

The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark spoke in a similar vein when he addressed the U.N. General Assembly on September 25:

"Multilateral efforts, led and encouraged by the medium and smaller-sized countries, can help improve the atmosphere, and can put specific, workable ideas on the agenda."

The multilateral forums are living proof that in the nuclear age global politics is no longer the exclusive purview of the superpowers. The nuclear arms race threatens every nation and individual on this planet -- all nations have the right to speak out in defence of their future.

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As a focal point for international relations, it is not surprising that the major multilateral arms control and disarmament forums have emerged from the U.N. system itself.

The United Nations has stood by the goal, adopted in 1959, of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. A number of limited agreements for arms control have been achieved through U.N. initiatives -- such as the Antarctic Treaty, the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 (UNSSOD I), the 149 participating nations adopted, by what has been called an "historic consensus" a 129-paragraph Final Document containing a Program of Action which listed measures intended to be implemented "over the next few years."

But no progress has been made in achieving agreements since then. The fault lies not with the U.N. as such but with those governments that use confrontation rather than cooperation. The words at the heart of the Final Document must not be forgotten: "Mankind is confronted with a choice: we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation." Multilateral work for disarmament must go on.

U.N. First Committee

The First Committee of the U.N. General Assembly, which deals with political and security matters, has an agenda comprising the entire range of arms control and disarmament questions. The First Committee is a deliberative body and prepares recommendations and draft resolutions which are then submitted to the General Assembly for adoption on the basis of majority vote. Of all the activities of the United Nations, those of the General Assembly attract the most public attention.