



SSEA Addresses House of Commons on US-USSR Nuclear Arms Control Negotiations

On January 23, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, made the following statement in the House of Commons on the US-USSR nuclear arms control negotiations.

"For Canadians, no duty is more challenging than to contribute constructively to peace among nations. In a world threatened by the spread of arms, we are one country who, decades ago, chose deliberately not to acquire nuclear weapons. We had the capacity. We made the choice, not as a gesture, but as a practical contribution to the control of arms. That is part of the character of Canada.

One of the first acts of this Government was to reconstitute the Consultative Group on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs. On October 31, meeting with that Group, the Prime Minister spelled out six Canadian goals in arms control and disarmament:

1. negotiated radical reductions in nuclear forces and the enhancement of strategic stability;
2. maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime;
3. negotiation of a global chemical weapons ban;
4. support for a comprehensive test ban treaty;
5. prevention of an arms race in outer space; and
6. the building of confidence sufficient to facilitate the reduction of military forces in Europe and elsewhere.

A year ago, in a statement in Parliament, I expressed the Government's satisfaction at the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to resume negotiations in Geneva. The decision to meet again, and to expand the agenda to encompass the prevention

of an arms race in outer space and its termination on earth, was an act of confidence and statesmanship. These negotiations have been underway for nine months now.

As I said last year, we should be under no illusion that the course at Geneva will be an easy one. It will be long and arduous. We are encouraged by the signs of progress, in particular, the tabling last fall of detailed American and Soviet proposals which contained some important common features: a 50 per cent reduction of nuclear arsenals, limits on warheads as well as launchers, and sublimits on ICBM warheads. We hope that, in this International Year of Peace, the experienced negotiators of both sides will be able to enlarge significantly on this common ground. Agreement on an equitable formula for the radical reduction of nuclear forces and on the appropriate relationship between offensive and defensive strategies and systems will remain the key challenges.

We welcome the broad-ranging proposal issued last week by General Secretary Gorbachev and its reaffirmation of the Soviet Union's commitment to nuclear disarmament. That is the most recent in a long history of suggestions, by both superpowers, on how to achieve general and complete disarmament. In this context conventional arms, where the Soviet Union has an overwhelming superiority, will also have to find their place. The Soviet Union has the opportunity to address this imbalance in its response to the Western proposal, tabled in Vienna last month, at the talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions.

The Soviet Union does not address the issue of missiles deployed in Asia. But we take satisfaction from the fact that Mr. Gorbachev seems to be moving closer to President Reagan's 1981 zero-zero proposal on the elimination of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The explicit Soviet recognition of the importance of verification in the negotiation of

arms control is gratifying, as is the apparent movement towards long-standing Western positions on the need for on-site inspection. The exact nature of what the Soviets will accept in this regard will have to be determined. We also note potentially constructive references to issues before other arms control forums.

It is, of course, too early to offer more than this tentative assessment of the proposals. They contain some intriguing new elements alongside well-worn positions and some disturbing preconditions that could hamper negotiation. They clearly warrant very serious consideration, but there are also many aspects that require clarification in the ongoing negotiations. The real test of the Soviet Union's commitment to radical and verifiable arms reductions will come when it moves from the stage of public diplomacy to the confidential confines of the negotiating room.

The Geneva Summit and the decision to regularize this high-level contact improve the prospects for progress in arms control. Besides bringing leaders together, regular meetings build in an annual accounting of progress on arms control and encourage leaders to resolve issues which negotiators cannot.

Through the channels open to us, Canada will actively encourage the conduct of serious and constructive negotiations. The House should note the extraordinary degree to which the United States has informed and consulted with its Allies since the Geneva process was resumed. The Prime Minister's personal meetings and conversations with President Reagan provide a continuing avenue of Canadian influence on the Administration's positions on arms control.

In December, in Brussels, I convened a special meeting of Canadian arms control ambassadors to identify specific areas where Canada might contribute to practical progress. One instrument is to press within NATO for more frequent and focused consultation on the state of the various arms control negotiations and their implications for Alliance policies.