



Statements and Speeches

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ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Statement in the First Committee of the Thirty-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 5, 1976, 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.

My predecessors in this committee have repeatedly spoken of the growing impatience, frustration and deep disappointment felt by most countries -- and certainly by Canada -- at 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. Despite some modest steps, the record of achievement in the past 12 months has provided no cause for comfort.

Shall we have to voice the same harsh judgment at the end of the Disarmament Decade as we do at its mid-point? Shall we be forced to admit in five years that the declaration of the 1970s as the Disarmament Decade was a half-hearted gesture? I fear 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. We must reach early agreement on the most pressing arms-control problems and follow through with the most vigorous possible action to resolve them. All states of military significance must share in this important task, but the primary responsibility to ensure that the Disarmament Decade is not a failure rests with the nuclear-weapon states.

Of all the problems we face in the arms-control and disarmament field, 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.

As valuable as they have been, the strategic arms limitation talks between the United States and the Soviet Union have not yet slowed the nuclear arms race, much less led to any reduction in nuclear arms. Canada welcomed the SALT I agreement and the establishment at Vladivostok in 1974 of the principle of numerical equality in central strategic systems. Four years have passed since the SALT I agreement and the Vladivostok principles still remain to be confirmed in a definitive SALT II agreement. Over those years, new developments in strategic weaponry have further complicated the

task of achieving measures to curtail competition in nuclear weapons. All of us in the international community must be fully conscious of the complexity of the problems the United States and the Soviet Union confront in undertaking even gradual and partial measures of nuclear disarmament, but we strongly believe they must make a more determined effort to surmount these problems. We appeal to the two principal nuclear powers again 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.

Despite the appeals made year after year for almost three decades in resolutions of this Assembly, progress in recent years towards a ban on all nuclear-weapons testing has been almost imperceptible. The Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 has not yet been signed by two nuclear-weapon states, and one of them is still engaging in atmospheric testing.

The achievement of a comprehensive test ban, like strategic-arms limitation, involves difficult security, political and technical problems and perceptions. In the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, many countries, including my own, have tried to contribute to the solution of some of those problems, particularly those that would have to be faced in verifying compliance with such a treaty. We hope the search for solutions will be advanced by the group of scientific experts established by the CCD this year to investigate the possibilities for international co-operation in detecting and identifying seismic events, but the work of that group will be more useful if it has the active support of all nuclear-weapon-state members of the CCD.

Although the CCD continues to grapple with the question of nuclear testing, it is difficult to accept that more resolute efforts have not been made by the nuclear-weapon states themselves to overcome the obstacles to a nuclear test ban. We fail to understand why, as at least one nuclear-weapon state has argued, movement towards a CTB is impossible unless all five nuclear-weapon states participate from the outset. Ultimately -- and sooner rather than later -- all nuclear-weapon states must stop their weapons testing in all environments. But what insurmountable obstacles prevent at least the two super-powers, and as many other nuclear-weapon states as possible, from entering into a formal interim agreement to end their nuclear-weapon testing for a defined trial period? When the two super-powers 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, how can it be argued with any credibility that an interim testing halt by the two of them

would threaten their security unless all of the remaining nuclear-weapon states immediately followed suit? If we are ever to have a comprehensive test ban, someone must take the first step, and the two super-powers are the ones who should take it.

If such an agreement were reached for a fixed trial period it could, at the end of that time, be reviewed by its adherents to determine whether it might be further extended or be transformed into a permanent agreement including all nuclear-weapon states. One thing, however, must be stressed. In proposing an interim agreement, we are not calling for an unverified moratorium. On the contrary, we envisage 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.

We can welcome the achievement by the United States and the Soviet Union of their Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974 and their related agreement on peaceful nuclear explosions to the extent that they constitute mutual restraints and contain provisions for verification. But we consider these measures to be initial steps only. Agreements that permit the yield of individual explosions to remain as high as 150 kilotons are very modest indeed. In Canada's view, a much more far-reaching demonstration of the super-powers' determination to secure a CTB is required most urgently.

Although existing nuclear-weapon arsenals pose the most immediate threat to world security, all of us continue to be haunted by the danger that nuclear weapons will spread to more states. 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.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty 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 co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. One of the important tasks of this committee this year will be to assess the progress that has been made since the NPT Review Conference of May 1975. Canada is encouraged that some positive steps have been taken since the review conference, but we are convinced that much that should have been done in support of the non-proliferation objective has not been done. As we all know, the treaty's obligations apply to all of its parties -- to nuclear-weapon states as well as non-nuclear-weapon states.

While non-nuclear-weapon states parties undertook not to acquire

nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices, the nuclear-weapon-state parties undertook, in return, to pursue negotiations in good faith and at an early date towards nuclear disarmament. We regret that the nuclear-weapon states have not done more to fulfil their part of the NPT bargain. An effective non-proliferation system is in the interest of all states. But to be fully effective and to serve the interests of all states, the non-proliferation system must entail restraints on vertical as well as horizontal nuclear proliferation.

An important achievement has been the growth in the number of the treaty's adherents from just over 80 at the time of the review conference to about 100. Parties to the treaty now include almost all of the most highly-industrialized countries and the great majority of developing countries. By forswearing the acquisition of nuclear-explosive devices and by placing all of their nuclear activities under IAEA-administered safeguards to verify this commitment, this impressive group of states from all regions of the world has 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, however, that this encouraging perspective is not yet shared by certain other states advanced in nuclear technology or in the process of acquiring that technology. We appeal to those 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.

In its Final Declaration, the NPT Review Conference urged that "in all achievable ways" steps be taken to strengthen the application of nuclear safeguards as the reasonable and necessary condition for international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Canada has taken this appeal very seriously indeed. We have made it clear in the negotiation of new bilateral nuclear co-operation agreements and in the renegotiation of others that we are determined to ensure that Canadian nuclear assistance will be used solely for peaceful non-explosive purposes.

We have been gratified by the measures that have been taken in the IAEA and among suppliers since the NPT Review Conference to reinforce and broaden the application of nuclear safeguards. Important steps have been taken in safeguards agreements concluded by a number of countries with the IAEA in the past year, especially their explicit exclusion of any explosive use and strengthened provisions for the application of safeguards to technology transfers. We very much welcome the detailed study being given in the IAEA and elsewhere to

the need for exercising greater care and for applying more stringent controls in the use of the most sensitive parts of the nuclear-fuel cycle. Canada will continue to press in its bilateral nuclear relations and in all appropriate forums for the further strengthening and broadening of the scope of nuclear safeguards. In our view, safeguards will not be fully effective until they cover all peaceful nuclear activities in all states. As a country that has willingly accepted the application of safeguards to all of its own nuclear industry, Canada firmly believes that universal acceptance of such safeguards would provide the soundest basis for international nuclear co-operation.

The NPT Review Conference called for intensified study of the application of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. It strongly reaffirmed the provisions of Article V of the Treaty whereby any potential benefits from the application of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes will be available to non-nuclear-weapon states party to the treaty on a non-discriminatory basis, under appropriate international observation and procedures, through an appropriate international body and pursuant to a special international agreement or agreements. It confirmed that any such benefits could be made available to non-nuclear-weapon states not party to the treaty by way of nuclear-explosive services provided by nuclear-weapon states and conducted under the appropriate international observation and procedures called for in Article V. It concluded that the IAEA was the international body through which potential benefits of peaceful applications of nuclear explosions could be made available by nuclear-weapon states to non-nuclear-weapon states.

Canada fully supported these conclusions. Nonetheless, we remain to be convinced that there are significant potential benefits in so-called peaceful nuclear explosions. We doubt that any benefits that may exist would outweigh the inherent risks. Certainly there can be no question that such explosions would have crucial arms-control implications. It has been clearly recognized in resolutions of this Assembly in 1974 and 1975 that no distinction can be made between the technology for nuclear weapons and for nuclear-explosive devices for peaceful purposes and that it is not possible to develop such devices for peaceful application without at the same time acquiring nuclear-weapons capability. It is for this reason that we are participating fully in the detailed study being conducted in the IAEA of the economic, technical, safety, environmental and legal aspects of peaceful nuclear explosions. The IAEA studies will require more time, but we hope they will lead not only to broad consensus on the economic, technical and legal aspects of peaceful nuclear explosions

but also to international arrangements for the provision of PNE services that are fully consistent with the requirements of the NPT and other international legal instruments, including the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. We do not minimize the difficulties involved in devising such arrangements. But it could be much harder to reach agreement on international arrangements to govern PNE services if we wait until whatever economic value they may have has been demonstrated.

The NPT Review Conference confirmed that internationally-recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones can be an effective means of curbing the spread of nuclear weapons and of strengthening the security of states which become fully bound by their provisions. The nuclear-weapon-free-zone conception and the possibility of establishing such zones in various parts of the world have been the subjects of numerous resolutions of this Assembly in recent years, and will be addressed again this year. Yet, apart from the Antarctic, Latin America is the only area of the world which has been established as a nuclear-weapon-free zone by treaty, and that treaty is still not in force for some important countries of the region. Moreover, its protocols have yet to be adopted by all of the states to which they were designed to apply.

In principle, Canada supports the nuclear-weapon-free-zone concept. Our understanding of this concept has been deepened by the thorough study undertaken in the CCD and presented to the Assembly last year. I wish to stress, however, that, in Canada's view, the value of any specific nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal or arrangement will depend on whether it has or is likely to have the support of most countries of the area concerned -- including, of necessity, the major military powers of the region. It will also depend on a clear definition of the geographic area covered, on assurance that the arrangement would not confer additional military advantage to any state or to any group of states, and on the provisions made for ensuring that all component countries comply fully with the commitments involved and forswear the independent acquisition of nuclear-explosive capability. It is also essential that supplementary arrangements applicable to states outside the region concerned be realistic and fully consistent with generally-recognized principles of international law. Moreover, it is important to recognize that there can be no all-purpose blueprint for nuclear-weapon-free-zone arrangements. Obviously, when requested, the United Nations has a responsibility to assist in the establishment of such arrangements, but the terms of such arrangements cannot be imposed.

