

APPENDIX

SPEECH BY HON. HOWARD C. GREEN TO DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

I begin my statement today on behalf of Canada by thanking the acting secretary general of the United Nations for the excellent facilities which have been made available. The presence of his representative at this table is of great significance. It emphasizes that all members of the United Nations are vitally concerned with the problem of disarmament. In my opinion, we should never lose sight of this fact in the course of our negotiations. It is obvious that the main purpose of the United Nations is to keep the peace. Of course, under present conditions, that means that disarmament becomes the most important problem of the United Nations, and that forum will always have the main responsibility for bringing about disarmament. There are several reasons why this conference has an unprecedented opportunity to make rapid progress toward agreement.

First, there is now an agreement on the basic principles of disarmament unanimously endorsed by the United Nations general assembly. For the first time there is a common understanding about the objective to be reached, and the guide lines which should be followed in working toward it. As a result, we are in a position to move quickly from a general exchange of views to a detailed consideration of measures which will actually stop the competition in armaments and bring about substantial reductions from the present levels. In my personal opinion the problem of stopping the development of more deadly weapons is perhaps more important than that of bringing about measures of disarmament, although of course both problems are of vital importance.

Second, the new negotiating committee is representative of all major geographical areas of the world. This reflects the fact that disarmament is not the concern only of the great powers, but of all countries, however large or however small. The presence at this table of the representatives of eight additional countries is, in my opinion, a major advantage. They will, I am sure, play a valuable role in avoiding the stalemates which have so often developed in past disarmament conferences. Also, the fresh perspective which they bring to the negotiations will assist materially in the search for early agreement. And may I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that the presence of these eight other nations has already been of deep significance as well as of great help to the opening phases of this conference.

Third, we had just ten days ago the unanimous finding of the United Nations committee on the economic and social consequences of disarmament that general disarmament, far from producing adverse economic effects, would be an immense contribution to the advancement of human well-being. There can surely be no doubt that the reallocation of even part of the enormous resources now devoted to expenditure on armaments would open up unlimited possibilities for the improvement of living standards in all the nations, whatever their social system or whatever their stage of development.

Fourth, past experience has made us fully aware of the grave consequences which will follow if we permit these negotiations to fail or even to lose momentum. It is now almost two years since the work of the ten nation committee was broken off. This period has been marked by renewed international tension and a nuclear arms race of increased intensity, of which the resumption of nuclear testing is the most serious aspect. An even more serious deterioration in the international situation will result if our efforts here cannot bring about rapid agreement.

Finally, the increasingly devastating power of modern weapons has placed a new responsibility on the representatives who are gathered here. The very fact that all of us around this table fully recognize the immeasurable catastrophe which would result from a conflict involving such weapons in itself provides new motives for meeting the challenge which faces us. In my opinion we cannot allow another failure to establish an effective system of disarmament. If we do not succeed on this occasion, the world may not be given another chance.

As far as my delegation is concerned, we have come to Geneva with the firm intention to continue working without interruption until a comprehensive system of general disarmament has been agreed. At the same time we hope and expect to see initial agreements reached with the least possible delay. This committee is obliged to report to the United Nations disarmament commission by June 1, and the peoples of the world will expect a substantial measure of progress by then. The time factor is of vital significance in our work, and we should at once start to search for common ground. This is a case where, as we say in Canada, time is of the essence.