

Can UNDC Make a Credible Contribution?

The 1993 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was held in New York from April 19 to May 10. The following are excerpts from the plenary statement by Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason on April 20.

The Disarmament Commission is a UN body of universal membership, which has as its mandate the focused consideration of a limited number of items. Its subject matter comprises issues that need more in-depth consideration than is possible in the First Committee, but that are not yet ready for negotiation in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

During the resumed session of the First Committee, this basic mandate of the UNDC was reaffirmed and support given to the ongoing efforts to enhance the functioning of this body. In particular, an earlier agreement in principle on a three-item phased agenda was confirmed, to ensure that the subject matter before the UNDC would have both an element of predictability on the one hand and flexibility on the other. However, while agreement was reached in principle, it was not reached in practice and the result is that our efforts to move to a three-item phased agenda with one item in the first, one item in the second and one item in the third and final year of consideration, have been put in jeopardy. We shall have to give careful consideration to this problem at the 1994 Organizational Meeting later this year in order to determine how we can get back on track. In particular, we may have to consider whether one of the new items — if and when they are agreed upon — can be successfully concluded in two, rather than three, years.

Turning to this year's agenda, as many speakers have already pointed out, we have a considerable amount of work ahead of us if we are to successfully conclude the items on "regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security" and "the role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields." Yet successfully conclude them we must if we are to demonstrate that a three-week meeting of the Disarmament Commission can make a credible contribution to the increasingly difficult search for

international peace and security in the post-Cold War era.

With respect to the time available to us, Canada has observed in the past that three weeks is far too long for a mere exchange of formal positions but relatively little time in which to reconcile broadly divergent views on complex and sensitive issues. This is why we have advocated preparations in advance of the session with a view to developing working papers jointly presented by countries with quite different perspectives on the issues at hand. And this is precisely what Canada and Brazil have tried to do with respect to the agenda item on science and technology. The result is a joint working paper on "the transfer of high technology with military applications" which we hope will help the deliberations of Working Group IV. This paper will be formally introduced in the working group itself. Let me now briefly set out Canada's overall approach to the science and technology issue.

We strongly believe that this item merits our close attention because it offers us an opportunity to broaden international agreement in a particularly difficult area of non-proliferation — the transfer of sensitive technologies. In Canada's view, we must find ways to ensure that technology developed for peaceful purposes does not find its way into the hands of those seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery. At the same time, the application of such technologies for economic and social development must be encouraged.

In Canada's view, the way to attain

both objectives is to make the commitment to, and fulfilment of, comprehensive non-proliferation norms or standards a *sine qua non* for the promotion of international cooperation in the transfer of sensitive technologies. Once this framework for cooperation has been established on a government-to-government basis, the way is then clear for the respective commercial sectors of the countries in question to pursue mutually advantageous arrangements.

The international community — whether it be in the context of the IAEA or the Second Preparatory Meeting of the OPCW or the ongoing work of the BTWC Experts Group — is engaged in a wide variety of efforts to develop global, comprehensive, effectively verifiable non-proliferation regimes to regulate the transfer of material, equipment and sensitive technologies that have the potential for use in research, development, acquisition or use of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The Disarmament Commission can make a tangible contribution to these broader efforts if agreement can be reached on guidelines that genuinely enhance the prospects for transferring sensitive technologies solely for peaceful purposes.

As a country that has conducted extensive research in the area of verification, Canada also hopes that the guidelines will support the strengthening of international cooperation in — and greater access to — disarmament-related technologies.

Canada has devoted increasing attention to regional disarmament and international security questions over the past year

UN Should Integrate Efforts

The following is an excerpt from the March 8 statement of Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason to the resumed session of the First Committee in New York.

The UN cannot hope — over the longer-term — to reduce the time it devotes to crisis management if it does not expend some considerable effort on nurturing workable mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes long before they reach the crisis stage. This is conflict prevention in its most fundamental sense. The regional activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) should be seen as an integral part of the early warning apparatus of the UN. Likewise, the arms control database, including the arms register, should be seen as part of the arsenal of information, techniques and expertise that the UN can call upon in its early warning, good offices and other preventive diplomacy efforts. In our view, the work of the ODA — and indeed of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission — should be more closely integrated into the other preventive diplomacy efforts of the UN.