CANADA

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 67/4 CANADIAN STATEMENT ON NON-PROLIFERATION

Statement by Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns, Permanent Representative of Canada, before the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, Geneva, February 28, 1967.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada has asked me to make the following statement on his behalf.

We have welcomed the recent bilateral discussions between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. on the treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, which we understand have brought those countries close to agreement. We look forward to the tabling shortly of that draft treaty and to its careful study in this Committee. Like every country represented here, and, indeed, every responsible member of the international community, we hope we are close to reaching agreement on what can be one of the most significant international arms-control measures of our generation.

The urgency and importance of a non-proliferation treaty is clear. We are at an extremely critical point of history, when the decision of one country to join the ranks of the nuclear-weapons powers could trigger an uncontrollable, prohibitively costly and potentially catastrophic arms race. This could be the last chance of preventing such an arms race.

Since the basic purpose of a non-proliferation treaty is to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, a treaty must provide that the control of existing nuclear weapons shall rest incontestably with the present nuclear-weapons powers and that states without nuclear weapons shall renounce the acquisition or development of nuclear weapons. While this is an inherently discriminatory approach to the problem, it is the only rational one. Indeed, in the short run, it is in the interests of non-nuclear-weapon states to renounce nuclear weapons and thus to eliminate the danger of nuclear warfare among themselves and to reduce the danger of smaller conflicts developing into nuclear wars into which the great powers might be drawn. In the longer run, of course, substantial benefits would accrue to all nations if, as we intend, the treaty contributes to international stability and to an atmosphere conducive to more comprehensive measures of arms control.

It is neither unnatural nor unreasonable that countries foregoing their option to produce nuclear weapons should wish to ensure that their act of self-denial should, in turn, lead the nuclear-weapons powers to undertake tangible steps to reduce and eliminate their vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons

and delivery vehicles. We are, therefore, of the opinion that nuclear-weapons signatories to a treaty should be party to a clear and compelling declaration of intent to embark on the process of nuclear-arms control. In short, we think that by means of this treaty nuclear as well as non-nuclear states should contribute, and be seen to contribute, to the objective of nuclear disarmament.

It is, of course, important in this connection to ensure that the treaty should be seen to work effectively in practice. A provision for periodic review of its terms and operation is, therefore, an objective to which the Canadian Government has already subscribed and will continue to pursue.

The term "loophole" has been freely used in this Committee's deliberations on a non-proliferation treaty. In our view, a treaty permitting non-nuclear-weapons states to conduct, on a national basis, nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes, would contain a substantial loophole. We believe that it is impossible to distinguish between the technology required in nuclear explosions for peaceful as against military purposes and that a non-nuclear-weapons power which detonated a nuclear explosive device, no matter for what purposes would - in effect - have taken a decisive step towards the production of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we believe that a treaty should contain a clear assurance that non-nuclear-weapon powers may obtain the economic and scientific benefits of the use of peaceful nuclear explosions and, specifically, should have assurances of obtaining from nuclear-weapons powers the use of such explosive devices under the supervision of an appropriate international organization. We are pleased to note that President Johnson has said in his message that the U.S.A. is prepared to make nuclear-explosive services for peaceful purposes available to non-nuclear-weapons states on a non-discriminatory basis under appropriate international safeguards.

There has been some discussion recently of the value of technological "spin-off" from nuclear explosions. We are not convinced that such "spin-off" is significant, but we note again that President Johnson has assured us that not only peaceful explosive services but also any technological "spin-off" from them will be available to non-nuclear-weapons states. It goes without saying, of course, that a treaty should not place any inhibitions whatever on research or development of advanced peaceful nuclear technology.

It is, in our view, important that a non-proliferation treaty should include an effective safeguards clause, the main purpose of which would be to ensure that the treaty provisions are being observed and that nuclear fuel designated for peaceful purposes is not diverted clandestinely to the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Moreover, it will be important to establish the principle that the treaty safeguards system, to be internationally administered, must be acceptable to the great majority of states which are expected to sign the treaty.

I have touched in a very general way on some of the most important issues that we will be examining in the weeks ahead. We propose to present our views in a more comprehensive manner once we have a draft treaty text before us

In conclusion, I should like to make some brief remarks on the signing in Mexico City earlier this month of a treaty to denuclearize Latin America and the Caribbean. This is a development which we in Canada have warmly welcomed. We extend our congratulations to our Latin American and Caribbean friends (and I should mention the contribution of our Mexican colleague, Senor Garcia Robles in particular), noting that theirs is a unique achievement, which establishes an important precedent. The signing of this treaty is eloquent testimony to the tireless efforts of our neighbours, who have taken steps toward excluding nuclear weapons from their area and toward ensuring that nuclear energy is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Let us hope that this achievement will lend impetus to our efforts here to reach agreement on a universal non-proliferation treaty.

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