



Statements and Speeches

No. 80/23

DISARMAMENT PRIORITIES REAFFIRMED

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, on the Occasion of Disarmament Week, October 24-30, 1980

Disarmament Week serves to remind Canadians of the great importance the government of Canada attaches to the achievement of verifiable disarmament and arms-control agreements as one of the essential foundations of international security. The government views Canadian participation in disarmament and arms-control negotiations as one of the most important aspects of its foreign policy. As indicated in last spring's Speech from the Throne, "we must and we will, actively co-operate in international efforts to negotiate agreements on verifiable means of arms control and disarmament, and seek to rally others to a cause that is no less than human survival on this planet".

1980 marks the mid-point between the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament and a second such session scheduled for 1982. This year is also the beginning of the Second Disarmament Decade.

Despite the increase in international tensions since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there have been during 1980 almost constant discussions on disarmament and arms control, many of which Canada has participated in. Bilateral discussions between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. on banning chemical weapons have continued, as have the trilateral talks among the U.S.A., the U.K. and the U.S.S.R. on a comprehensive test ban. The annual session of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva focused this year in particular on chemical weapons, radiological weapons, security assurances to non-nuclear weapons states, a comprehensive program for disarmament, the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, and a comprehensive nuclear test ban. In March, a review conference on the Biological Weapons Convention was held in Geneva. The United Nations Disarmament Commission met in New York in May. The second Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference recently concluded its sessions in Geneva. It was immediately followed by the reconvening of the Special UN Weapons Conference which was successful in achieving agreement on limiting the use of mines and booby traps and some incendiary weapons. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks in Vienna have continued, and the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. began talks a week ago on limiting nuclear missiles in Europe. The First Committee of the UN General Assembly has also just begun its annual deliberations on disarmament.

As profound Canadian experience since 1945 has taught, arms control and disarmament is a long process. The international situation this year has meant that progress has been slower than might have been anticipated even a year ago. Canadian priorities, however, remain unchanged. They are:

- (1) to encourage the continuation of the SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks]
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