

United Nations Convenes Meeting of Verification Experts in USSR

At the 1987 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), the Soviet Union offered to host a United Nations Meeting of Experts on Verification in Dagomys, USSR, commencing on April 12, 1988. Organized within the framework of the World Disarmament Campaign (WDC) and financed from the contribution by the USSR to the WDC Trust Fund, responsibility for the form and substance of that meeting was assumed by the United Nations. Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations, as Chairman of the Dagomys meeting, invited some 35 experts from more than 20 countries to participate in the meeting to discuss the conceptual issues and the technical aspects of verification.

Regarding conceptual aspects, the participants focussed on issues such as an overview of the relationship between verification of arms control and disarmament agreements and security, principles of verification, lessons from existing arrangements, institutional aspects and the human factor, and openness, transparency and confidence-building. The technical issues included topics such as multilateral aspects of the verification of underground nuclear explosions, scientific and technological progress in verification techniques, and whether there is a growing gap between advances in weapons systems and verification capabilities. The meeting also addressed verification issues relevant for the future.

Included in the group of experts who took part in these discussions were a number of ambassadors closely related to the arms control and disarmament (ACD) negotiating process in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. The presence of Mr. Lynn M. Hansen and Mr. Oleg A. Grinevsky, respectively USA and USSR representatives to the Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CCSBMDE), added a particularly positive flavour to the proceedings since that Conference



Delegates at the April 12-15, 1988 United Nations Meeting of Experts on Verification at Dagomys, USSR.

had succeeded in producing the Stockholm Document, thought by many to be a singular achievement in the field of multilateral ACD diplomacy. The successful implementation of the verification procedures included in the Stockholm Document combined with the successful conclusion of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) negotiation in Washington on December 8, 1987 contributed significantly to the positive atmosphere of the Dagomys meeting. As Ambassador Tessa Solesby of the United Kingdom remarked, there seems to be no disagreement around the table regarding the significance of verification in the ACD negotiating process.

Canada was represented at the Dagomys meeting by two experts in the concept and technology of verification. Mr. F.R. Cleminson, Head of the Verification Research Unit of the Department of External Affairs, was invited by the Under-Secretary-General Akashi to present a paper on the principles of verification in a multilateral context. Dr. Peter Basham, a seismologist with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, who acts as the senior Canadian representative on the Group of Scientific Experts (GSE) in Geneva, participated in the technical discussions

relating to the verification of a Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban (CTB).

The Dagomys meeting permitted both the conceptual problems and the more practical technical considerations of verification inherent within the global setting to be addressed together. This gathering of a relatively small group of specialists in the verification process permitted a more intimate exploration of the role and primary responsibilities of the United Nations deriving from the UN Charter, the UNSSOD I final document, and from provisions of existing agreements to be undertaken. The results of the meeting are likely to be of interest to a broad array of generalists as well as experts in the ACD process.

The most tangible and practical result of the meeting was the collection of the presented papers. These have been reproduced in the summer 1988 edition of *Disarmament*, a periodic review by the United Nations which is intended to serve as a source of information and a forum for ideas concerning the activities of the United Nations with regard to arms limitation and disarmament issues. It can be obtained from the United Nations, Sales Section, New York, N.Y. ■