

Canadian Statement to First Committee

The following is the text of the statement made by Ms. Peggy Mason, Ambassador for Disarmament, to the First Committee at United Nations Headquarters in New York on October 16, 1990.

We gather at a time of great hope and unprecedented expectations. The Cold War is over. The disarmament process between the superpowers and in the broader East-West context is unfolding at a pace that none of us could have imagined only a few short years ago. States that for decades viewed each other with mistrust and suspicion are now engaged in constructive dialogue and negotiations aimed at mutually beneficial cooperation and enhanced security for all at drastically lower levels of armament.

There is, I believe, a momentum in place that, with the continued commitment of all parties, can enable us to build on the results of ongoing negotiations to produce further important milestones on the road to disarmament, and to firmly establish the spirit of trust and cooperation among the states concerned.

Unfortunately, however, there remain difficulties and situations that impede our quest for a world whose citizens may feel secure from the threat of ruinous armed conflict. Particularly alarming is the recent and brutal Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, a sovereign member of the United Nations. In addition to the tragic consequences of the invasion itself, this blatant disregard for the most fundamental norms of international relations seriously undermines any efforts to reverse the destructive build-up of arms and achieve a just and lasting peace in that troubled region of our planet.

There are other disturbing trends that contrast with the positive developments in the East-West context. Canada is particularly alarmed at the unabated proliferation of modern weapons and their delivery systems. The introduction of chemical, biological, nuclear and ever-more sophisticated conventional weapons into regions, particular those characterized by chronic political ten-

sion, can only exacerbate regional arms races and, ultimately, threaten the future of the people whose interests they were intended to protect. In Canada's view, states in all regions where tensions persist must focus their efforts on negotiating resolutions to their differences and on seeking ways of building mutual confidence. Such a course of action offers prospects of genuine security for the peoples concerned. The acquisition of new and sophisticated weapons, on the other hand, offers only a costly arms race and increases the risk of death and destruction.

In this regard, in his statement to the 45th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 26th last, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, underscored the importance of the parties to the conventional force reduction talks in Europe taking steps to ensure that weapons affected by that agreement not end up as contributions to potential conflicts elsewhere in the world.

In Canada's view, if this Committee is to fulfil its unique and irreplaceable role, it must, in the coming weeks, take into full account the realities, both positive and negative, to which I have referred. More specifically, my delegation would expect our deliberations to appropriately recognize the important progress that is currently taking place in the fields of arms control and of disarmament. But given that much remains to be done, we should also encourage the states concerned to redouble their efforts towards the early conclusion of even more dramatic measures. Equally, we should seek to stimulate considera-



Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason (centre) with Mr. Jai Pratap Rana, Chairman of the First Committee (left) and Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, Secretary of the First Committee (right) at UNGA 45.

tion of arms control and disarmament measures in areas where substantial progress has yet to be made.

I wish to briefly elaborate on Canada's perspective regarding some recent developments in arms control and disarmament negotiations.

Canada commends the perseverance demonstrated by the United States and the Soviet Union in negotiating a START treaty that will substantially reduce their arsenals of strategic nuclear weapons. The forthcoming signing and implementation of this treaty will represent a significant achievement in the process towards nuclear disarmament. Canada welcomes the commitment of both sides to follow up the START I treaty with negotiations on a START II treaty that would further cut the superpowers' nuclear arsenals.

On nuclear testing, Canada welcomes the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union have concluded verification protocols to the 1974 and 1976 treaties and that these two agreements will soon be ratified. While this step, in the eyes of many, was overdue, we believe that it represents an important basis upon which further restrictions on nuclear testing can be negotiated. In his