Before leaving the question of nuclear proliferation, I want to emphasize the need for a constructive approach to the assessment of

the progress achieved since the NPT Review Conference. Canada recognizes that the NPT is not a perfect instrument. Nevertheless, it must be borne firmly in mind that, whatever its weaknesses, the treaty's objectives are as valid today as they were when it was concluded. We agree with the many states which deeply regret that more has not been done to reinforce it.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the non-proliferation system is as much in the interest of non-nuclear-weapon states as of nuclear-weapon states. It is as much in the interest of developing countries as of developed countries. The non-proliferation system has the cardinal value of sparing non-nuclear-weapon states the diversion of economic and human resources to non-productive and potentially destructive ends.

Although first priority must be given to checking the growth and averting the spread of nuclear arms, we must seek and exploit every opportunity to curb the growth and use of other weapons. For three decades we have been spared a nuclear war, but conventional arms have continued to exact an appalling toll in life, suffering and material destruction. The international arms trade has reached mammoth proportions, and continues to devour vast resources urgently needed for productive economic and social purposes throughout the world. The need to check the growth and spread of conventional arms has been largely ignored in disarmament forums. Concerted international action is urgently required among both suppliers and recipients to check the growth in the arms trade. As other members of this Assembly have already suggested, it might be particularly fruitful to approach this problem at the regional level.

The Vienna negotiations for mutual and balanced force reductions in Central Europe offer the prospect of significant steps in disarmament and the reduction of the danger of confrontation at the regional level. Unfortunately, progress has been slow and the negotiations are now about to enter their fourth year with little measurable achievement yet in sight. Canada attaches high priority to MBFR and, in that forum as in others, will continue to work for the achievement of meaningful measures of disarmament and the improvement of mutual confidence.

It is particularly timely that, in the middle of the Disarmament Decade, we are reviewing the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Canada fully supports the search for ways of enabling the UN to carry out this role more effectively. We have participated in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee established last year to undertake this review, and we are prepared to endorse its report. The United Nations remains the principal forum in which to focus world

attention on the need to limit and reduce the levels of military forces and armaments, for the exchange of views among member states on multilateral disarmament issues and for encouraging the examination of disarmament-related questions in other international forums.

At the same time, it has been repeatedly recognized in resolutions of this Assembly that the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament continues to be the most appropriate forum for the negotiation of arms-control agreements intended to have universal application. Canada deeply regrets that, except for the draft environmental-modification convention, no arms-control treaty has emerged from the CCD in recent years. Nevertheless, the CCD remains well suited to the negotiation of international arms-control agreements whenever fundamental political and other obstacles can be overcome. The value of the CCD would be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of those nuclear-weapon states that have not yet participated in its work. The CCD has decided to undertake a comprehensive review of its procedures early in 1977. Canada supports efforts to improve the effectiveness of the CCD and will, in particular, be prepared to give sympathetic consideration to changes in the structure or procedures of the CCD that would make possible the participation of more than three of the nuclear-weapon states.

The CCD's utility as a negotiating forum has been again well demonstrated this year by the elaboration of a draft convention to prohibit the military or any other hostile use of environmental-modification techniques. We are well aware of the reservations some countries have about the draft convention, particularly about the scope of its prohibition. We do not consider the draft convention to be a faultless document, nor, given the other and more pressing priorities in the arms-control field, do we regard it as a major landmark. Canada is, nevertheless, prepared to join in recommending to governments that they sign the draft convention in its present form in the hope that it will inhibit whatever plans some states might otherwise make or contemplate for the hostile use of environmental-modification techniques. Its provision for periodic review is particularly important in dealing with techniques so little understood as those the convention seeks to regulate. We also support fully the provision in Article III of the draft convention for the fullest possible exchange of scientific and technological information in the use of environmental-modification techniques for peaceful purposes, which, we hope, will help to foster greater international co-operation in a field of vital importance to us all.

Canada sincerely hopes that the value of the CCD will be further demonstrated in the continuing consideration it is expected to give to a convention to prohibit the development, production and stock-

piling of chemical weapons. Discussion of this question in the CCD and elsewhere this year has provided some glimmer of hope for at least a modest breakthrough towards resolving the problems -- particularly the problems of verification -- that have so long stood in the way of achieving such a convention. This Assembly should give further encouragement to the CCD to press ahead with this task.

We also look for progress in the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts. At this stage, all of us must redouble our efforts to ensure that agreements will be reached on certain prohibitions or restrictions on the use of specific conventional weapons that may cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects.

Many members of the Assembly have expressed the view that the cause of disarmament could be significantly advanced by the convening of a special session on disarmament. Canada stands ready to support a call for such a special session and to participate fully and constructively in it and in the careful preparations that it will require. It must not be a dialogue of the deaf. Our objective for the session must be to infuse a new sense of purpose into the quest for peace and security.

I have sought to underline the arms-control problems Canada considers most pressing. It should be clear to this Committee that Canadians firmly believe that no more time must be lost in seeking resolutions to those problems. We must all, as the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs said in this Assembly on September 29, "re-examine our traditional assumptions, take adequate account of the security concerns of others and seize all opportunities for concrete action".