



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 57/39

DISARMAMENT

Statement by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, in the First Committee of the United Nations, on October 23, 1957.

CORRIGENDUM

Page 4, paragraph 2, line 7 - "four-power draft resolution" should read "twenty-four power draft resolution"

Page 5, paragraph 3, lines 1 and 2 - "four-power draft resolution" should read "twenty-four power draft"

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Mr. Chairman, in my first intervention in the Political Committee I have pleasure in extending to you my warm congratulations on your election as our presiding officer.

My Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker, in his statement in the general debate on September 23, has made known the anxiety with which the Canadian Government views the dark prospect of growing arsenals of increasingly apocalyptic weapons. As we reflect on the awesome prospect of man's ability to destroy himself, we renew in Canada our determination to prove, before it is too late, that statecraft has not lagged too far behind science. All of us in this room and all our governments must continue to search for sure means to secure the peace of the world. Yet as we survey the antagonisms which rend the world we find an array of well-nigh overwhelming problems. It would be idle to suppose that at this session of the General Assembly we can bring about a settlement of all these controversies. We may hope, nevertheless, that our endeavours will serve to start a reversal in the trend of world events so that we may, as we are pledged to do under the Charter "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". When those words were written, despite the appalling devastation which a global war had wrought, those at San Francisco in 1945 could not realize that soon means of destruction would be created which would make us uncertain that the world would ever see those succeeding generations. We have indeed a more fundamental task than that envisaged in the Charter -- not merely to save the world from the scourge of war but to save the world from destruction.

As some representatives have rightly said, our debate in this Assembly is not merely about disarmament, but about human survival. We have yet to prove that we are capable of the radical adjustment in our thinking which the modern age demands. We are

still using, Mr. Chairman, the outworn vocabulary of international rivalry in the age of intercontinental missiles and the beginning of ventures into outer space. Modern science requires us to achieve a solidarity of purpose as human beings in the great venture of exploring these new developments in science for the benefit of mankind.

The Soviet Union makes a simple appeal -- ban the use of nuclear weapons altogether, or for five years, and then eliminate them entirely, and I must confess, in common with many others throughout the world, that this proposition has an immediate attraction and appeal. An end to any possibility of the use of nuclear weapons is certainly our objective. Why then, it is fair to ask, can we not now accept this simple appeal? The answer is that a promise not to use nuclear weapons is good only until one nation decides to break it. There is at present no reliable means of ensuring the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

A disarmament agreement must be based on something more substantial than mere promises. All nations must know (and be able to rely on that knowledge) that other nations will not continue to keep and develop such weapons in spite of their pledged word to get rid of them. We must be convinced that no nation is planning or preparing the destruction or crippling of another, and each of the nations must, by its deeds and not by mere declarations, persuade the other nations of the world that its weapons will never be used except for defence. We must have mutual trust and confidence, but it must be based on the cold, hard terms of a binding agreement under which real safeguards have been established. If the nations of the world had the faith in one another on which moral obligations without such safeguards would have to depend, they would not now be caught in the dire armaments race.

Throughout the United Nations disarmament talks the U.S.S.R. has been notably reluctant to come to grips with the question of inspection. Instead, they have frequently accused other countries of using arguments of inspection as an excuse for avoiding disarmament. We were considerably encouraged by the fact that at least in principle the Soviet attitude on controls in the last year or so had improved considerably, and I believe this was a major factor in the hopes during the past year that at least a partial disarmament agreement might be soon achieved. It was, therefore, with deep dismay that we heard in the latest Soviet pronouncement the same old contemptuous reference to the guarantees of inspection and control which mark the difference between empty declarations and serious disarmament undertakings.

I know that the deep suspicions which divide the great nations today make any agreement on inspection and controls slow and difficult, but countries which are genuinely peaceful in

their intentions, and whose armed forces and armaments are honestly defensive and not aggressive, should be able to accept this essential condition of disarmament. As my Prime Minister put it, "If you have nothing to hide, why hide it"? Canada, for example, has agreed to open its territory to whatever inspection may be mutually accepted by the parties to a disarmament agreement. We have explicitly agreed to aerial inspection of all or part of our country under a fair and equitable system for warning against surprise attack. Soviet spokesmen have rather sarcastically written off inspection of Canada's Arctic regions (included in one of the zones suggested), but this area is of course significant in this context, both as a possible route of surprise attack and as an area for a beginning of such inspection which would be free of some of the complications of more heavily populated regions.

