

CANADIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Press Office
750 Third Avenue
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YUkon 6-5740

WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Text of Statement in Explanation of Vote on World Disarmament Conference to be delivered in the First Committee by the Canadian Representative, Mr. E. L. M. Burns, on Tuesday November 23, 1965

Mr. Chairman, in explaining Canada's vote on the resolution now before us, I should first of all like to express my Delegation's appreciation to the principal sponsors who worked so untiringly to produce a draft which could obtain the widest possible support. The results of the voting which has just taken place clearly indicate the degree of success which they achieved.

Canada voted in favour of the resolution and in doing so gave its support to the principle of convening a conference in which the nations of the world, both those inside the United Nations and those not represented here would have an opportunity to exchange views and express their opinions on the all-important question of disarmament. We made our decision to support this idea even though we believed, as I indicated to the Committee in my statement of October 19, that there were a number of practical problems which would subsequently have to be resolved. The eventual decision by Canada - and I suppose that of any other states - as to participation in the conference will depend on a number of factors including the resolution of these practical problems but in the meantime we have been encouraged by the wide-spread recognition on the part of the sponsors of the resolution and others that the concern which we had expressed is legitimate and is designed not to obstruct the holding of a World Disarmament Conference, but to ensure that it will be properly organized, so that useful results can be achieved. In this connection I would like to refer to the statement made yesterday by the distinguished representative of Algeria when he was formally introducing the final text of the draft resolution. He said at that time and I quote ... "important questions have quite properly been raised: questions as to dates, participation, duration, financing, etc. No one can minimize their importance".

The distinguished representative of Byelorussia attempted in his intervention on November 19 to suggest that the Western countries did not want a conference at all and were doing all in their power to delay its convening by laying down unacceptable conditions in advance. Today without exception the Western nations have voted in favour of the principle of

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Yakima, Washington

Dear Mr. [Name]

Thank you for your letter of [Date]

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

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convening a World Disarmament Conference. No conditions have been laid down, but suggestions have been made as to what matters of organization the preparatory committee should deal with. I am sure that the representative of Byelorussia appreciates, as everyone else must, that if the World Disarmament Conference is to be successful, it must be properly organized. This requirement for careful preparation for a large conference is not our idea, of course, but has been widely recognized for some time. A concrete example of this was the UNCTAD meeting which took place in Geneva in the spring and early summer of 1964. Before this very successful conference could be held a preparatory group was required to meet off and on for more than a year to ensure a properly organized and productive meeting.

In view of the many complicated questions which will have to be resolved, the Canadian Delegation supports the proposal of a preparatory commission to go into all the aspects of the problem. This idea has been supported by a great many representatives including our distinguished Rapporteur Mr. El Kony in his very instructive statement to the Committee on November 19. When this preparatory commission is being established, we think there are three considerations which should be borne in mind. First of these is the necessity to keep the group relatively small if it is to work effectively. A membership of 25 has been mentioned informally on occasion, and it would be our view that if the commission is to carry out satisfactorily the work entrusted to it, this number could scarcely be exceeded. The second consideration is that membership of the commission should be broadly representative of those countries whose attendance at the proposed conference is essential because of their significant military power or other reasons. Finally, we think that to the largest extent possible membership of the preparatory group should be made up of those countries whose practical experience in complexities of disarmament negotiations will enable them to help in finding satisfactory answers to questions to be resolved.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, there is one last point I would like to make and that is to express our support of the widely-held view that, while soundings and preparations for a World Disarmament Conference are under way, these activities should be conducted so as not to interfere with the disarmament deliberations which may be taking place elsewhere in bodies such as the United Nations General Assembly or the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Commission. As I think we all appreciate, the world disarmament conference to be truly useful must supplement rather than supersede existing arrangements for considering disarmament problems. In particular, it could not carry on detailed consideration of specific questions which is possible in a more restricted body such as the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Commission. No one disarmament forum can be expected to have a monopoly of wisdom in this most important field, and we must do everything we can to assure that, in establishing a new forum, we are not in any way reducing the effectiveness of those which already exist. Because we feel so strongly about this question, it has been a matter of considerable satisfaction to the Canadian Delegation to find that most other delegations agree. In particular I might refer again to Mr. El Kony's statement of November 19 when he said: "There is nothing contradictory between the negotiating table in Geneva and a world forum for disarmament which latter could serve as a real stimulation to the technicians in Geneva".

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