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Statement of the Right  
Honourable Joe Clark,  
Secretary of State for  
External Affairs, in the  
House of Commons on  
"USA-USSR Nuclear  
Arms Control  
Negotiations"

HOUSE OF COMMONS

January 23, 1986.

For Canadians, no duty is more challenging than to contribute constructively to peace among nations. In a world threatened by the spread of arms, we are one country who, decades ago, chose deliberately not to acquire nuclear weapons. We had the capacity. We made the choice, not as a gesture, but as a practical contribution to the control of arms. That is part of the character of Canada.

One of the first acts of this government was to reconstitute the Consultative Group on Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs. On October 31st, meeting with that Group, the Prime Minister spelled out six Canadian goals in arms control and disarmament:

- (1) negotiated radical reductions in nuclear forces and the enhancement of strategic stability;
- (2) maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime;
- (3) negotiation of a global chemical weapons ban;
- (4) support for a comprehensive test ban treaty;
- (5) prevention of an arms race in outer space; and
- (6) the building of confidence sufficient to facilitate the reduction of military forces in Europe and elsewhere.

A year ago, in a statement in Parliament, I expressed the government's satisfaction at the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to resume negotiations in Geneva. The decision to meet again, and to expand the agenda to encompass the prevention of an arms race in outer space and its termination on earth, was an act of confidence and statesmanship. These negotiations have been underway for nine months now.

As I said last year, we should be under no illusion that the course at Geneva will be an easy one. It will be long and arduous. We are encouraged by the signs of progress, in particular, the tabling last fall of detailed American and Soviet proposals which contained some important common features: a 50% reduction of nuclear arsenals, limits on warheads as well as launchers, and sublimits on ICBM warheads. We hope that, in this International Year of Peace, the experienced negotiators of both sides will be able to enlarge significantly on this common ground. Agreement on an

equitable formula for the radical reduction of nuclear forces and on the appropriate relationship between offensive and defensive strategies and systems will remain the key challenges.

We welcome the broad ranging proposal issued last week by General Secretary Gorbachov and its reaffirmation of the Soviet Union's commitment to nuclear disarmament. That is the most recent in a long history of suggestions, by both superpowers, on how to achieve general and complete disarmament. In this context conventional arms, where the Soviet Union has an overwhelming superiority, will also have to find their place. The Soviet Union has the opportunity to address this imbalance in its response to the Western proposal, tabled in Vienna last month, at the talks on Mutual Balanced Force Reductions.

The Soviet Union does not address the issue of missiles deployed in Asia. But we take satisfaction from the fact that Mr. Gorbachov seems to be moving closer to President Reagan's 1981 zero-zero proposal on the elimination of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. The explicit Soviet recognition of the importance of verification in the negotiation of arms control is gratifying, as is the apparent movement towards long-standing Western positions on the need for on-site inspection. The exact nature of what the Soviets will accept in this regard will have to be determined. We also note potentially constructive references to issues before other arms control forums.

It is, of course, too early to offer more than this tentative assessment of the proposals. They contain some intriguing new elements alongside well-worn positions and some disturbing preconditions that could hamper negotiation. They clearly warrant very serious consideration, but there are also many aspects that require clarification in the on-going negotiations. The real test of the Soviet Union's commitment to radical and verifiable arms reductions will come when it moves from the stage of public diplomacy to the confidential confines of the negotiating room.

The Geneva Summit and the decision to regularize this high-level contact improve the prospects for progress in arms control. Besides bringing leaders together, regular meetings build in an annual accounting of progress on arms control and encourage leaders to resolve issues which negotiators cannot.

Through the channels open to us, Canada will actively encourage the conduct of serious and constructive negotiations. The House should note the extraordinary degree

to which the United States has informed and consulted with its Allies since the Geneva process was resumed. The Prime Minister's personal meetings and conversations with President Reagan provide a continuing avenue of Canadian influence on the Administration's positions on arms control.

In December, in Brussels, I convened a special meeting of Canadian arms control ambassadors to identify specific areas where Canada might contribute to practical progress. One instrument is to press within NATO for more frequent and focussed consultation on the state of the various arms control negotiations and their implications for Alliance policies.

We will not, however, be talking only amongst ourselves. This Government is committed to promoting a more active and meaningful dialogue with the countries of the Eastern bloc. In September the Prime Minister wrote to General Secretary Gorbachov outlining Canadian views and priorities with respect to arms control and disarmament. Last month I sent a team of Canadian officials to Moscow for consultations on arms control with the top Soviet experts, Ambassadors Petrovsky and Karpov. Similar consultations are planned with other East European countries this year. We are ensuring that the key players in international security affairs are made directly aware of Canadian views.

What else can Canada do? What special practical contributions can we make to arms control?

This Government's activity will be focussed in three directions: 1) encouraging compliance with existing treaties; 2) developing verification mechanisms and 3) building confidence between East and West.

To deviate from a policy of full compliance is to threaten the credibility, and hence the viability of arms control. Canada firmly supports the regime created by the ABM treaty and the existing SALT agreements on limiting strategic forces. Our stance towards SDI research is rooted in the need to conform strictly with the provisions of the ABM Treaty. We will continue to urge the parties to these treaties to do nothing to undermine their integrity, but rather work to reinforce their status and authority.

Effective verification provisions can help ensure compliance with arms control treaties as well as facilitate their negotiation. Verification is an area where Canadian expertise and diplomacy come together. At the UN this fall, a Canadian-initiated resolution on verification was

unanimously adopted. We are second to none in our activity to develop verification procedures and technology that meet the practical requirements of arms control agreements actually under negotiation or envisaged.

To cite only the most important projects recently completed or underway:

- 1) the Peace Satellite, or PAXSAT project examines the technical feasibility of a satellite-based system for monitoring potential arms control agreements covering outer space or conventional forces in Europe;
- 2) research into seismic technology for detecting low-yield nuclear tests that pose a major obstacle in the way of agreement on a nuclear test ban;
- 3) the elaboration of operational procedures for effective investigation of incidents of alleged chemical weapons use, the results of which have recently been handed over to the UN Secretary General;
- 4) the tabling at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva of a working paper on the nature of the legal regime governing outer space.

We must not forget that the prospects for progress on arms control are clearly linked to an improvement in the general East-West relationship. Confidence can be gradually generated through political actions that promote East-West consultation and co-operation.

The enhancement of the political dialogue with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe and the inclusion in it of a healthy element of people-to-people contact are major objectives of our Government. This past year has seen an impressive number of high-level visits between Canada and Eastern Bloc states. Both the Prime Minister and I visited the Soviet Union, and Mr. Kelleher and Mme Vézina travelled inter alia to Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria. We received in Canada the Romanian President, the Premier of the Russian Republic and the Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary.

Canada was host to the Human Rights Experts Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and is playing an active part in the other CSCE-mandated meetings which are working to realize the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. These include the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures, the Bern meeting on human contacts, and the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting which will convene in November to review the whole spectrum of CSCE activity. Last summer I joined the Foreign Ministers of the

other CSCE participating states in Helsinki to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act and to reaffirm our commitment to increase the level of security and cooperation in Europe. Canada believes the CSCE can be an important vehicle for advancing our security and humanitarian goals.

So, as the fourth round of Soviet-American nuclear arms talks get underway in Geneva, this Government will assist, in every way possible, the process of negotiation towards an equitable agreement. By encouraging compliance with the fundamental arms control treaties, by developing practical solutions to verification problems and by supporting an improvement in the East-West political relationship, Canada can make a distinctive and significant contribution to realizing the critical objectives of the Geneva negotiations. That is our goal, our duty, and our Canadian tradition.