



Statements and Speeches

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ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT: CANADA COMMITTED TO EVEN GREATER EFFORTS

A Statement by Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament Arthur Menzies to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly XXXV, October 27, 1980

...Canada views its participation in disarmament and arms-control negotiations as one of the most important aspects of its foreign policy. The cause of arms control and disarmament is no less than human survival on this planet. The achievement of verifiable arms-control agreements is one of the essential foundations of international security and, as such, is a cardinal objective for Canada. To this end, the Prime Minister of Canada, at the tenth Special Session of the United Nations devoted to disarmament, put forward a number of proposals to contain the ominous growth of the world's nuclear arsenals, and in further pursuit of this objective, an Ambassador for Disarmament has been appointed for the first time.

This Committee is reviewing developments in the field of disarmament in the light of recent events. The conclusions we reach will enable us to assess prospects for the future. The Committee can equip itself to look ahead towards 1982, for at the second Special Session devoted to disarmament we will be passing judgments on both the machinery set up in the disarmament field and the over-all progress realized in implementing the Program of Action. The intervening period between now and 1982 is, therefore, critical if we are to break the present impasse and take positive steps towards the realization of measures we all agreed to in the Program of Action.

The present international atmosphere is bound to have an effect on our deliberations. An independent and non-aligned country has been invaded by its larger and more powerful neighbour. Other military conflicts have also broken out. In the arms-control context, the words of the Canadian Prime Minister — that "Declarations of good intent are no substitute for real disarmament. They need be violated only once." — take on topical significance.

The arms-control process is painfully slow under the best of circumstances. In 1979, we anticipated both the ratification of SALT II [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] and looked to the drafting of the comprehensive test ban treaty in 1980. We were disappointed. The lesson is that, in matters of international security obtained through arms-control negotiations, the process of negotiation is inextricably linked to world events. We regret that SALT II has not been ratified. In our judgment, SALT II serves the security interests of all, and sets the stage for further significant advance. We are pleased to note, however, that the Soviet Union has set aside preconditions for the commencement of bilateral talks with the U.S.A. on the limitation of long-range theatre nuclear forces in Europe. Besides the intrinsic importance of these talks, we hope that they will be a prelude to an early full resumption of the SALT process.

The continuation of this process and a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty are

essential to slow, halt, and to begin to reverse, the momentum of nuclear-weapon developments. Canada considers that a ban on the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes through strengthening and making more equal the impact of the non-proliferation regime would also contribute to achieving that objective. We therefore continue to advocate this concept. As a result of past General Assembly resolutions, it is before the Committee on Disarmament.

Working groups

Mr. Chairman, we are pleased that the work of the Committee on Disarmament is strengthened this year by the presence of all nuclear powers at the negotiating table and by the establishment of working groups. These groups will provide opportunities for all member states to play a more active role. Canada is particularly pleased that a working group on a chemical weapons treaty began study of some of the main questions, including verification. We believe that verification is at the heart of an effective arms-control proposal.

There have been a number of reports and accusations concerning the use of chemical weapons, and in these circumstances we believe it important that there be objective means to verify or finally put to rest rumours that undermine confidence in agreements already reached in this field. Unless this is done, it will be all the harder to reach future agreements on the basis of mutual respect and confidence.

As for negotiations outside the Committee on Disarmament, the trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear test ban and the bilateral talks on the chemical weapons treaty are of fundamental importance. Adequate provision for verification is an essential part of the eventual conclusion of agreements in these areas. We share, for example, in the frustration over the apparent deadlock in negotiations leading to a comprehensive test ban treaty; but that is no reason for us to settle for a moratorium on nuclear testing — which, of course, makes no provision for verification, and leaves it up to the nuclear powers to begin testing, as they see fit, at the end of the period. Indeed, a moratorium is likely to delay the negotiations, and consequently any conclusion of a treaty which is, after all, our common goal.

Test ban treaty urgent

The urgency of the early realization of an effective multilateral comprehensive test ban treaty has been underlined not only by the continuing rapid pace of underground testing but also by the recent Chinese atmospheric test, China's first since 1972. Radioactive residue from the Chinese test has passed over Canada, with effects we have not yet assessed.

The Review Conference on the Bacteriological Biological Weapons Convention and the Non-Proliferation Weapons Treaty have taken place within this last year. While much useful work was accomplished and a large measure of agreement realized at the NPT Review Conference, Canada would have preferred an agreed final document. It might have focused on the Conference's reaffirmation of the validity of the means established to prevent proliferation as provided by the treaty, but would also have renewed the commitment of the nuclear-weapon states party to the treaty to Articles IV and VI.

Mr. Chairman, there are three subjects highlighted in the Final Document of the first

Special Session on Disarmament which have as yet received little attention.

The first is paragraph 81 on conventional disarmament. Useful discussions on conventional weapons took place in the United Nations Disarmament Commission last spring. This should be just the beginning of our efforts to show balanced progress in the field of arms control. The recent successful conclusion of the UN Weapons Conference is a contribution to the development and elaboration of international humanitarian law.

The second is paragraph 80. It says, "To prevent an arms race in outer space, further measures should be taken and appropriate international negotiations held." The fact is that there already is an incipient arms competition in outer space. The continuation of this competition could well have a destabilizing effect on the present balance of weaponry and it is consequently Canada's view that efforts should be intensified to reach an international agreement on this matter.

The third subject is the central issue of any meaningful arms-control agreement. It is verification. Point 9 of the permanent framework of the agenda of the Committee on Disarmament recognizes the necessity of adequate verification as a vital ingredient in negotiations. To encourage understanding of the complexities of verification, Canada tabled in the Committee last June a compendium of arms-control verification proposals. A second paper quantifying some aspects of this research was tabled more recently. A conceptual paper is in preparation, as is an updated version of the compendium. While these papers may help to develop an understanding of the basic elements in verification, there is also a need for papers on the verification problems of particular agreements under negotiation.

We believe that recent events, and the atmosphere that has consequently been created, are strong arguments in favour of verification as an integral part of arms-control agreements. There is therefore all the more reason to press ahead.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I wish to assure members of this Committee of the determination of the Canadian government to make a sustained effort to contribute to the process of arms control and disarmament. The unsettling events which have transpired since this Committee last met, and the consequent deterioration of the international climate, have convinced us that even greater efforts must be made. In this regard, we should recall that the process of arms control and disarmament is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. The end, of course, is to secure the peace and stability of this planet, so that we might deal without distraction with the array of other vital problems which confront us. In all these respects, Canada remains deeply committed.

Verification
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Disarmament
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