

The high number of resolutions, reflecting the intense activity, gives the impression of accomplishment, but this is an illusion. Many resolutions cancel one another out, while others are little more than hortatory. On December 12, 1984, when the First Committee resolutions were being funnelled through the General Assembly, Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar took the extraordinary step of mounting the podium to voice his alarm at the paralysis:

“Discussions have taken on a life of their own. All too often it seems as if the players are only moving their lethal pawns in a global chess game.”

Among the most prominent in the plethora of resolutions are those that deal with the questions of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Chemical Weapons, Outer Space and a freeze on nuclear weapons.

In Canada, most public attention seems to have been fixed on the three U.N. resolutions which called for a comprehensive freeze on the production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons. Expressing the fear and genuine frustration that the pace of arms control negotiations was too slow compared to the continuous upward momentum of the nuclear arms race, many nations argued that the superpowers should freeze at existing levels of armaments and then negotiate reductions. While the idea of a comprehensive nuclear freeze has an attractive and almost compelling logic, in the present atmosphere it seems very unlikely that it would be possible to agree to negotiate a verifiable freeze. Some hold that mere declarations of a freeze are not a meaningful response to present dangerous levels of nuclear arms, it being better to negotiate reductions than to declare a freeze. Moreover, if comprehensive reductions were taking place, a freeze would lose its appeal. In voting against a comprehensive freeze, Canada was by no means accepting the present situation; in fact, Canada repeated its demand for reductions through negotiations.

There are other, more direct, ways of stifling the nuclear arms race – and Canada takes the lead on two major issues. These two steps represent specific “freezes” in their own right.

The first is the call for a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB). Since 1945, there have been 1,522 nuclear explosions, and 53 in 1984 alone. The Secretary-General of the U.N. has stated: