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# Statements and Speeches

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## ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

A Statement on October 27, 1977, in the First Committee of the Thirty-Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly by Mr. R. Harry Jay, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

In his address to the General Assembly on September 26, 1977, the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada stated that: "...no problem is of greater concern to the United Nations than disarmament, but equally no subject has more frustrated our efforts and disappointed our peoples". I recall also that in the debate in the First Committee last year I expressed a sense of impatience, frustration and profound disappointment at the continuing failure of the international community to face up more concretely and rapidly to the awesome problems that confront us in the field of disarmament. Disappointing as achievements have been up to now, when we come to examine the current situation we do find that there are grounds for greater optimism in at least three crucial areas. In these areas efforts have been accelerated and intensified, with the result that opportunities for major progress may at last be in sight.

These developments do not, of course, give grounds for any complacency. The task of nurturing these possibilities to the stage of fruition is bound to take time. This fact does not diminish but heightens our sense of urgency. As a result of the persistent efforts of the international community to enhance international security through arms-limitation and disarmament measures, we now are on a threshold of important developments. The success of this enterprise will depend on the intensity of the effort — particularly by all militarily-significant states — in the next few years.

### Strategic arms-limitation talks (SALT)

First and foremost, in terms of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the super-powers, the ongoing efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union to reach agreement on a series of further measures to curb, and then to reverse, the strategic-arms race are of crucial importance. It is the strongly-held view of Canada that these bilateral negotiations between the two major nuclear powers must, as their ultimate objective, endeavour to attack the problem in qualitative as well as quantitative terms — that is, seek to curb the technological-arms race, as well as limit and reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons.

A short while ago, the United States and the Soviet Union announced separately their intention to continue to be governed by the provisions of the now-expired SALT I strategic-arms limitation agreement. In order to preserve a measure of stability while negotiations continued for the long-delayed follow-on agreement, SALT II, which should be a significant first step in the actual reduction of nuclear arsenals. It is particularly important that the negotiations on SALT II, and on certain interim supplementary restraints, are now being pursued with renewed vigour.

No one who is aware of the serious problems involved in such negotiations, relating to

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matters of vital security interest, can question the complexity of the difficulties that must be overcome in order to achieve worthwhile measures of restraint with regard to strategic weapons. Nonetheless, if the momentum of the negotiations so painstakingly achieved in past years is not to be lost and the prospects of success diminished, Canada strongly believes that new, bold steps forward at the earliest possible date are desirable — even essential. At this juncture, it would be appropriate for the Assembly to leave the two negotiating powers in no doubt about the profound hope of the international community that these talks will soon result in the conclusion of SALT II, and permit progress to the third stage of SALT, which should lead to further and substantial reductions in strategic weapons.

**Non-proliferation**

The other side of the same coin is the pressing need to improve the international non-proliferation system, to strengthen safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to implement the Non-Proliferation Treaty more effectively and to re-examine the risks inherent in various nuclear cycles and processes. This task is all the more important because the world must increasingly come to terms with a growing energy shortage, and many countries are looking to nuclear energy as an alternative to conventional sources. In this field, Canada has had long experience, as a producer and a supplier, of both uranium and proved nuclear technology. We recognize the contribution we can make as an exporter to the energy-poor countries, both industrialized and developing. At the same time, we attach the highest importance to developing the most effective international system of safeguards possible in order to try to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and the capability to produce them.

This policy stems from concerns that go beyond commercial considerations. We have made clear that we are prepared to sacrifice potential gains rather than accept less-than-satisfactory controls. Canada has rejected the nuclear-weapons option long ago and our policy on safeguards is the logical extension of our concern, and indeed our sense of responsibility, regarding non-proliferation. Accordingly, in the case of its exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology to other non-nuclear-weapon states, Canada requires that such countries should either adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty or otherwise make a binding non-proliferation commitment and accept IAEA-administered safeguards on their entire nuclear program (so-called "full-scope safeguards"). In seeking from others agreement to such controls and safeguards, we are asking for undertakings that Canada has already, and willingly, accepted. We welcome the fact that a number of other suppliers have adopted a similar policy. It is our hope that this condition will become a basic international requirement, facilitating international co-operation in the strictly peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Canada also welcomes the international nuclear-fuel-cycle evaluation project, which is about to get under way on a broad international basis. We appreciate that there are legitimate differences of opinion on the question of the desirability of different means of utilizing nuclear resources and technology, but we hope that this international study will give careful thought to alternative fuel-cycles that avoid the use of plutonium and improve safeguards. In our view, the international nuclear-fuel-cycle study project warrants the full support of the international community. The plain

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fact is that, although countries such as Canada have been prepared to adopt rigorous measures at the national level, the international non-proliferation system can be implemented effectively only through a broad collective approach involving nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon, industrialized and developing, exporting and importing nations — all of whom share a common interest in avoiding the dangers inherent in nuclear proliferation.

