

Mason Addresses First Committee

The First Committee of the 44th United Nations General Assembly began its deliberations in New York on October 16, 1989. The First Committee, which deals with political and security matters, has an agenda comprising the entire range of arms control and disarmament questions. It prepares recommendations and draft resolutions which are then submitted to the General Assembly for adoption on the basis of a majority vote. The following is the text of the address given by Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, Ms. Peggy Mason, to the First Committee on October 20, 1989.

One year ago, in his address to the First Committee, Canada's Ambassador Yves Fortier remarked on the degree of hopefulness being exhibited in this chamber and in the General Assembly. This hopefulness reflected the dramatic improvement in relations between the two leading military powers, the painstaking, but real, progress in negotiations toward arms control agreements, and the amelioration of regional conflicts.

Today, when we look back at what has happened since that time, we have even stronger grounds for the expectation and desire that characterize hope. Progress has continued on many fronts: in the resolution of regional conflicts in Southern Africa, Indochina and Central America; in the general climate of East-West relations; and, most particularly — reflecting and in turn encouraging the East-West improvement — in arms control and disarmament, the province of the First Committee.

Who would have predicted just a few short years ago that the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact would be sitting down in March of this year to begin a new set of negotiations aimed at enhancing stability at lower levels of conventional forces in Europe, encompassing all of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals? And that these negotiations would have an excellent prospect of coming to a successful conclusion within the next year? Who would have predicted, in those early, dark days of the Stockholm

Conference, that the thirty-five states members of the CSCE would soon be negotiating a second round of confidence- and security-building measures, building on those eventually agreed at Stockholm, which continue to be so successfully implemented. These two sets of negotiations in Vienna have the potential to bring about a remarkable, positive and, we hope, lasting transformation of East-West security relations.

Multilateral process must not lag behind

On the issue of nuclear weapons, the United States and Soviet Union continue to make significant progress. Canada was particularly encouraged by the movement last month toward abandonment of the linkage between research on strategic defence and progress on strategic nuclear arms control. Canada also welcomes the advances the two countries are making toward ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty.

In addition, in their bilateral negotiations, the United States and the Soviet Union have made strides toward the elimination of chemical weapons, strides that Canada hopes will accelerate progress in the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

In East-West negotiations, including negotiations between the two super-powers, progress over this past year has been sizable and rapid. We should not assume that it has been easy or foreordained. It has been, rather, a reflection of that recipe for success that the Canadian representative suggested in his address to this Committee last year: patience, persistence and realism. It has been the result of pragmatic approaches, of a willingness to be flexible, a willingness to seriously entertain ideas previously thought unthinkable. There is perhaps no better example of this than the readiness now to begin negotiations to create "Open Skies" over the territories of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, an idea that was rejected out-of-hand when it was first put forward by President Eisenhower thirty-four years ago.

The "Open Skies" concept, if agreed to, would have the effect of opening the territory of North America, Europe and the Soviet Union to virtually unrestricted aerial surveillance. It would mark an unprecedented openness in military relations. It would symbolize a nation's commitment to transparency and provide a clear, unequivocal sign that its intentions are not aggressive. An "Open Skies" regime could lead to an important increase in confidence between East and West. It could also contribute to the verification of specific arms control agreements, including an eventual agreement on conventional forces in Europe. Canada is looking forward to hosting the first stage of a conference to address the issues related to "Open Skies."

I referred a moment ago to the essential ingredients for success in arms control: patience, persistence and realism. On the East-West front it appears that this combination has begun to show results. However, on other fronts, the multilateral process — including the work of the UN — often gives the appearance of lagging behind.

Canada was disappointed, like many of you, by the inability last year of UNSSOD III to arrive at a final document. We were also disappointed this year when the UN Disarmament Commission failed to reach agreement on any of its agenda items. In the Conference on Disarmament, we very much regret that it has not yet proved possible to reach agreement on the basis for a mandate that would allow the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on a nuclear test ban. There is much constructive work that can be done there. As East-West negotiations move forward so clearly, some multilateral forums risk acquiring the epithet of "too much talk and too little action."

If it were only a question of uncomplimentary labels we could perhaps continue unperturbed. Unfortunately, East-West negotiations do not operate in a vacuum. A secure and peaceful world, at greatly reduced levels of armaments, cannot be realized until all are prepared to participate in the process of achieving it. The multilateral arms control process can work; we see that in the negotiations related to conventional arms control in