

Arms Proliferation: A Canadian Initiative

Mr. President, renewed efforts to design a comprehensive and effective framework dealing with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are also absolutely essential. The Gulf conflict showed that conventional arms, as well as weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, can destabilize whole regions. Since 1950, the world has suffered 125 wars which have killed 25 million people, almost all as a result of conventional weapons.

How many more conflicts, how many more deaths, how many more destitute refugees does the international community need before we apply the necessary political commitment to eliminating these threats?

Canada was among the first nations to call for definitive action. In February, our Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, characterized as insane the build-up of weapons that had taken place in Iraq. At that time, he launched an initiative which called for a number of concrete steps:

- universal adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its indefinite extension beyond 1995;
- immediate conclusion of a global, comprehensive and verifiable convention banning the acquisition, possession and use of chemical weapons;
- strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; and
- transparency of international arms sales, particularly by the establishment of a UN register.

We are, with others, moving ahead with proposals to address the areas of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. With respect to conventional weapons, transparency is vital -- not only for knowing what is happening in the arms trade, but also for building confidence and trust. A global arms transfer register that is universal, non-discriminatory and effective is long overdue. That register should include national inventories as well. And we must be prepared to act on the basis of that information.

We applaud the historic advances made over the past year in East-West arms control. We urge all parties to ratify and implement the Conventional Forces in Europe and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) Treaties as soon as possible; and then to begin anew to reduce unnecessarily large arsenals further.

We are not naive. Every country has a legitimate right to assess its own defence needs, and act accordingly. But no country,