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"THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ARMS"

IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Integrated Report from Roundtables in Ottawa, Kingston and
Victoria - December, 1998

THE CONTEXT:

"The Future of Nuclear Weapons" was discussed at roundtables held in Kingston, Ottawa and Victoria during early December. These timely discussions coincided with the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels and the pending release of the Canadian Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade's report, "Canada and the Nuclear Challenge" (December 10, 1998).

International and Canadian experts from government and civil society (NGOs, labour, strategic studies academics) addressed a number of key issues at the three roundtables, including:

- * the NATO Strategic Concept Review
- * ballistic missile defence
- * the Non-Proliferation Treaty
- * Canada and USA relations
- * the role of middle powers
- * the future role of NATO
- * the elimination of all nuclear weapons - feasibility and desirability, and

* the increased threat of biological and chemical weapons

It was a complex and ambitious agenda. Nuclear weapons culture is currently undergoing transition and although some thought Canada should work within the existing US lead consensus, these roundtables confirmed support for Canadian leadership to pursue reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons.

KEY THEMES:

1. Canada's objectives and roles:

There was strong agreement at the three roundtables that Canada should continue to pursue the principle to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. Sound policies and practices toward that goal should be developed. Canada should support both strong, sophisticated principles and practices. According to Professor Brian Job, Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, "we shouldn't give up on one for the other (principles or practices). Canada should pursue intelligent change based on well-grounded policy development." (Victoria)