



Statements and Speeches

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CANADIAN POSITION ON DISARMAMENT RESTATED

A Statement by the Adviser on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs, Mr G.A.H. Pearson, to the First Committee of the Thirty-third Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 21, 1978.

To prevent war and to maintain international stability, most members of the United Nations believe that they must be prepared to defend themselves, either singly or collectively. This means that, unless and until there is a radical change of attitudes amongst peoples and governments, which we cannot realistically anticipate soon, the goal of general and complete disarmament is bound to continue to seem a distant one.

Deterrence has been an important, perhaps decisive, factor in preventing a global war during the past three decades, but there is no assurance that deterrence will continue indefinitely to provide stability if the nuclear-arms race continues. The appearance of new, more accurate and more efficient systems of weapons may upset the present balance or create perceptions and fears that it will do so. At the same time, the proliferation of nuclear weapons could increase the risk of war by accident or miscalculation, as well as making arms-control agreements more difficult to achieve and verify. For example, ten years ago the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. possessed approximately 2,700 strategic missile warheads. Today, this number is reported to be close to 15,000. In addition, new weapons can erode the viability of, and confidence in, existing arms-control treaties. Thus, continuing development and production of nuclear weapons is fraught with such dangers that at some point in the near future the factors weighing against the use of nuclear weapons may be undermined.

**Strategic
Arms
Limitation
Talks
(SALT)**

We believe there cannot be any long-term solution to the problem of horizontal proliferation unless the two major nuclear powers succeed in halting and reversing vertical proliferation, as they are pledged to do by Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Even in the short term, failure by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. to reach agreement to curb substantially their strategic nuclear-weapons systems can seriously jeopardize the strengthening of the non-proliferation régime. We know that the two major nuclear-weapons powers are conscious of these realities; otherwise they would not be committed to seeking agreement in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. We understand, too, that the SALT negotiations deal with the vital security interests of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. and their allies, and that in these circumstances progress cannot easily be made. However, we must confess that we find the pace of these negotiations very slow in view of the vital interest that we all have in their successful conclusion.

Canada reiterates its earnest hope that the talks will soon lead to agreement. Our attitude towards them is and will be guided by the following factors:

- Negotiations should be pursued as an ongoing process, with each successful agree-
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ment setting the stage for the next round of negotiations.

– SALT should seek not only restraints but also substantially-reduced ceilings on strategic nuclear weapons.

– SALT should seek not only quantitative limitations and reductions but also far-reaching limitations and prohibitions on qualitative improvements and innovations in such weaponry.

– Agreements must be verifiable and thus give assurance they will be observed.

– We understand that a ban on the flight-testing of strategic delivery vehicles can be verified by national technical means and thus may be one useful and feasible way to seek to curtail the qualitative aspects of the arms race.

– With those thoughts in mind, my delegation fully supported the language of Paragraphs 50 and 52 of the final document of the special session on disarmament, with their emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative limitations. We also supported Resolution 32/87G adopted by the thirty-second session of the General Assembly and we continue to do so.

**Comprehensive
Test
Ban**

I wish to repeat here the views of my Government on the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB), which was the first of the four points outlined by my Prime Minister in his "strategy of suffocation" to arrest the dynamic of the nuclear-arms race:

– A treaty prohibition of nuclear tests, with effective verification to provide adequate assurance of compliance, would be an additional qualitative restraint on the nuclear-weapons development process and thus have an impact on vertical proliferation.

– As a multilateral treaty to which non-nuclear-weapons states as well as nuclear-weapons states might adhere, it would also have value in reinforcing the international system to prevent horizontal proliferation.

– Canada believes that a comprehensive test ban should be pursued as a matter of urgency, as stipulated in Paragraph 51 of the final document of the special session. We understand that the negotiations now being pursued by the U.S., Britain and the U.S.S.R. are close to conclusion and we can look forward to early consideration of the results in the Committee on Disarmament.

**Cessation of
the production
of fissionable
material**

On many occasions, and most recently during the special session, Canada and many other states have drawn attention to the fact that agreement on the cessation of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes would also contribute to the ending of the nuclear-arms race. We welcome the explicit recognition of this approach in Paragraph 50 of the final document of the special session on disarmament. Obviously, as is the case with many other measures in the disarmament field, the usefulness of such an agreement would depend on the application of effective verification measures, which, in this instance, should include acceptance of full-scope or comprehensive safeguards under the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) or some equivalent system.

The objective, in our opinion, should be the elaboration by the Committee on Disarmament of a multilateral treaty, to which both non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon states might adhere, prohibiting the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons

or other nuclear-explosive devices, and prohibiting the diversion for nuclear weapons or other nuclear-explosive devices of any fissionable material produced in connection with peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Such a measure would have the advantage of focusing in the same instrument on both the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, before negotiations could proceed very far in the multilateral phase, it would be desirable for the two major nuclear powers, and any other nuclear-weapons states willing to participate, to explore the "cut-off" aspects, including the verification aspects applying particularly to nuclear-weapons states. Verification backed up by full-scope safeguards would ensure that all parties to such an eventual treaty would be bound essentially to the safeguards accepted by the non-nuclear-weapons states party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Canada, therefore, believes that it would be appropriate, especially in view of the renewed interest shown in this subject, that this question be given early consideration in the Committee on Disarmament.

