

Canada Increases Chemical Controls

Although the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibits the use in war of chemical and biological weapons, it does not prohibit their production and stockpiling. This gap has been partially filled by the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which completely bans biological and toxin weapons. In addition, negotiations have been underway since 1984 at the Conference on Disarmament to achieve a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons (CW). Canada plays an active role in these negotiations and, although certain problems remain, we are optimistic that the desired result is achievable in the not-too-distant future.

During the last few years, however, Canada and others have had to address the problem of what can be done immediately to stop the proliferation of CW in view of an increased interest on the part of some countries — most notably Iraq — to acquire them. There have been few means at our disposal to ensure that chemicals having legitimate and widespread commercial applications would not be diverted to the production of CW. Nevertheless, there has been growing international support for the view that the available means be exploited and improved as much as possible to present additional obstacles to proliferation.

Since 1985 Canada has participated in the 20-member, informal "Australia Group," in which countries examine ways to harmonize their national policies in addressing their common concern about CW proliferation. As a result, Canada controls the export of 14 chemical precursors under Item 5301 of the Export Control List. At the last meeting of the Australia Group, the majority of participants — including Canada — agreed that all 50 identified CW precursors should be under strict export controls. Canada has drafted the necessary regulations and expects to have controls covering the additional chemicals in place by May 1991.

Most of the 50 identified chemical weapon precursors are not manufactured in Canada. There will thus be minimal direct impact on Canadian trade as a result of these added control measures. From a Canadian perspective, the primary reason for maintaining controls over all identified chemicals is to ensure that such chemicals produced elsewhere are not exported from a country of manufacture through Canada to a third country.

For further information, contact the Export Controls Division of EAITC at 613-996-2387 and request the pamphlet entitled "Chemical Weapons: Be Vigilant."

Conference Looks at Strengthening the BTWC

A conference held from February 6 to 8 in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, brought together officials, defence scientists, disarmament experts and academics to explore ways and means of strengthening the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). The conference host — the Government of the Netherlands — sought a free-ranging discussion of ideas for improving the confidence-building measures that are presently politically-binding on parties to the BTWC. In addition, it encouraged participants to consider further confidence-building measures that might be adopted at the Third Review Conference of the BTWC, to be held in Geneva from September 9 to 27. Legally-binding verification measures, which the BTWC lacks, were also discussed.

The conference was, in the best sense of the word, a "brainstorming" session, in which participants put aside official positions to remain receptive to new ideas that might provide the basis for further policy development in the run-up to the Review Conference. The unstated assumption of all present was that opportunity exists to strengthen the BTWC from within — that is, not through the potentially divisive procedure of treaty amendment but through expanding existing provisions or adding, through agreed protocols or politically-binding declarations, further commitments to transparency and confidence-building.

Canadian participation at the conference was led by Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason. The following are excerpts from the informal Canadian discussion paper presented there, which does not necessarily represent the official Canadian position.

The objective of confidence-building in the context of the BTWC is to dispel doubts about the aims of research for permitted purposes on biological and toxin warfare agents and to ensure that such warfare agents are not being developed for offensive purposes...

Quo Vadis Open Skies?

The changes that have occurred in Europe since the Open Skies negotiations began in February 1990 have made the successful conclusion of a treaty more relevant than ever. As was recognized in the communiqué of the 22 leaders who signed the CFE Treaty in November 1990, Open Skies has an important role to play in reducing misunderstanding and mistrust in the new, multipolar Europe.

Unfortunately, differences over the Soviet interpretation of the CFE Treaty (see "CFE Update") have made progress on arms control difficult in recent months. Nonetheless, the NATO

allies continue to discuss outstanding issues of the Open Skies negotiations during regular, high-level consultations in Brussels. Their goal is to identify possible compromises that might be tabled once the negotiations resume in earnest. At the same time, it is recognized that the Soviet position will have to undergo fundamental changes before a truly "open" Open Skies regime can be achieved.

Canada remains committed to achieving an Open Skies treaty, which would provide for regular, short-notice overflights of participants' territory using unarmed surveillance aircraft.