



Statements and Speeches

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INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF DISARMAMENT ISSUES

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, October 22, 1981

Disarmament Week this year is especially significant because it comes at a time when preparations are being made for the second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD II) to be held next spring.

The negotiation of verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements is a vital part of the search for international security. I have called that process a security imperative. Canadian participation in international efforts to negotiate agreements is a priority of Canadian foreign policy. The Secretary-General of the UN has underlined that the public "...must be actively interested in current negotiations if they are to produce results". Disarmament Week, initiated by the UN three years ago, draws attention to this public dimension.

Canadian support

The government is supporting efforts to encourage research and information activities on arms control and disarmament issues. Financial assistance is provided by a number of government departments and agencies to Canadian organizations for such activities. In the case of the modest disarmament fund of the Department of External Affairs, over 20 contributions were made during the past year and in the coming months, available funds are being channelled toward activities related to UNSSOD II. Contracts have included: the preparation of a Canadian bibliography on arms control and disarmament which will be distributed in the near future and a booklet entitled *UNSSOD II and Canada*, which is being distributed to assist those wishing to study issues likely to arise at UNSSOD II. In addition, Canada is assisting in covering the costs of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. Its report, to be issued early next year, will help to stimulate informed public discussion on the issues.

The *Disarmament Bulletin*, a semi-annual newsletter on national and international activities, has a growing distribution and is reaching more citizens taking an interest in complex arms control and disarmament issues.

The Consultative Group on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs, chaired by the Ambassador for Disarmament, bring together twice a year approximately 30 individuals and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The government has also undertaken studies. For example, the importance which Canada has attached to the subject of verification over the years has been reflected in three papers tabled in the Committee on Disarmament, the multilateral negotiating body in Geneva. They have also been distributed in Canada.

Canadian experts have participated in two UN studies being submitted to this year's

General Assembly: one on confidence-building measures; the other on the relationship between disarmament and international development. In the case of the latter, Canada is funding the preparation of a popular version of the report to be published prior to UNSSOD II.

The plans of community groups, non-governmental organizations and individuals for activities coast-to-coast during Disarmament Week are commendable. They will greatly assist in increasing public awareness of the importance of seeking limitations and reductions in the levels of armaments.