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NEW OFFICE OF ADVISER ON DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL AFFAIRS

In accordance with his statement to the House of Commons on June 30, the Secretary of State for External Affairs today announced the creation of a new Office of Adviser on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs within the Department of External Affairs.

The Disarmament Adviser will be Mr. Geoffrey Pearson, currently Director General of the Bureau of United Nations Affairs, who will assume his new functions in the autumn.

The Head of the Office will act as principal adviser to the Under-Secretary on disarmament policy, including nuclear proliferation, arms transfers, and negotiations taking place under the auspices of the United Nations and in other international bodies. The decision follows agreement at the 10th Special Session on Disarmament of the General Assembly on a programme of action on disarmament. The Special Session was held in New York May 28 - June 30, 1978. Two new bodies -- a deliberative body composed of all members of the United Nations and an enlarged negotiating body of which Canada is a member -- will be responsible for implementing the programme of action.

As an additional means of strengthening Canada's role in disarmament negotiations, the Disarmament Adviser will explore ways of associating Canadians who have special knowledge of the subject with his Office. A consultative group met twice with officials before the Special Session on Disarmament and some were appointed to act as advisers to the Canadian Delegation. The government also hopes to be able to encourage research and to stimulate public information activities in relation to disarmament.

The new Office will concentrate Departmental advice on all matters relating to disarmament within one place, and will serve as a point of contact for those interested in the subject outside the government. The decision reflects the view of the government that disarmament negotiations are at a crucial stage and that Canada must do everything it can to contribute to their success.