

B. POLITICAL AND SECURITY QUESTIONS

1. DISARMAMENT

On November 21, 1978 before the First Committee of the General Assembly, Mr. G.A.H. Pearson, Adviser on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs commented briefly on, among others, the following subjects: the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the Comprehensive Test Ban, the cessation of the production of fissionable material, studies on questions related to disarmament, the reduction of military spending and chemical weapons. He also mentioned the "strategy of suffocation" outlined by Prime Minister Trudeau during the Special Session on Disarmament. The following paragraphs were extracted from Mr. Pearson's statement.

To prevent war and to maintain international stability, most members of the United Nations believe that they must be prepared to defend themselves, either singly or collectively. This means that unless and until there is a radical change of attitudes amongst peoples and governments, which we cannot realistically anticipate soon, the goal of general and complete disarmament is bound to continue to seem a distant one.

Deterrence has been an important, perhaps decisive, factor in preventing a global war during the past three decades, but there is no assurance that deterrence will continue indefinitely to provide stability if the nuclear arms race continues. The appearance of new, more accurate and more efficient systems of weapons may upset the present balance or create perceptions and fears that it will do so. At the same time, the proliferation of nuclear weapons could increase the risk of war by accident or miscalculation, as well as making arms control agreements more difficult to achieve and verify. In addition, new weapons can erode the viability of, and confidence in, existing arms control treaties. Continuing development and production of nuclear weapons is fraught with such dangers that at some point in the near future the factors weighing against the use of nuclear weapons may be undermined.

We believe there cannot be any long-term solution to the problem of horizontal proliferation unless the two major nuclear powers succeed in halting and reversing vertical proliferation, as they are pledged to do by Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Even in the short term, failure by the USA and the USSR to reach agreement to curb substantially their strategic nuclear weapons systems can seriously jeopardize the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. We know that the two major nuclear weapons powers are conscious of these realities; otherwise they would not be committed to seeking agreement in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. We understand, too, that the SALT negotiations deal with the vital security interests of the USA and the USSR and their allies, and that in these circumstances progress cannot easily be made. However, we must confess that we find the pace of these negotiations very slow in view of the vital interest that we all have in their successful conclusion. Canada reiterates its earnest hope that the talks will soon lead to agreement.

I wish to repeat here the views of my government on the Comprehensive Test Ban, which was the first of the four points outlined by my Prime Minister in his "strategy of suffocation" to arrest the dynamic of the nuclear arms race: