

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Group of Socialist States, to back the Soviet proposals that a special group of scientific experts be set up which would be assigned the task of submitting recommendations on the structure and functions of a system of verification for any possible agreement not to conduct nuclear weapon tests. If this proposal were implemented, all the facets of verification of compliance with relevant accords would be addressed in a purposeful manner. We do hope this initiative will meet with the unanimous approval of the Conference.

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There is no issue which has proven more controversial than that of verification. Even if it is not on our agenda as a separate item, it is omnipresent in our work. During my time, this issue of verification, a long-standing Canadian priority which we have regarded as the key to arms control and disarmament agreements, has gradually come to be universally accepted as the essential requirement for the conclusion of such agreements. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Mr. van den Broek, pointed out in his statement to the CD last month, "it is increasingly recognized that asking for on-site inspection" to verify a treaty with important security implications "is reasonable and legitimate". He went on to say that "the growing consensus on the need for strict verification holds the promise of progress with regard to arms control in general". It is stating the obvious to say that the Canadian Government fully shares that view. What may not be so obvious is that such a statement could not have been made four years ago.

As I pointed out in my statement last month, verification performs a series of central functions, the most important being deterrence of non-compliance, confidence-building, removal of uncertainty and treaty assessment. The success this year of the working group on verification at the United Nations Disarmament Commission, under Canadian chairmanship, in reaching provisional agreement on several verification principles, further testifies to the emerging international consensus on these issues. This has to be seen as progress. Thus while verification is sometimes portrayed as an obstacle in the way of a solution, for Canada it has always been a central part of the solution.

It is in this context that I welcome and acknowledge the importance of the statement made in this room by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Mr. Shevardnadze, when he said that "real verification" ought to involve "foolproof, indisputable, reliable and extremely strict and rigorous methods". The specific verification-related suggestions he made at that time in relation to chemical weapons, outer space and nuclear testing will be studied with care by Canadian authorities with these criteria in mind. I should like to come back later to the question of the standards to be sought in verification measures.
