

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

by Geoffrey Pearson

This conference comes, I hope, at an opportune time. There are signs of real progress in disarmament negotiations, both at the level of the superpowers and in multilateral negotiations on chemical weapons. There is hope that further measures for regional stability in Europe can be worked out, including some reduction in levels of forces. Verification of agreements is less of an issue than it was.

Yet, paradoxes remain. At the recent UN conference on Disarmament and Development, states agreed to give further consideration to reducing their military expenditures, to re-allocating any savings to socio-economic development, and to reviewing issues related to the conversion of military industry to civilian production. Yet there is little evidence that these good intentions are anything more than that. In fact, global military expenditures, according to the Final Document of the same conference, are increasing faster in the 1980s than during the 1970s and are 20 times as large as all ODA to developing countries. The Document makes only one brief reference to arms transfers and says nothing about how to limit them, except possibly by making more information available.

Yet we know from other sources that while there was a substantial decline in the arms imports of developing countries in 1985, these still accounted for 80 percent of the total. Seven of the top 20 military powers measured by military spending are developing countries. But let it be noted as well that while Canada spent more in 1984 for military purposes than all but 14 other countries, we place only 27th, according to American figures, on the arms export table.

It is our hope that the report of this conference will help to clarify the reasons for some of the trends and apparent contradictions just noted. In a world of 160 or more sovereign states, greatly unequal in size, population and wealth, insecurity and therefore military spending are bound to be a fact of life. The authors of the UN Charter sought to meet this challenge by establishing a system of collective security, not of collective disarmament. They thought of aggression as the cause of war, not arms. But in the absence of such a system, arms can and do lead to war, as well as wasting resources. Formal or informal rules, regional or global, are urgently needed to control their sale and use. This issue is of growing concern to Canadians, and that is why we have organized this conference.