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SUMMARY OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS' STATEMENT AT
NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE
GENEVA, MAY 7, 1975

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

Grave strains will be placed on international stability and the risk of nuclear conflict will become greater unless more vigorous efforts are made to check the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan J. MacEachen, said today. He was speaking at the Conference to review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which opened in Geneva on Monday.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty, which came into force in 1970, has been ratified by over 90 countries.

Mr. MacEachen reaffirmed Canada's strong support for the Treaty as the best available barrier to an increase in the number of nuclear weapon states and called on more states to ratify it. He declared that "the Treaty clearly serves the interests of those very many countries like Canada that wish to avoid the moral burden, the dangers, the fears and the dissipation of creative energy and physical resources that would be entailed if they had to resort to nuclear arms in a world of many nuclear armed states".

Although the central objective of the Treaty is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to countries which do not already possess them, the Minister stressed that one of the Treaty's basic premises was the need for the nuclear weapon powers to halt the nuclear arms race. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the USA and the Soviet Union had promoted a climate of strategic stability and political détente between the superpowers. "But that is not enough", he said. "The talks have not halted the momentum of the nuclear arms race or achieved steps of actual nuclear disarmament."

Mr. MacEachen called for a comprehensive ban on all nuclear testing at the earliest possible date. "Perhaps the achievement of no other measure", he said, "would so help to support the non-proliferation objective".

Mr. MacEachen emphasized the need for international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, especially between advanced and developing countries. This, he said, was another premise of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"An exporter of nuclear materials and technology such as Canada is anxious to promote international commerce and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy", he said, "but only with assurance that such cooperation will be compatible with international security".

Mr. MacEachen announced that future Canadian bilateral official development assistance commitments for the financing of nuclear projects will be undertaken solely to countries that are party to the NPT and that ratification of the Treaty would be "an important factor" in reaching decisions on the provision of Canadian Government financing in the nuclear field. He also announced that Canada would increase its technical assistance in the nuclear field to developing countries which are party to the NPT both bilaterally and through appropriate multilateral channels such as the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Minister declared, however, that "whether or not Canada extends financial assistance in the nuclear field, Canada will provide nuclear material, equipment and technology to other countries only on the basis of binding commitments that Canadian supplies will not serve the development of any nuclear explosive device for whatever purpose. This policy will apply equally to all countries. Canada is determined that its nuclear assistance must not contribute to the manufacture of explosive devices".

The Minister stressed the vital importance of promoting a stronger international safeguards system. The IAEA's verification of safeguards commitments of the non-nuclear weapon states parties to the Treaty was perhaps the most successful aspect of the Treaty. "As more and more non-nuclear weapon states parties to the Treaty develop nuclear energy capacities", said Mr. MacEachen, "the more important will be the role of IAEA safeguards applied in these states. These safeguards serve as a reassurance to neighbours and cooperating states alike that nuclear energy is not being diverted to the manufacture of nuclear explosive devices".

The nuclear weapon states party to the NPT should demonstrate their support for the purposes of the Treaty by accepting safeguards themselves, Mr. MacEachen said. He urged the USSR to join with the USA and the UK in their offer to place their peaceful nuclear activities under safeguards. He hoped this would be followed by a halt in the production of fissile material for military purposes.

The Minister noted that the increased production of fissile materials in nuclear power reactors throughout the world and increased transport of such materials had raised concerns about their possible theft and use to threaten governments and societies. He called on the Conference to encourage further international action to deal with the danger.

The peaceful application of nuclear explosions had been a controversial question, Mr. MacEachen said. Canadian Government experts had concluded that there is little promise for the practical application of nuclear explosions to resource extraction or engineering projects in Canada for at least a decade. He said Canada would like to see a halt to experimentation in this area "at least until a thorough re-evaluation of the world's resources and energy needs presents a more compelling case for the use of peaceful nuclear explosions".

Mr. MacEachen went on to say that if governments believed that peaceful nuclear explosion experiments should continue "it will be necessary to assess the need for a more formal international regime for peaceful nuclear explosions". However, such a regime would have to ensure that any benefits from such experiments would be available to all non-nuclear weapon states by way of services provided by nuclear weapon states; that nuclear weapon powers would give notice of and report on peaceful nuclear explosions on their own territories and that such explosions would not contribute to the development of nuclear weapons.

Mr. MacEachen summarized Canada's main objectives at the Review Conference.

First, Canada seeks "a clear recognition by the nuclear weapon states of the urgency and necessity of reversing the momentum of the nuclear arms race and a reaffirmation by them of greater determination to reduce their nuclear destructive capabilities".

Second, "we wish to see a recognition by all non-nuclear weapon states that their security interests are best served by preventing a further proliferation of nuclear weapon states and by reaffirming their determination to pursue only the peaceful uses of nuclear energy".

Third, Canada seeks "greater recognition of the need for all countries, and particularly the developing countries, to have access to nuclear technology and materials where this can serve their social and economic well being, but with the firm understanding that such nuclear cooperation will take place only in a way to ensure the world's security".