**Comprehensive  
test ban**

As in the case of both SALT and international efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation system, there is also some basis for optimism with regard to the long-sought goal of a comprehensive test ban (CTB). Year after year, in this Assembly, the immense majority of member states have insisted on the importance of achieving such a treaty. Certainly we can feel particularly encouraged that serious formal negotiations have indeed begun involving all three of the nuclear-weapon states upon which the onus rests, as original parties to the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, to undertake such negotiations.

The views of Canada on this question have been repeated time and again. We have expressed the view that in this area it was incumbent upon the two major nuclear powers to set an example by agreeing to end their nuclear tests for a determined period of adequate duration, even if other nuclear-weapon powers did not immediately join such an agreement. The recent announcement by Foreign Minister Gromyko at this session that the Soviet Union was now prepared to envisage stopping tests along with the United States and Britain represents a welcome development in the Soviet position, particularly so far as it means that, as we have long advocated, progress on a definitive cessation of tests need not await participation by all nuclear-weapon states.

There are clearly difficult hurdles to be surmounted, involving problems such as verification, the scope of the agreement and the conditions for its entry into force. The pursuit of solutions to these problems will require time. In the seismological working group of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, Canada and other countries have already invested a great deal of technical effort concerning the contribution international co-operation in the exchange of seismological data can make to easing the verification problem. Canada welcomes the fact that the principle of such a data-exchange seems to be accepted by the participants in the negotiations. Moreover, we have already stated in the Geneva Conference that, in view of the lack of any convincing way of ensuring that so-called peaceful nuclear explosions do not provide weapons-related benefits, a comprehensive test ban should prohibit all nuclear explosions. Surely the utility of peaceful nuclear explosions is sufficiently doubtful that such uses of nuclear-explosive energy should not be allowed to impede the achievement of an objective to which this Assembly has already assigned the highest priority.

We trust that this essential trilateral stage of the negotiations will be carried out successfully within a reasonable period so that the Geneva Disarmament Conference will be able to begin the multilateral phase of negotiation of a treaty. We believe that such a treaty should be adhered to on the broadest possible basis in order to address the proliferation problem in both its vertical and horizontal aspects.

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**Chemical  
weapons  
convention**

With regard to efforts to achieve a convention on the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction, to which this Assembly has also assigned a very high priority, we note that this year there are much better prospects than existed last year. Negotiations are being pursued actively between the United States and the Soviet Union. We are encouraged by the fact that the two major military powers have recognized their special responsibility for taking the initiative of working out the key elements of a chemical-weapons treaty. As is the case with the efforts to achieve the basic elements of a CTB, there remains much ground to be covered in these negotiations. But perhaps it would be realistic to expect that the bilateral negotiations may be successfully completed in time for the Geneva Disarmament Conference to begin its work on the multilateral treaty before the special session of this Assembly devoted to disarmament meets next year.

**Reduction of  
military  
budgets**

Turning now to the question of the reduction of military budgets and an adequate reporting system — this is an area where efforts can probably best be pursued in a broad multilateral forum, because such reductions should be implemented universally. My country appreciates the extremely valuable work that has been carried out by the Secretary-General's study group, and supports their recommendations. The viability of reductions in military budgets as a means of progress towards real disarmament on an assured basis rests upon the development of a satisfactory means for reporting and comparing military expenditures. It also clearly requires a much greater degree of openness on the part of states in making useful information available. This is, in our view, an avenue that should be followed vigorously with the objective of devising a valid reporting system and adequate verification techniques to make military budget reductions a truly effective approach to disarmament.