Studies

My remarks so far have been directed mostly to actual or potential negotiations about agreements on nuclear-arms control. I have, in the context of the CTB and the cessation of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, already recalled the "strategy of suffocation" which my Prime Minister outlined before the special session on disarmament. Two other elements of that strategy, as he noted them, would be agreements to stop flight-testing of all new strategic delivery vehicles, and to limit and then progressively to reduce military spending on all new strategic nuclear-weapons systems, subject to the proper verification procedures. All four of these elements remain important and should not be put aside. Even if at the present moment concrete steps towards implementation of the whole strategy may be premature, nevertheless they can and should be studied, either individually or as a part of a concerted approach. The special session has already commissioned a somewhat similar study on disarmament and international security. We are also looking forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board concerning a United Nations Studies Program. We should expect that a part of this program would include the constructive proposal by Sweden for a study of nuclear-weapons systems. Such a study would provide a further opportunity to examine the kind of approach proposed by Canada that I have just recalled.

**Reduction of
military
spending**

Clearly, balanced reductions of military expenditures in a bilateral, regional or even world-wide context would also have considerable benefits. As I mentioned earlier, in my intervention on Item 125 on October 27, the development of a standardized system of reporting could open the way to the possibility of creating measures for the reduction of military expenditures. We ought to consider the possibility of multi-lateral discussions on how and in what fields of military spending these reductions could be implemented. Necessary conditions for progress would be greater willingness to make information available and the need for adequate verification. I must here express disappointment that support for a pilot study of a standardized reporting system has been limited so far to a very small number of countries. Without the participation of countries from different geopolitical groups, including all nuclear-weapons states, any such test will be of limited value.

Conventional weapons

Four-fifths of the \$400 billion spent on weapons each year is spent on so-called conventional weapons. In our opinion, the time has come for an examination of all aspects of the problem of conventional disarmament, including the transfer of arms. We are aware that such transfers are now the object of bilateral talks between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. We assume that these talks will involve, at a later stage, other major suppliers. However, it seems to us that this approach could usefully be complemented by multilateral and regional approaches involving importers. The Committee on Disarmament should give more attention to this subject. The objective would be to achieve the same security at a lower level of armaments and to introduce some qualitative and quantitative restraints on production as well as transfers.

We also hope that the Conference on the Prohibition or Restriction of the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons will be able to complete its task next year by producing meaningful agreements prohibiting or limiting the use of various weapons. Military and security considerations are legitimate, but they must also be weighed against humanitarian concerns. If we cannot prevent war, at the least we can try to limit its effects.

Regional approaches

The Latin American countries have given the rest of the international community a unique example in the field of regional approaches to disarmament. The Treaty of Tlatelolco has so far established the only nuclear-weapon-free zone in a populated area, and constitutes a rare success. We are particularly pleased by the willingness of all the nuclear-weapons powers to enter into the formal and binding obligations required by Protocols I and II of the treaty. We strongly hope that the few remaining countries of that zone who have not yet done so will ratify the treaty in the near future and waive the conditions for its entry into force for themselves also, so that the objectives of the treaty are completely and universally achieved.

Latin America is also to be commended for its efforts to agree on self-restraints in the field of conventional weapons. If the signatories of the Ayacucho Declaration succeed in their enterprise, they will have once more achieved another "first" in disarmament. I wish to reiterate our full support for this promising undertaking.

Another example of the regional approach is to be found in the confidence-building measures agreed to among the signatories of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. We hope that those measures so far agreed [on] can be extended and that other regions of the world will be able to initiate similar efforts.

Chemical weapons

The negotiation of a treaty on chemical weapons has been given high priority by this Assembly for many years. Intensive bilateral discussions are going on between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. to produce, as requested, a joint initiative for submission to the Committee on Disarmament. We understand that progress is being made but that it may take some time before the key elements of a treaty can be tabled in the Committee on Disarmament by their two co-sponsors. We should like to express here the strong hope that, when the Committee meets, it will start work on areas where there is already a large measure of agreement, such as the scope of a future treaty, whether

or not the bilateral negotiations are complete. It is obvious that there will be considerable work to be done before we begin the negotiation of a multilateral treaty on chemical weapons. We believe that the Committee on Disarmament could usefully begin this task by establishing a working group that, for example, could deal with the definition of chemical agents.

I have commented briefly on some of the items listed on our agenda. Each of them deserves more time than it is possible to give in this debate, even though some have been the subject of intense scrutiny for many years. We know that oratory will not bring agreement. We also know that very real differences of view are the cause of stalemate or of slow progress. But, in the absence of genuine negotiation on a multilateral basis, there is little alternative to the making of speeches. We express at the United Nations our collective sense of urgency. As Dag Hammarskjöld put it over 20 years ago, "people might rightly feel that it is not in keeping with their reasonable rights to life to have to live under the kind of threat that ... emerges from the total situation as it develops while the discussions are going on". That threat is greater now, and we therefore welcome the fact that prospects of agreement on further measures to restrain the strategic-arms race appear to be good. Arms-control measures are clearly vital. But we must move on, and move soon, to real disarmament if we are to keep control of the human future itself.

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