



Statements and Speeches

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DISARMAMENT PRIORITIES REAFFIRMED

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, on the Occasion of Disarmament Week, October 24-30, 1980

Disarmament Week serves to remind Canadians of the great importance the government of Canada attaches to the achievement of verifiable disarmament and arms-control agreements as one of the essential foundations of international security. The government views Canadian participation in disarmament and arms-control negotiations as one of the most important aspects of its foreign policy. As indicated in last spring's Speech from the Throne, "we must and we will, actively co-operate in international efforts to negotiate agreements on verifiable means of arms control and disarmament, and seek to rally others to a cause that is no less than human survival on this planet".

1980 marks the mid-point between the first United Nations Special Session on Disarmament and a second such session scheduled for 1982. This year is also the beginning of the Second Disarmament Decade.

Despite the increase in international tensions since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there have been during 1980 almost constant discussions on disarmament and arms control, many of which Canada has participated in. Bilateral discussions between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. on banning chemical weapons have continued, as have the trilateral talks among the U.S.A., the U.K. and the U.S.S.R. on a comprehensive test ban. The annual session of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva focused this year in particular on chemical weapons, radiological weapons, security assurances to non-nuclear weapons states, a comprehensive program for disarmament, the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, and a comprehensive nuclear test ban. In March, a review conference on the Biological Weapons Convention was held in Geneva. The United Nations Disarmament Commission met in New York in May. The second Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference recently concluded its sessions in Geneva. It was immediately followed by the reconvening of the Special UN Weapons Conference which was successful in achieving agreement on limiting the use of mines and booby traps and some incendiary weapons. The Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks in Vienna have continued, and the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. began talks a week ago on limiting nuclear missiles in Europe. The First Committee of the UN General Assembly has also just begun its annual deliberations on disarmament.

As profound Canadian experience since 1945 has taught, arms control and disarmament is a long process. The international situation this year has meant that progress has been slower than might have been anticipated even a year ago. Canadian priorities, however, remain unchanged. They are:

- (1) to encourage the continuation of the SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks]
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process;

- (2) to promote the realization of a comprehensive multilateral test ban treaty;
- (3) to assist in the preparation of a chemical weapons convention;
- (4) to promote the evolution of an effective non-proliferation regime based on the non-proliferation treaty;
- (5) to participate actively in negotiations to limit and reduce conventional forces;
and
- (6) to strive, step by step, to ultimately achieve general and complete disarmament, consistent with the legitimate security needs of states.

The Final Document of the UN Special Session on Disarmament highlighted the need for greater emphasis on research, information and education programs. The Department of External Affairs has responded in several ways. It convenes semi-annually a consultative group of representatives of Canadian non-governmental organizations which have a special interest in disarmament and arms control. It encourages greater research and information programs through financial assistance from its disarmament fund. It also produces a newsletter on national and international disarmament activities which is distributed to interested groups and individuals. In addition, I have suggested that the creation of an autonomous association for arms control and disarmament would help to expand activity and raise the level of debate in Canada on these issues.

Disarmament Week is held annually from October 24-30. Initiated in 1978 after the UN Special Session on Disarmament, it is an opportunity to emphasize the importance of mobilizing public opinion world-wide in support of disarmament and to underline the objectives set forth in the Final Document. Community groups, non-governmental organizations and individuals in Canada have accepted the challenge proffered by Disarmament Week to involve the public to a greater degree in these issues, and have planned numerous projects and activities in many centres across the country. Disarmament affects all Canadians individually and collectively. For this reason alone, we must join in efforts to encourage progress towards world peace through reductions in the levels of armaments and world military spending.