

Canada is interested in developing realistic policies aimed at enhancing the security and stability of the Arctic region but we have serious reservations about these proposals. Our installations in the North, which I described earlier, are all defensive. Proposals to demilitarize our North would imply that we abandon our defences.

Similarly, proposals to declare the North a nuclear-weapon-free zone or to restrict naval movements in areas such as the Norwegian Sea overlook the fact that the nuclear-weapons threat is global, not regional. Both East and West have massive nuclear forces capable of mutual annihilation - weapons on land, sea and air, all over the globe.

Some may be in the Arctic. Some may pass over the Arctic. But the threat relates to the East-West rivalry, not the Arctic. Declaring the Arctic a nuclear-weapon-free zone or restricting certain naval movements there would do nothing to reduce the threat from these weapons. It would be destabilizing for other regions.

Mr. Gorbachev appears to focus exclusively on the Western Arctic without discussing the Barents Sea or other waters adjacent to the USSR. He does not offer any detail as to how a ban of naval activity would be verified or enforced. Obviously, it would be inappropriate to discuss the Western Arctic and not the Soviet Archipelago.

Finally, Mr. Gorbachev's words do not reflect the actions of his government. Unlike Canada or the Nordic countries, the Soviet Union has an enormous concentration of military forces and weapons in the Arctic region.

In Canada's view, the best prospects for progress toward enhanced security in the Arctic lie in a balanced, step-by-step approach to arms control and disarmament. Our security in the Arctic is a direct function both of the solidarity and cohesion of the Alliance, the climate of East-West relations and progress toward balanced reductions of nuclear weapons.

The North is deeply embedded in the consciousness of Canadians. The North conveys images of breathtaking beauty and of climatic extremes. We have contradictory impressions of vast natural resources locked in an incredibly fragile environment. We seek both modernization in the North and the preservation of traditional ways of life. We seek to protect the precious ecology and beauty of the North, while making it accessible to those from the South.