

The UNDC has experienced many of the same problems that exist in other U.N. forums and has had difficulty in dealing substantively with its agenda items. At its last session, the UNDC achieved little in substantive terms, except a reaffirmation of the goals of the Second Disarmament Decade. Even perennial agenda items, such as the reduction of military budgets and the nuclear capability of South Africa, remain untouched by progress or movement of any sort. While there was some useful discussion on the role of the United Nations in disarmament, the session was characterized by a lack of urgency.

Nevertheless, the UNDC does have an important role to play in improving and strengthening the manner in which the U.N. deals with disarmament issues. Canada supports the UNDC and believes that if all member-states strive to play a more meaningful role in this process the Commission could make a real contribution to the deliberation of disarmament questions.

The Stockholm Conference

The Stockholm Conference, or as it is formally called, the Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, is a creation of the on-going 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and represents a unique approach to negotiating arms control and disarmament.

Proceeding on the basis of a mandate carefully worked out at the CSCE Follow-Up Meeting, which concluded in Madrid in September 1983, the Conference is "to undertake, in stages, new, effective and concrete actions designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security and in achieving disarmament."

The first stage of the Conference is specifically devoted to the negotiation and adoption of a set of mutually complementary confidence-and security-building measures designed to reduce the risk of military confrontation in Europe. These confidence-and security-building measures (CSBMs for short) represent a novel and largely undefined approach to East-West arms control and disarmament. While the mandate stipulates that the CSBMs are to be militarily significant, politically binding, adequately verifiable and applicable to the whole of Europe, the exact nature of these measures is left up to the Conference to determine.

Here the approaches of East and West are in striking contrast, the West favours a gradual building up of confidence through a series of concrete steps whereas the East prefers an initial declaration that confidence exists and its subsequent reinforcement with subordinate and limited specific measures.