

Canada Hosts Workshop of UN Verification Experts



UN Group of Governmental Experts on Verification at the Montreal workshop.

The UN Group of Governmental Experts on Verification gathered for a workshop in Montreal July 24-25, 1989. This Group of Experts, which was set up as a result of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 43/81(b) of December 7, 1988, is not to be confused with the Group of Scientific Experts (GSE) associated with the Conference on Disarmament. In Resolution 43/81(b), which was in large part a Canadian initiative, the UN Secretary-General was requested to undertake, with the assistance of a group of qualified governmental experts, an in-depth study of the role of the United Nations in the field of verification. In particular, the study is to:

- identify and review existing UN activities in the verification of arms control and disarmament agreements;
- assess the need for improvements in existing activities, and explore and identify possible additional activities, taking into account organizational, technical, operational, legal and financial aspects; and

— provide specific recommendations for future UN action in this context.

Twenty countries were selected to provide experts for the study, including Canada, the USA and the USSR. The experts act in their own capacities, not as representatives of their respective governments. The UN Group of Experts held its first meeting in February 1989 and chose as its Chairman Mr. Fred Bild, who is Assistant Deputy Minister of the Political and International Security Branch of External Affairs and International Trade Canada. This choice reflected Canada's leadership role and high international profile on the issue of verification.

Group is studying the role of the UN in verification

The objectives of the Montreal workshop were to provide, in an informal atmosphere, an opportunity for the Group to explore legal and technical issues relating to verification and to share with them some of the results of relevant Canadian verification research. The

Group attended briefings by Canadian experts on legal aspects of the role of the UN in verification (Dr. Howard Mann and Dr. Lucy Stojak) and on technical aspects of remote sensing from space (Dr. F.J.F. Osborne). In addition, the Group visited Spar Aerospace Ltd.'s satellite production facilities at Ste. Anne-Bellevue, Quebec.

The workshop was organized by McGill University's Centre for Research of Air and Space Law at the request of External Affairs and International Trade Canada. It was an excellent example of cooperation among Canada's governmental, academic and private sectors on the subject of arms control verification, and represented a fruition of the continuing efforts of the Government's Verification Research Program to foster expertise in verification in all three sectors.

After the successful conclusion of the workshop, the Group proceeded to New York to complete its second session. It is scheduled to hold two further sessions before submitting its report to the UN General Assembly in 1990. ■