Even if we are agreed in principle on the necessity for controls, there are innumerable questions of technical detail which would need clarification and agreement. The immense amount of work still to be done in this field was strikingly illustrated by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom in his statement in the general debate when he listed many of the vital inspection questions to which we would need to find exact answers.

By the will of the United Nations, Canada has accepted the obligation to serve on the Sub-Committee in the hope of making some contribution to the disarmament problem. While the Great Powers represented on the Sub-Committee, which have the responsibility and power associated with the production of nuclear weapons, must play a decisive part in reaching an agreement, other countries, which like ourselves, do not produce such weapons, have the right and the duty to express their views on an issue which, as I said earlier, affects all mankind. To some extent, Canada, the only smaller country on the Sub-Committee, shares the point of view of the majority of member states which might be classed as middle or smaller powers. During the course of this debate we have already heard, from many delegations not represented on the Sub-Committee, thoughtful and important statements on disarmament. To name only a few, Mr. Chairman, the Delegations of Japan, Belgium, India and of Mexico in their interventions have called attention to significant aspects of this problem. We have also heard the significant statements of the Great Powers and in particular the lucid and cogent exposition of M. Moch yesterday morning.

Following the lead of some of these earlier statements, we must come to grips with the real difficulties which now beset disarmament negotiations. Recriminations and rehashing of old controversies, from whichever side put forward, are in our opinion inappropriate. The issue is too grave to furnish material for propaganda points.

In this connection, I must say that our delegation deploras certain statements contained in the speech by the Soviet representative in this Committee. They are, I suggest, unworthy of this debate. I refer in particular to Mr. Gromyko's implication in his speech in this Committee that the Western democracies were responsible for the Second World War. While I do not wish to dwell on the ill-fated German-Soviet pact which did so much to launch that war, I must say again that we consider these communist attempts to falsify history as out of place in discussion of the disarmament issue.

When we begin to examine the essential problems before us, we must face the fact that the world failed in its efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons at a time when the inspection necessary to guarantee such an undertaking presented considerably less difficulty than it does today. The distinguished representative of India has commented on the absence from the four-power draft resolution of reference to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The explanation, of course, is that this particular draft resolution deals with those limited objectives in disarmament which could be achieved at once or soon. Unfortunately the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, for which there are at present no adequate safeguards, cannot be regarded as immediately attainable. Nevertheless we have not abandoned as a goal the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. If the means of inspection adequate to guarantee such an undertaking can be devised, it would certainly be part of my Government's recommendation for a comprehensive disarmament agreement. But, I reiterate, it is not helpful to approach this goal by way of unsubstantiated declarations and unenforceable agreements such as a promise never to use nuclear weapons.

Our immediate responsibility now is to do whatever may be possible to decrease stockpiles of such weapons and to ensure the use of fissionable materials for peaceful purposes. We believe that a beginning could be made in this direction. At the same time, and I emphasize this point, constructive efforts must continue through the United Nations to reduce world tension and to solve dangerous problems as they arise and so to make certain that these weapons of terrible destruction are never used. At this point, although I do not for a moment suggest any political conditions for the first-stage disarmament plan which we espouse, we are again up against the inevitable link between progress on disarmament and progress on the other difficult international issues which divide the world. Disarmament in any comprehensive sense must go in step with settlement of these other grave international problems. Without any slackening of our efforts to make a beginning in disarmament we must also seize every opportunity for settlement of these other problems. One of the ways in which the United Nations has already made a great contribution to world peace has been the provision of neutral and impartial United Nations observation

or inspection forces in tense and troubled areas. The United Nations must be ready whenever appropriate situations arise -- and of course whenever the circumstances are favourable -- to consider further action of this kind which at the very least inhibits dangerous movements of forces and may even save the peace of the world and thus give us the time and the atmosphere in which to continue disarmament negotiations. I need hardly add that Canada has always made a full contribution to United Nations undertakings of this sort.

