



Statements and Speeches

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ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT THE MOST URGENT ISSUE OF OUR TIMES

Statement by Mr. J. Alan Beesley, Ambassador for Disarmament, in the First Committee Debates on Disarmament of the Thirty-Seventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 3, 1982

...The most pressing issue of our times is arms control and disarmament. It is at once the most serious, the most controversial and the most urgent. The amount of activity in this field, amongst nations, and across a broad range of public opinion has been a major theme of this year. One can point to other years when agreements were concluded, signed and ratified. While 1982 has not been such a year, it nevertheless represents a critical juncture in the arms control and disarmament process.

When this committee convened a year ago, there were no negotiations on nuclear weapons. This past year has seen the resumption of the crucially important talks between the United States and the Soviet Union on strategic arms limitation and reduction, as well as the earlier beginning of the related talks on intermediate range nuclear forces. It may be that our survival will depend on the outcome of these talks; our interest in their success is fundamental and, indeed, progress in talks on nuclear issues is in the interests of all, because all will be affected by their results and not only the parties directly concerned. Not surprisingly, the Canadian Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, emphasized in his address to the General Assembly on September 27, that Canada strongly supports these negotiations.

I should like now to turn to a number of issues on our agenda.

Nuclear matters

Nuclear test ban: At the second Special Session on Disarmament [UNSSOD II], Prime Minister Trudeau reaffirmed Canada's commitment to the achievement of a comprehensive test ban treaty as one of the elements in a coherent strategy for curbing the nuclear arms race, a "strategy of suffocation". In the multilateral negotiating body in Geneva, the establishment of a nuclear test ban working group is significant. We regret that it was not possible to agree on a work program for this group, but are confident that, despite the difficulties, work will proceed on real measures to verify an eventual test ban treaty.

We note the contribution of the Soviet Union in presenting a text on the outline of a test ban treaty. At the same time, we note that the Soviet proposal contains a number of elements which cause us concern. The question of a moratorium is one such element. Would a moratorium on testing simply be tantamount to agreeing to a treaty
