

Security the key

At this point I want to make it clear that our support for the maintenance of forces sufficient to deter aggression and defend the NATO area is entirely consistent with our commitment to a vigorous arms control and disarmament policy. Indeed, the two policies are more than consistent; they complement and support each other, forming a coherent whole. They serve the same goal of enhancing security and preserving peace. Security is the key. For only on a basis of undiminished security can nations be expected to accept limitations on the numbers and quality of their weapons. And only on such a basis can they be brought to consider mutual and balanced reductions of their armed forces.

It is against this background of a balanced security policy that Canadian interests and efforts in disarmament at UNSSOD II should be viewed. It was against such a background that the Prime Minister proposed, at the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978, a strategy of suffocation which called for the negotiation of verifiable agreements by the nuclear powers on its four elements. The proposal addressed the problem of vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. The problem remains, as does the validity of the concept.

I have thus far talked about nuclear issues which are among the priorities of Canadian arms control and disarmament policy, which I set out in 1980. I want now to turn to another priority: a ban on chemical weapons.

Chemical weapons

The Committee on Disarmament, the multilateral negotiating body in Geneva, has given increased attention to this subject in the past two years by establishing a working group on chemical weapons. It is mainly in this forum that Canada has and will continue to contribute its technical expertise. As a result of continuing Canadian research on defensive measures, we have the knowledge which enables us to offer meaningful suggestions on such aspects as the verification provisions of an eventual treaty banning these weapons. The fact that Canadian soldiers without protective equipment were the first to suffer a massive gas attack in the First World War has undoubtedly contributed to Canadian preoccupation with defensive measures. The subject of chemical weapons illustrates well the way in which the two elements of security policy overlap. Allegations of use of chemical weapons in recent years mean that the subject of chemical weapons is likely to receive considerable attention at UNSSOD II. Canada co-sponsored a resolution in the General Assembly in 1980 which led to the establishment of a group of experts to investigate reports of use and subsequently provided to the UN Secretary-General information on alleged use of chemical weapons volunteered by refugees in Thailand.

Conventional forces

Turning to conventional forces, I am sure that it will come as no surprise that their limitation is a Canadian priority. These forces account for a high proportion — estimated at 80 per cent — of military expenditures. We continue to seek mutual and balanced reductions in the conventional forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact confronting each other in the region of central Europe. We also seek agreement on