It has been our wish in the Canadian Delegation to participate in a constructive approach to this central question of international security, and in our participation, I repeat, we have the role of a middle power. We believe that there are many measures of disarmament which are capable of inspection and control and which could genuinely add to our security because all participating countries could be reasonably sure that other states are living up to their obligations. Among these measures are reductions in forces and conventional armaments and also agreement to provide that henceforth all production of fissionable materials will be solely for peaceful purposes. These are two of the main themes in the draft resolution before the Assembly co-sponsored by four members of the Sub-Committee and a large number of other nations.

Two other measures, included in that resolution, could do a great deal to allay our present anxieties. These are, first, a suspension of testing of nuclear weapons, particularly the largest-scale hydrogen weapons, and second, some variant of the several proposals which have been made for a system of advance warning against surprise attack by means of reciprocal air and ground inspection. The Delegation of India has tabled proposals for scientific commissions to go into some of the detailed problems of inspection and control. These suggestions merit careful examination, particularly with reference to these last two measures.

Canada is one of the sponsors of the four-power resolution I have mentioned. We urge its adoption. Nevertheless we must remain sensitive to every possibility of improving it. Let us not be inflexible. We of Canada certainly do not say that the particular proposals with which we are now associated are the only means by which at least some progress can be made towards disarmament.

The Soviet Delegation has been particularly indifferent -- even hostile -- to the proposal to use all production of fissionable material for peaceful purposes. We are at a loss to understand this Soviet objection to any cut-off date on the production of weapons from fissionable material. It seems to us strange that despite their many declarations in favour of "banning the bomb" and prohibiting its use, they are not more interested in finding a workable proposal for stopping the

manufacture of such weapons, particularly when such a proposal is preceded as it would be under our resolution by the suspension of test explosions.

Speakers in this debate have properly devoted considerable attention to suggestions for suspension of tests of nuclear weapons with suitable control posts and technical equipment in the areas where such tests have been made. The latest proposals in the Sub-Committee, which I have mentioned and which Canada co-sponsored, do provide for suspension of tests as the very first thing to be done in our plan for initial steps of disarmament. Under this plan tests could be suspended for two years. The Assembly should note that the sponsors of this proposal have made a real effort to match the proper international concern about the testing of nuclear weapons. As you are all aware, Canada does not produce nuclear weapons. Therefore, we have not ourselves conducted any of these tests. Thus, we are in this respect in the same position as the great majority of the other nations represented here. Whatever the correct view may be as to the possible harmful effects of radiation and fallout, I think none of us would want to discount the anxiety on this score felt by the peoples of all nations. However, in the present international circumstances of tension and fear, it is inevitable, unless we do something now, that the major powers will seek to augment and improve their weapons, and this involves tests. While we are certainly not opposed to any fair and reciprocal measures to be taken as soon as possible with respect to tests of nuclear weapons, we are also convinced that some more fundamental action must also be agreed upon and must be taken.

We all have this much in common, that we share an interest in survival. Let us then so order our endeavours that we may ensure that the engines which are capable of putting our survival in hazard are made the servants and not the masters of man. But if the wonderful devices for harnessing the forces of nature which science has contrived are to be used to alleviate and not to increase human misery and destitution, we must organize political machinery which will direct these discoveries into the ways of peace. I cannot believe that this is a simple matter which can be done by the stroke of a pen or the passage of a resolution. But I am convinced that such an achievement is within our capacity and within our grasp.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I ask seriously this question. What is the alternative? Are we once again to end our discussions in deadlock? We should ask ourselves, each of us, have we all really faced up to the meaning of this for the peoples of the world -- for all mankind? Prime Minister Diefenbaker, in participating in the general debate, concluded his statement with the heartfelt wish that this Assembly might become known in future years as the Disarmament Assembly. My final word is a plea directed primarily to the

Great Powers, which must bear the main responsibilities, for at least a beginning in actual measures of disarmament. Canada has co-sponsored plans for partial disarmament but, I repeat, we do not regard them as necessarily the last word. Further negotiation in the interests of world peace is the bounden duty of all of us. At the beginning the experience gained and the confidence created by our first steps in disarmament -- however limited -- could lead us on towards our goal, which is the elimination of nuclear weapons. The stake is the very survival of the human race.

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