

Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. Stemming the spread of nuclear weapons is one of the most important challenges facing the world. This challenge was addressed at the Moscow Nuclear Safety and Security Summit in April where participants reaffirmed the fundamental importance of strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), concluding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and elaborating the Fissile Material Cut-Off Convention.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Canada believes that the international community must work towards having all countries ratify the NPT. Ratified by all but seven countries, this treaty is the main international instrument for curbing the spread of nuclear arms. At the NPT Review and Extension Conference in May 1995, participating states agreed to extend the treaty indefinitely. The countries which have not yet ratified the treaty include Brazil, Cuba, India, Israel and Pakistan.

The Moscow Nuclear Summit reaffirmed the fundamental importance of the NPT, including the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 New York Review and Extension Conference. It was agreed to increase co-operation to promote universal adherence to the NPT and to further strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system.

The NPT represents a compromise between nuclear weapons states (NWS), which pledged to "pursue in good faith" negotiations towards nuclear disarmament, and the non-NWS, which pledged not to acquire nuclear weapons. While the NWS, particularly the United States and Russia, have made considerable progress in this project (i.e., the two strategic arms reduction treaties — START I and START II), expectations are for greater reductions in nuclear arsenals. Among the challenges flowing from the May 1995 NPT review and extension conference are:

- continuing to encourage the remaining countries to sign and ratify the treaty;
- finalizing negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, under which all nuclear test explosions would be banned;
- starting negotiations soon on a convention to end the production of fissile materials for explosive purposes (known as the Cut-Off Convention);
- the establishment of nuclear weapons-free zones;
- further steps to assure that non-nuclear weapons states do not adopt the use of nuclear weapons;