

Grave strains will be placed on international stability and the risk of nuclear conflict will become greater unless more vigorous efforts are made to check the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan J. MacEachen, said today. He was speaking at the Conference to review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which opened in Geneva on Monday.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty, which came into force in 1970, has been ratified by over 90 countries.

Mr. MacEachen reaffirmed Canada's strong support for the Treaty as the best available barrier to an increase in the number of nuclear weapon states and called on more states to ratify it. He declared that "the Treaty clearly serves the interests of those very many countries like Canada that wish to avoid the moral burden, the dangers, the fears and the dissipation of creative energy and physical resources that would be entailed if they had to resort to nuclear arms in a world of many nuclear armed states".

Although the central objective of the Treaty is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to countries which do not already possess them, the Minister stressed that one of the Treaty's basic premises was the need for the nuclear weapon powers to halt the nuclear arms race. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the USA and the Soviet Union had promoted a climate of strategic stability and political détente between the superpowers. "But that is not enough", he said. "The talks have not halted the momentum of the nuclear arms race or achieved steps of actual nuclear disarmament."

Mr. MacEachen called for a comprehensive ban on all nuclear testing at the earliest possible date. "Perhaps the achievement of no other measure", he said, "would so help to support the non-proliferation objective".

Mr. MacEachen emphasized the need for international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, especially between advanced and developing countries. This, he said, was another premise of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"An exporter of nuclear materials and technology such as Canada is anxious to promote international commerce and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy", he said, "but only with assurance that such cooperation will be compatible with international security".

Mr. MacEachen announced that future Canadian bilateral official development assistance commitments for the financing of nuclear projects will be undertaken solely to countries that are party to the NPT and that ratification of the Treaty would be "an important factor" in reaching decisions on the provision of Canadian Government financing in the nuclear field. He also announced that Canada would increase its technical assistance in the nuclear field to developing countries which are party to the NPT both bilaterally and through appropriate multilateral channels such as the International Atomic Energy Agency.