



Comprehensive Study on Arms Control and Disarmament Verification

On April 14, the Canadian Government transmitted to the United Nations a comprehensive study on arms control and disarmament verification prepared in response to the UN resolution 40/152(o) dealing with verification in all its aspects. This resolution, co-sponsored by Canada, signalled a major breakthrough by requesting that Member States submit their views on verification and on the role of the UN in the field of verification.

Following is the text of the letter that accompanied the Canadian report to the United Nations Secretary-General. Copies of the report may be obtained by writing to the Editor.

"Excellency:

I have the honour to refer to United Nations resolution 40/152(o) entitled 'Verification in All Its Aspects,' which was adopted without vote on 16 December 1985 by the United Nations General Assembly during its fortieth session. The resolution called upon Member States of the United Nations, *inter alia*:

...to communicate to the Secretary-General, not later than April 15, 1986, their views and suggestions on verification principles, procedures and techniques to promote the inclusion of adequate verification in arms limitation and disarmament agreements, and on the role of the United Nations in the field of verification....

In accordance with that invitation, I am pleased to convey to you the attached comprehensive study on arms control and disarmament verification conducted by the Government of Canada.

This document provides a detailed analysis of verification, an issue which the Government of Canada believes has become the single most important element in international arms control and disarmament negotiations.

The importance of verification centres on the fact that an arms control agreement is essentially a compromise in which each party bases part or all of its national security on the undertakings of other contracting parties rather than on its own military capabilities. All such agreements touch directly on the most sensitive aspects of national security. Consequently, reciprocal confidence that all parties will adhere to their obligations is essential; the more so when such agreements are negotiated and implemented in a context of political suspicion and mistrust. Verification, in simple terms, is the means by which such confidence is gained.

A starting point for any discussion of verification issues should be acceptance of the proposition that verification serves functions that are essential to the long-term success of the entire arms control and disarmament process. This fact has indeed already been clearly acknowledged by the international community, most notably in the Final Document of UNSSOD I, paragraphs 31, 91 and 92.

There is thus an international consensus that adequate and appropriate verification provisions form an essential element in all arms limitation and disarmament agreements.

The functions to be performed by verification are threefold: deterrence of non-compliance, confidence-building, and treaty assessment. Verification is thus more than a matter of providing for a 'police' function. It should help meet the need to institutionalize in the context of relations among states the kind of accepted rules, procedures and expectations as those that govern the conduct of relations among individuals in all civilized societies. Such rules and procedures do not presume bad faith or malevolent intent on the part of others, but they allow for such a possibility and provide a framework in which unjustified accusations could be authoritatively rebutted, misunderstandings clarified and

resolved, and non-compliance objectively established.

In this connection, it should be emphasized that the verification process does not in itself address the issue of what can or should be done in the event of misconduct. No judicial function is involved. The political management of the consequences of demonstrated non-compliance is perhaps the ultimate, and most difficult and sensitive, problem in the whole arms control and disarmament process. The role of verification in this context is limited to providing, in the most comprehensive and objective way, data relevant to such behaviour. It thus can be valuable in limiting the scope for unjustified allegations and in providing a basis for reasoned and factually-based decisions by the international community in instances where non-compliance is demonstrated.

It has been contended that the emphasis on verification has been used as a pretext for impeding or avoiding progress in the negotiation of agreements. Similarly, it has been said that verification means are also used as a pretext for the gathering of intelligence unrelated to the verification task.

Each of these criticisms reflects, in certain measure, an area of valid concern: about the utility of verification research not linked to specific agreements; about the political motivation which may underlie varying approaches to verification issues; and about the broad implications for the entire arms control and disarmament process of perhaps excessive concern with the perfectability of verification measures.

Nevertheless, Canadian experience and research with respect to verification questions indicate that intensive study of the verification issue can not only allay many of these concerns but also facilitate the arms control and disarmament process. There are many initiatives that can be undertaken to prepare and develop a range of instruments — legal, institutional and technological — that could contribute to the potential for the verification of specific agreements. The work of the Conference on Disarmament's