

It is, nevertheless, a situation of which we have had to take account. And we have taken account of it by attaching safeguards, wherever possible, to transactions in nuclear materials and equipment. Such safeguards are now a feature of most bilateral agreements covering peaceful co-operation in nuclear matters. At the same time, a system of international safeguards has been evolved by the International Atomic Energy Agency to apply to transactions conducted through it, as well as to transactions specifically placed under its supervision for safeguards purposes by member states.

I am convinced that the use of safeguards -- whether bilaterally or in the wider context of the International Atomic Energy Agency -- has played a direct part in delaying the development and spread of nuclear weapons. It has also, indirectly, helped governments to resist pressures on them to embark on military nuclear programmes.

But the use of safeguards is not universal in application. It seems to me, therefore, that we must direct our efforts toward closing this gap by making safeguards applicable on as comprehensive a basis as possible to nuclear materials and equipment entering into international commerce. To the extent that this can be done through the International Atomic Energy Agency, I am sure that international confidence in the system will be enhanced.

The partial test-ban treaty concluded two years ago is another step we have taken towards halting the spread of nuclear weapons. Its extension, accompanied by acceptable arrangements for verification, to include underground testing would help to consolidate progress in that direction. Recent advances in the technique of seismic recording and analysis encourage me to believe that the technical capability to distinguish at long distance between earthquake signals and those of an underground explosion will shortly prove to have been significantly improved. I am hopeful that on that basis, and provided the need for at least some "on-site" inspection can once again be accepted in principle by all concerned, it may be possible to arrive at a comprehensive test-ban agreement which would command general support.

The more comprehensive application of safeguards to transactions in nuclear materials and equipment and the extension of the partial test-ban treaty to cover underground tests would each represent an important advance along the path of containing the spread of nuclear weapons. Even taken together, however, they would be unlikely to prove adequate to the task of effectively dissuading additional states from manufacturing or otherwise endeavouring to acquire control of nuclear weapons.

It is true that, with the passage of time, it has become clear that the nuclear powers themselves have no intention of allowing their nuclear weapons to contribute to the creation of further independent nuclear capabilities. From their point of view such a development would, at best, serve only to complicate the strategic picture. At worst, it could upset the nuclear balance.