

the Council on the unsatisfactory situation in Laos from the viewpoint of one of the members of the three-nation International Supervisory Commission. I expressed our determination to continue to press for greater freedom of action and movement for the Commission, and I am happy to know that the three members of the Commission have joined together in their most recent report.

Too often in the past the Council has met in the shadow of crisis. Last December it met in the immediate aftermath of Cuba. The preceding year it was the wall in Berlin. This year we were faced with no immediate threat of armed aggression affecting the treaty area directly, and this fact was noted in our review of the international situation. On the other hand, the absence of war or the threat of war is a long way from the kind of peace we seek, and we were also forced to recognize that long-standing issues such as were named in the communiqué remain unresolved and are a continuing source of grave concern. The causes of the present lull well may lie within the Sino-Soviet bloc itself, although no one can predict how long this state of immobility in East-West relations may continue.

There was complete agreement upon the importance of maintaining continuous contact with the Soviet Union in an effort to resolve issues which might lead to war and ensure, at the very least, that neither side should misunderstand the intentions of the other.

In this connection, the decision in principle which has been reached at Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union to establish direct communication between Washington and Moscow was welcomed by the Canadian delegation as one which should help to reduce the risk of war by miscalculation.

That agreement was one of the useful byproducts of the 18-Nation Disarmament Conference now meeting in Geneva. As I had occasion to say in one of my interventions before the Council, the outlook at the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the test-ban talks is so far from encouraging that it would be unrealistic to slacken our defence efforts. But I noted at the same time that the implications in both military and financial terms of an unrestricted arms race are such that we simply could not relax our efforts to negotiate a balanced reduction of armaments and armed forces provided we can secure the proper safeguards. To abandon this search would be a counsel of despair, although I have no illusions about either the ease or the speed with which results may be achieved.

There was unanimous support for the continuation of efforts at Geneva to bring about general and complete disarmament by stages under effective international control and international safeguards. Even though real progress in the scaling-down of arms may be some distance away (and I believe this is the case), there are related areas, such as the communications link, which can substantially reduce the risk of war by accident or miscalculation and thereby contribute to the maintenance of peace and security. Similarly, on