

UNSSOD I

In 1978, the United Nations General Assembly held a Special Session on Disarmament, known from its initials as UNSSOD I, and it produced a remarkable Final Document. The 129 paragraphs contain an Introduction, a Declaration, a Programme of Action, and recommendations on the future machinery for disarmament negotiations. The most notable aspect of this Document is that it was approved by consensus, which means that none of the 149 member-states present was willing to express opposition. Some may have had reservations about some parts of it, but these were subordinated to what all agreed was more important, approval of a document which might be called a new charter for disarmament.

Reading the Final Document one can see that it is the work of many hands. There is a certain amount of repetition and an element of cut-and-paste, as if segments of various drafts had been incorporated in their entirety. Obviously, a good deal of horse-trading must have gone on. Yet it sets out at length and in considerable detail the reasons why disarmament is believed to be essential for the security and well-being of the world and how it might be achieved. The ultimate objective, of course, is general and complete disarmament, and the Programme of Action establishes these priorities for negotiations (para 45):

- nuclear weapons;
- other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons;
- conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects;
- reduction of armed forces.

External Affairs Minister Mark MacGuigan followed this closely when he set out priorities for Canada soon after taking up his present office. They were:

1. *"...to encourage continuation of the SALT process.*
2. *"...to promote the realization of a comprehensive, multi-lateral treaty banning nuclear weapons tests.*