

CURRENT CANADIAN POSITION

Canada supports the principle of nuclear weapon-free zones whenever they are considered feasible and likely to promote stability in an area. Although the creation of such a zone is not judged a satisfactory alternative to having the countries involved ratify the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it can make a significant contribution to preventing the spread of nuclear arms and increasing regional security in the absence of NPT ratification. At the first two special sessions of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament, in 1978 and 1982, Canada supported the final declarations encouraging the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones.

The Canadian Government's stance remains unchanged. It is prepared to study such proposals on a case-by-case basis but it believes that to be effective, any proposals must meet certain requirements: the zone must apply to a defined geographic area; it must be based on proposals which emanate from and are agreed to by most of the countries in the area concerned, including the principal military powers; it must not give an advantage to any state or group of states; it must contain adequate treaty assurances and the means to verify that countries abide by their commitments; and it must not permit the development of an independent nuclear explosive capability in the area.¹

At the Forty-fourth Session of the UN General Assembly in 1989, Canada voted in support of related resolutions on the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Rarotonga, Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon-free Zone in the Middle East (adopted without a vote), Establishment of a Nuclear Weapon-free Zone in South Asia, and the Denuclearization of Africa (Part A--Implementation of the Declaration). Canada abstained on the Denuclearization of Africa (Part B--Nuclear Capability of South Africa), on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and on a Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic.

As a result of Canada's NATO membership, it has always been opposed to the establishment of such zones in Central or Northern Europe or the Balkans. The Government believes that the establishment of zones in these areas would cast doubts on the effectiveness of the NATO deterrent and expose certain areas to the risk of Soviet attack, without making a genuine contribution to nuclear disarmament.

The Government does not support a declaration of nuclear weapon-free status for Canada. Although Canada does not possess nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapons are not stationed on Canadian territory, Canada is a member of NATO which, as already indicated, relies on a nuclear deterrent. The declaration of a nuclear weapon-free zone, it is maintained, would be inconsistent with membership in that alliance.²

¹ Department of External Affairs, Arms Control and Disarmament Division, "Canada's Position on Nuclear Weapon-free Zones." *Disarmament Bulletin*, (Summer-Fall 1986), p. 12.

² *Ibid.*