



Statements and Speeches

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TECHNOLOGICAL MOMENTUM THE FUEL THAT FEEDS THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

An Address by the Right Honourable P.E. Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, New York, June 18, 1982

The message Canada brings to this Assembly is not one of military strength or power. It is a message of peace which I bring you, a message which all countries, whether strong or weak, rich or poor, must make heard at the present time.

Only the deaf cannot hear the clamour arising all over the world against the arms race. In some countries, people's anguish and anger are freely expressed. In some others, people's voices are muffled by repression, but can still be heard by us.

In both cases, however, the message is clear. Men and women from every country are addressing a most urgent appeal to their leaders. They are telling us to seize the opportunity of the Special Session to start building a system capable of restraining the suicidal rivalry in which we are stuck.

As we contemplate the business at hand, we must remind ourselves that disarmament is not simply a technical matter; it cannot be isolated from the world context. If we want to know why so little progress has been made in the four years that have elapsed since our first Special Session, we can do no better than to cast our minds back to some of the events that have erupted on the world scene over that period — particularly recently — and to wonder what has happened to the Charter. As Chancellor Schmidt pointed out earlier this week, the Charter is international law. In adopting it, each and every one of our countries has made it part of our national law. The Charter lays down, as a prime requisite of world order, that "all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force" in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

The plea is made, from time to time, in favour of an undertaking of non-first use of nuclear weapons. I have no quarrel with those making the plea, who are serious persons concerned about the horrendous implications of the outbreak of nuclear warfare.

However, the Charter lays down that there shall be no first use of force — any force. This law binds all of us. I can see no need to re-enact the Charter. In fact, I can see enormous pitfalls in trying to diminish the Charter in one of its central affirmations by seeking to set an order of precedence among the various manifestations of the use of force.
