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ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

SUMMARY OF STATEMENT IN THE FIRST COMMITTEE
OF THE 31ST 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,
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 5, 1976

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

Impatience, Frustration and Deep Disappointment

"Impatience, frustration and deep disappointment". These were the words used today in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in New York by Mr. R. Harry Jay to describe Canada's reaction to "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".

Mr. Jay is Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD).

Mr. Jay wondered whether UN members would have to admit in five years that the declaration of the 1970s as the Disarmament Decade was a "half-hearted gesture". He feared that "international security will be in even greater peril if, in those next five years, we do not come to grips with the tasks set out for the Decade". Although "all states of military significance must share in this important task", he said, "the primary responsibility to ensure that the Disarmament Decade is not a failure rests with the nuclear weapon states".

Priorities

"Of all the problems we face in the arms control and disarmament field", said Mr. Jay, "none is greater or deserves higher priority than the need for limitations and reductions in nuclear arms, for an effective ban on all nuclear weapons testing and for further strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation system."

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

The SALT talks between the United States and the Soviet Union have been valuable, said Mr. Jay, but "have not yet slowed the nuclear arms race, much less led to any reduction in nuclear arms".

The United States and the Soviet Union, he said "must make a more determined effort" to surmount the difficult problems confronting them in undertaking nuclear disarmament measures. He appealed to the two principal nuclear powers "to move with greater speed towards the conclusion of SALT II and to move on to SALT III -- that is, from limitations to effective reductions -- at the earliest possible date".

Nuclear Weapons Testing

Recent progress toward a ban on all nuclear weapons testing had been "almost imperceptible", said Mr. Jay. He

noted the attempts made by Canada and other countries to help solve the problems that have prevented the achievement of a comprehensive test ban (CTB) but said it was "difficult to accept that more resolute efforts have not been made by the nuclear weapons states themselves".

Canadian Proposal for Interim Test Ban

The Canadian spokesman called on at least the two superpowers, and as many other nuclear weapon states as possible, to enter into a "formal interim agreement to end their nuclear weapon testing for a defined trial period". Canada, he said, was not proposing an unverified testing moratorium but "an agreement open to all states, containing measures to ensure first that its terms are fully honoured and second that any nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes do not confer weapons-related benefits". Such an agreement could be reviewed at the end of a fixed trial period to determine whether it might be further extended or be transformed into a permanent agreement including all nuclear weapon states.

Mr. Jay wondered how it could be argued with any credibility that such an interim halt would threaten the security of the USA and Soviet Union when they "already have nuclear weapon arsenals of such enormous magnitude and when their own capacity for destruction so greatly exceeds that of any other nuclear weapon state".

Non-Proliferation Treaty

"All of us continue to be haunted by the danger that nuclear weapons will spread to more states", the Canadian representative declared. "If more resolute efforts are not made to avert this danger, we shall have frittered away completely whatever chance there still may be of eliminating the threat of nuclear destruction".

Mr. Jay said that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its associated system of IAEA safeguards "continue to be the basic instruments of the non-proliferation system and the most appropriate framework for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy". He outlined steps taken since the NPT Review Conference of May 1975 to reinforce the NPT but said Canada was "convinced that much that should have been done ... has not yet been done".

Mr. Jay reminded the Assembly that the nuclear weapon states party to the Treaty had undertaken in it to pursue negotiations toward nuclear disarmament. Canada regretted that they "had not done more to fulfil their part of the NPT bargain".

Mr. Jay observed that about 100 countries now adhered to the NPT. These countries, he said, had "clearly rejected the mistaken notion that either the possession of nuclear weapons or the retention of an option to acquire them is a guarantee of security in some way essential to national sovereignty and the reinforcement of national prestige".

"It is cause for the deepest concern", he said, "that this encouraging perspective is not yet shared by certain other states advanced in nuclear technology or in the process of acquiring that technology". He appealed to such states to "reassess their reasons for not making a firm commitment to the non-proliferation objective either by adhering to the NPT or in some other equally binding and verifiable way".

Safeguards

Mr. Jay declared that Canada was "determined to ensure that Canadian nuclear assistance would be used solely for peaceful non-explosive purposes" and that Canada would continue to press for the further strengthening and broadening of the scope of nuclear safeguards. "In Canada's view", he said, "safeguards will not be fully effective until they cover all peaceful nuclear activities in all states."

Peaceful Nuclear Explosions

Mr. Jay noted that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was giving detailed study to the application of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. Canada nonetheless remained to be convinced that there are significant potential benefits in so-called peaceful nuclear explosions and doubted "that any benefits that may exist would outweigh the inherent risks".

"Certainly there can be no question", he said, "that such explosions would have crucial arms control implications". It had been clearly recognized in previous UN resolutions that it was not possible to develop such devices for peaceful application without at the same time acquiring nuclear weapons capability. Canada sought international arrangements to govern peaceful nuclear explosions that are fully consistent with the NPT and other international legal instruments.

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

Mr. Jay confirmed Canada's support in principle for the nuclear weapon free zone concept. He stressed, however, that the value of a specific nuclear weapon free zone proposal or arrangement would depend on the support of most countries of the area concerned including the major military powers of

the region, on a clear definition of the geographic area covered, on assurance that any state or group of states would not thereby acquire additional military advantage and on provisions to ensure that all component countries complied fully with the commitments involved and forswore the independent acquisition of nuclear explosive capability. Supplementary arrangements applicable to states outside such zones must be "realistic and fully consistent with generally recognized principles of international law".

Arms Trade

Mr. Jay stressed that "concerted international action is urgently required among both suppliers and recipients to check the growth in the arms trade". This trade, he said, "has reached mammoth proportions and continues to devour vast resources urgently needed for productive economic and social purposes throughout the world".

MBFR

Canada attached high priority, said Mr. Jay, to the Vienna negotiations for mutual and balanced force reductions in Central Europe (MBFR). These negotiations offered "prospect of significant steps in disarmament and the reduction of the danger of confrontation at the regional level" but "progress has been slow and the negotiations are now about to enter their fourth year with little measurable achievement yet in sight".

Chemical Warfare

There had been "some glimmer of hope" this year, said Mr. Jay, for at least a modest breakthrough toward resolving the problems of achieving a convention to prohibit the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. He urged the Assembly to give further encouragement to the CCD to press ahead with this task.

Environmental Warfare

Mr. Jay said Canada was prepared to join in recommending to governments that they sign a draft convention, negotiated in the CCD, to prohibit the military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. Canada did not consider the draft convention to be a faultless document, nor, given the other and more pressing priorities in the arms control field, to be a major landmark. Canada hoped, however, that it would inhibit whatever plans some states might otherwise make or contemplate for the hostile use of environmental modification techniques.

UN Special Session on Disarmament

"Canada stands ready to support", said Mr. Jay, a call for a special session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament and to participate fully and constructively in it. Such a special session "must not be a dialogue of the deaf". Its objective "must be to infuse a new sense of purpose into the quest for peace and security".

Disarmament Fora

Mr. Jay said that the UN remains the principal forum in which to focus world attention and for the exchange of views among member states on arms control and disarmament issues and that the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) in Geneva "continues to be the most appropriate forum for the negotiation of arms control agreements intended to have universal application".