

Little Progress at UN 1989 Disarmament Commission

The 1989 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) met in New York from May 8 to May 31. Discussions on various arms control and disarmament topics under the Disarmament Commission are open to participation by all 159 member states of the United Nations. The goal of the Disarmament Commission is to draft consensus reports on disarmament issues for the consideration of the UN General Assembly.

Whereas the UN General Assembly can pass non-binding resolutions by a simple majority vote, the UNDC is required to formulate its recommendations with the approval of all participating states. Some of the topics considered again this year have been examined for a decade. That progress on these items was once more absent at the 1989 session was cause for frustration among many delegations. During the closing interventions, several delegations requested that structural changes to the Disarmament Commission be examined to enhance advancement of the disarmament process. The lack of results at the 1989 session was in sharp contrast to 1988 when work on two topics, verification and confidence-building measures, was completed.

This year, the Contact Group working on a compilation of proposals for recommendations on "Nuclear Disarmament" and other priority measures on disarmament achieved agreed texts on two recommendations regarding the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) and Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START) negotiations and on conventional disarmament. However, 20 of 35 proposals for recommendations that were deliberated remain without agreed texts.

Consideration of the item "Reduction of Military Budgets" remained at an impasse over the voluntary or obligatory submission by States of the UN matrix on military expenditures. Informal discussions were organized by the UNDC Chairman, Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire, in an effort to find a compromise but to no avail.

Delegations involved in the debate on "South Africa's Nuclear Capability" agreed some progress was made during review of new text proposals. Advancement on this item is hindered by irreconcilable differences between delegations as to South Africa's actual nuclear capability and whether or not external assistance was available to attain that capability.

The Working Group reviewing the "Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament" managed to incorporate some material from the UNSSOD III Machinery Report in its Chairman's Working Paper. However, this paper is heavily burdened with alternate text proposals.

Examination of the "Naval Armaments and Disarmament" issue continues to be contentious. Discussions on this topic are held under the auspices of the UNDC Chairman as open-ended consultations because a working group cannot be established due to the objections of one delegation. The exchange of views on this topic between interested delegations reflected the considerable divergence of attitudes and opinions on naval disarmament and confidence-building measures.

Vigorous debate characterized the Working Group on Conventional Disarmament. Strong representations by delegations were made to emphasize many of the recommendations under consideration, including international arms transfers and disarmament and development.

Concern over the proceedings of debate on the "Third Disarmament Decade" led to the unexpected recruitment of Canada's head of delegation, Ambassador for Disarmament Douglas Roche, as Chairman of the Contact Group examining this item. Ambassador Roche produced a draft declaration which attempted to address the desire of some delegations for a concise document and others who wanted an all-encompassing arms control and disarmament manifest. Although consensus on the declaration was not forthcoming, the draft was preserved as a Working Paper for future reference. □

Change of Editor

Following this issue, the editorship of the Disarmament Bulletin will change hands. Mr. Paul Bennett, Editor of the Bulletin since July 1987, is being posted to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and will be replaced by Ms. Shannon Selin, former Editor of the Arms Control Chronicle of the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament (CCACD).

We hope our readers find our publication of interest and we welcome your comments on it. If you know of others who might benefit from receiving the Bulletin, please let us know. □

Canadians Inspect Czechoslovak Military Exercise

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Bill McKnight, announced on June 13, 1989 that Canada has addressed a request to the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to inspect a military exercise. Under the terms of the Document of the Stockholm Conference, agreed to by Canada and by Czechoslovakia in 1986, each participating State has the right to conduct inspections on the territory of any other participating State, within the zone of application for the confidence- and security-building measures described in the document.

Four inspectors from the Canadian Forces will travel to Czechoslovakia on June 14, 1989 to conduct a 48-hour inspection of a military activity notified by Czechoslovakia for June 12-16, 1989. This training activity will be a command and staff exercise. The tactical setting for the field portion of the exercise will be at divisional level with a partial deployment of troops.

Mr. McKnight announced that the inspection team will be led by Colonel Ken C. Mitchell of Montreal, who is the Commanding Officer of three Canadian