

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Statement to the First Committee of the
United Nations General Assembly on
November 9, 1962, by Lieutenant-General
E.L.M. Burns, the Canadian Representative

The most important and urgent task which faces the international community today, as all speakers so far, I think, have agreed, is to reach agreement on disarmament. To put it in stark terms, if civilization is to survive, the nations of the world must disarm.

Recent events show how real and how imminent is the possibility of nuclear war. As the Prime Minister of Canada said on 5 November:

"To all who know how close we were to war and what war today would mean, it is evident that the nuclear arms race must be halted. The logic of the aftermath is grim but clear and permits of no other conclusion than that if the nations of the world do not take effective steps the next crisis may not permit the world to stop short of the abyss of war".

So the crisis which the world has just faced must give a new and a strong impetus towards general and complete disarmament and other measures which will reduce international tensions and sources of conflict.

President Kennedy wrote to Chairman Khrushchov on 28 October:

"I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament as it relates to the whole world and also to critical areas. Perhaps now as we step back from danger, we can together make real progress in this vital field ... We should work hard to see if wide measures of disarmament can be agreed to and put into operation at an early date".

And Chairman Khrushchov, in his letter to President Kennedy of 28 October, emphasized the wish of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to eliminate the tense international atmosphere and to continue efforts to achieve progress on complete and general disarmament and other matters leading to the relaxation of international tensions.