which I refer; we went beyond the breadth of the "trigger list", which is fully outlined in the background paper that I tabled in the House on January 30. The details of that policy are clearly set out in that document.