**Special session  
on disarmament**

While reviewing, as I have been doing, the list of more-promising opportunities for progress that we now have before us, I would place particular importance on the special session devoted to disarmament, which is to be convened next May. Provided that it pursues its deliberations in a truly collective and co-operative spirit, a spirit that I am happy to note has prevailed throughout the sessions of its Preparatory Committee so far, the special session could and should provide an opportunity to reach a meeting of minds in identifying further avenues for progress in concrete arms limitation and towards more comprehensive measures of real disarmament.

Of course, such a broadly-based forum cannot itself undertake the negotiation of specific measures and treaties. These will require intensive efforts in the appropriate negotiating bodies, including particularly the Geneva Disarmament Conference, which we now have good grounds to believe may be about to enter upon a period of renewed activity and importance. The special session could also provide us with an opportunity for a broad reassessment of the problems and the opportunities and of the interrelations between disarmament, international peace and security, and economic development.

My country joined in the initiative for the special session; we are pledged to play our full part in it and to contribute to making its deliberations as fruitful as possible.

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**Collateral measures**

To round out my survey of developments in the past year I might also mention both the signature by more than 30 governments of the Environmental Modification Treaty and the successful completion of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Seabed Treaty. These treaties are, we all know, limited agreements that deal with only hypothetical areas of arms control. While they are peripheral to the central issue of disarmament, they are worthy of our support as desirable ancillary measures. Nevertheless, we should not allow the negotiation of such agreements to distract our attention from the need for other measures that will tackle the more urgent problems. Indeed, the scope for further collateral measures of this kind seems very limited. We now have the opportunity to negotiate much more significant measures, such as a comprehensive test ban and a chemical-weapons convention.

**New weapons of mass destruction**

The Geneva Conference has also given careful consideration in the past two years to the best means of preventing any development and deployment of so-called "new weapons of mass destruction" — that is, categories of weapons that might conceivably be developed in the future having effects analogous to the mass-destruction weapons with which we are only too familiar. Those deliberations have, in our view, tended to clarify the very serious problems of trying to address this matter on what I might call a broad generic basis. I think it would be fair to say that we have been left in a state of considerable confusion as to just what hypothetical, futuristic weapons such a treaty would be supposed to deal with. Any attempt to base a comprehensive treaty on such a conception gives rise to serious problems of knowing what could be actually prohibited and how to verify compliance with such prohibitions. We note that the Soviet Union has presented a revised draft, and some elements of obscurity that many states found in the original draft have been somewhat diminished. Nevertheless, the view of my Government, following the intensive study that has been given to this problem in the Geneva Disarmament Conference, is that there are very serious practical difficulties standing in the way of making the Soviet proposal effective as an arms-control treaty. In sum, we believe the soundest way to proceed is to consider specific agreements to prohibit, on a case-by-case basis, particular new categories of mass-destruction weapons when such specific weapons can be identified.

At the same time, we fully recognize the hypothetical element of risk a future development of such new categories of mass-destruction weapons might pose. We are, therefore, prepared to support a resolution that would call upon states to abstain from the development of new categories of mass-destruction weapons and would request the Geneva Conference to consider specific international agreements.

**Conventional weapons**

Without in any way diminishing the importance Canada attaches to these areas involving mass-destruction weapons, it is our conviction that the international community must begin to address the problem of conventional weapons, and the production and transfer of such weapons, which has been ignored for so long. In our view, the special session should take the lead in identifying avenues to be explored in this particular area. The problem of conventional arms, and the escalating transfers of such weapons, including the most sophisticated, is crucial to hopes for the achievement of comprehensive disarmament, or at least getting closer to it.

**Conclusion**

I have tried to identify some of the most important opportunities that at last seem to be unfolding before us, particularly in the areas of strategic-arms limitations, a comprehensive test ban and a chemical-weapons treaty. Because it relates, *inter alia*, to fundamental questions of nations' perceptions of their security interests, arms control and disarmament is a difficult uphill task and the past has been fraught with frustration. There are, however, grave and pressing dangers inherent in a failure to make real progress. Moreover, other more constructive demands on the resources of all of us make clear that our efforts must be pursued with renewed determination.

It is right that we make every effort to consider as analytically and objectively as possible the issues I have described. Emotion will not help us to understand properly the intricacies and the magnitude of the challenge of disarmament or to devise effective means to deal with them. Yet we must never lose sight of the underlying supreme task — to ensure the security of us all by reducing, and ultimately eliminating, the risk of war. Dare we hope that this year, perhaps more than in many previous years, we are on the verge of significant progress in this vital direction?

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