

profound concern, in its closing statement, about the reluctance of some delegations to allow working groups to consolidate important areas of agreement in the form of a report that could serve as a basis for further progress at next year's session.

Ambassador Mason criticized delegations for refusing to acknowledge areas of agreement, even in the form of

UNDC is at a crossroads: danger of irrelevancy versus need for action.

general principles, when such agreement was clearly in evidence. The argument by some that nothing needed to be agreed upon in the first year of an item's consideration represented, in Canada's view, an abdication of responsibility. It resulted in UNDC failure to seize important opportunities to advance multilateral disarmament and to restore the tarnished reputation of the Commission itself. In Ambassador Mason's words to the plenary:

"In the past, when every aspect of the UN was frozen in the prism of Cold War confrontation, to have a constructive discussion of issues was a worthwhile goal in and of itself, and I am not suggesting that mere discussion is still not a very worthwhile activity. But now that action is possible, discussion — however constructive — is simply not good enough, not when the problems we face are so daunting and urgent, and not when our colleagues in the Security Council, in the Committee on Peacekeeping and in the specialized agencies dealing with humanitarian needs have already moved beyond talking and are acting together in the most sensitive, delicate and difficult of areas.

"In my culture, one of the quintessential symbols of utter abdication of responsibility is that of the leader Nero, who played the fiddle while his city, Rome, burned to the ground. During the crucial period when action could have been taken to stop the fire before it became too large, he did not act to stop it; he amused himself with pleasant diversions.

"While the flames of militarism continue unabated in many regions of this world, I ask what did we, the distinguished representatives of the 1991 session of the UNDC, do?

"Well, we pointed out in great detail the height of the flames. We exchanged a diversity of views on the heat generated by those flames. We identified in admirable detail the destruction being wreaked in various parts of the world by those flames, but when it came to agreeing on the most basic steps in combatting those flames, then the argu-

ment was put forward that there was simply no need to rush. We have two more years to agree on what type of fire-fighting equipment to purchase, who should pay for it and, above all, who should take the lead in actually beginning to fight the flames. Why all the rush? Why indeed!...

"At the end of the 1989 session of the [UN General Assembly] First Committee, Canada very reluctantly decided that we would no longer participate in the Ad Hoc Committee on the IOZOP [Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace]. We have not left completely, as some chose to do, but we are not participating.

"I believe that this was the first time Canada took such an action in a multilateral forum dealing with disarmament issues. The Canadian representative on that committee was dividing his time between discussions there, which have not advanced in some 13 years beyond a completely sterile and futile effort to assign blame to one group or another for every ill in the zone, and discussions in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping on how to make the UN response in this area more comprehensive, more timely — in short, more effective.

"As the gap between the sterile rhetoric of the IOZOP Committee and the ever-increasing, action-oriented work on the Special Committee on Peacekeeping grew, it became clear where Canada wished to focus its attention, given the resource and personnel constraints we are facing. Increasingly those resource constraints are forcing us to make difficult choices. But is the

choice so difficult when it is between form and substance, between making endless lists and agreeing to concrete actions?

"I believe that the UNDC is at a historic crossroads. One path points backwards and leads to irrelevancy. It is the way of Nero. The other points forward. It is not an easy road and it is one that cannot be travelled alone because the challenges that face this newly multipolar world are beyond the capacity of any one country or group of countries to solve alone. This new path of shared responsibility beckons to us all. Let us go down it together."

Canada and most other delegations represented at the 1991 session demonstrated which path they wish to follow. At the UNDC's 1992 session, Canada will continue its efforts to revitalize this body. We will vigorously press all members to allow the Disarmament Commission to assume its mandate effectively and to make a meaningful contribution to the multilateral pursuit of disarmament objectives. ■

UNGA 46 First Committee Starts Work

The First Committee of the 46th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 46), which considers resolutions dealing with arms control and disarmament issues, begins its work on October 14. The Canadian delegation to the First Committee will be headed by Ambassador for Disarmament Peggy Mason and will take an active role in the negotiation and promotion of several resolutions.

As in previous years, Canada will provide leadership, jointly with Poland, in drafting a resolution calling for the early conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons. This resolution will be particularly important as negotiators at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva are under intense pressure from their governments to conclude such a convention during the CD's 1991 session. A strong UNGA