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STATEMENT OF CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE
GENERAL E. L. M. BURNS,
IN THE FIRST COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT
ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1962.

Mr. Chairman,

The most urgent and important task which faces the international community today is to reach agreement on disarmament. Put in stark terms, if civilization is to survive, the nations of the world must disarm.

Present events show how real and how imminent is the possibility of nuclear war. As the Prime Minister of Canada said on November 5, "to all who know how close we were to war and what war today would mean, it is evident that the nuclear arms race must be halted. The logic of the aftermath is grim but clear and permits of no other conclusion than that if the nations of the world do not take effective steps the next crisis may not permit the world to stop short of the abyss of war".

So the crisis which the world has just faced must give a new strong impetus towards general and complete disarmament and other measures which will reduce international tensions and sources of conflict.

President Kennedy wrote to Chairman Khrushchev on October 28: "I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament as it relates to the whole world and also to critical areas. Perhaps now as we step back from danger, we can together make real progress in this vital field. ... We should work hard to see if wide measures of disarmament can be agreed to and put into operation at an early date." Chairman Khrushchev in his letter to President Kennedy of October 28, emphasized the wish of the

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Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to succeed in eliminating the tense international atmosphere and to continue efforts to achieve progress on complete and general disarmament and other matters leading to the relaxation of international tensions.

We think that everyone recognizes that to advance towards general and complete disarmament and to get agreement on measures preliminary to disarmament which could reduce tension and the danger of nuclear war, will require intense effort and the most painstaking negotiations. Canada maintains the view that the best place for detailed and comprehensive negotiations on a disarmament programme is the conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on disarmament.

The Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee endorsed by Resolution 1722 (XVI) of December 20, 1961, is in our view well suited to the tasks. The conference has several advantages as a negotiating forum. I refer in particular to the role of the eight non-aligned countries; Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and United Arab Republic. The distinguished representative of the United Arab Republic in his statement in the First Committee on November 5 -- and we agree with what he said -- has shown that many changes in both plans were made in response to questions and suggestions of the non-aligned members. The presence of these countries in the Eighteen-Nation Committee has made it representative of all major geographical areas of the world. Their active participation in the conference is a constant reminder that disarmament is not the concern of the great powers alone but of all countries, large and small.

The Eighteen-Nation Conference has also developed procedures and working methods which are appropriate to its task. It has as its permanent Co-Chairmen representatives of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics who have actively co-operated in forwarding the work of the conference. The conference moved from a

rather formal examination of treaty texts in its earlier stages to one of detailed exploration of some of the most difficult problems in the disarmament field. The Canadian delegation is confident that the Eighteen-Nation Committee, with its improving techniques for comprehensive discussion and negotiation: can when it returns to its task succeed not only in bringing the sides closer together but also in achieving a programme for total disarmament.

I should like to discuss another important aspect of the Eighteen-Nation Committee -- the work of the Committee of the Whole, sometimes called the Collateral Measures Committee. This Committee was set up to deal with measures closely related to disarmament which could come into effect quickly, help to relieve international tensions and thereby facilitate agreement on general and complete disarmament. The Collateral Measures Committee has two questions on its agenda for immediate consideration: first, measures to prevent further dissemination of nuclear weapons, and second, reduction of the possibility of war by accident, miscalculation or failure of communications. The recent world crisis has shown us very clearly how vital it is to achieve progress in these two fields.

The first measure on which the Collateral Measures Committee of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee should negotiate is to prevent the wider spread of nuclear weapons. The delegation of Canada would like to associate itself with the eloquent appeal of the distinguished representative of Ireland that the nuclear powers take immediate steps to deal with this urgent problem.

A second measure is to put into effect arrangements to reduce the risk of war by accident. The risk of a nuclear holocaust resulting from accident or miscalculation seems far greater than the risk that any nation would deliberately begin a nuclear war.

A third measure which should be given early consideration concerns the prevention of the stationing of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. The Secretary of State for External Affairs for Canada proposed in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee that a declaration

prohibiting such action be adopted as a matter of priority. International agreement to this effect would be of great value in reducing the fear that the arms race may be extended to this environment. It would also be a first step toward a rule of law in outer space. Moreover, in our view, its adoption would implement and reinforce the two measures I have just mentioned. We welcome the statement by President Kennedy in his letter to Chairman Khrushchev of October 28 that "questions relating to the proliferation of nuclear weapons on earth and in outer space" should be given priority consideration along with related problems.

Another vital question which should be discussed in the Collateral Measures Committee is the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world. The importance of this question has been brought to the attention of this Committee by the proposal of the distinguished Brazilian delegate to create a nuclear-free zone in Latin America. The Canadian delegation believes that the creation of such a zone is primarily a matter for the countries in the region concerned to decide themselves. But the form of such agreements and, what is very important, the means for verifying that their provisions are being observed could appropriately be considered in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, as a measure collateral to disarmament.

Mr. Chairman, if we are to profit from the lessons of the Cuban crisis, it will be of the highest importance that the Eighteen-Nation Committee resume its work at once and that every effort be made to achieve agreement immediately on the important questions to which I have just referred. The statements of President Kennedy, Chairman Khrushchev and Prime Minister MacMillan about which I spoke earlier give new grounds for hope that agreements can be reached in these vital areas.

Taken together, agreements preventing dissemination of nuclear weapons and placing weapons of mass destruction in outer space and measures adopted against war by accident would constitute a significant advance toward a safer and more stable world.

International tensions would be immediately reduced, international security would at once be increased and a notable step forward would be taken towards agreement on general and complete disarmament.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss briefly some of the questions concerning general and complete disarmament which the Eighteen-Nation Committee has recently been considering. Disarmament questions before the conference fall largely within three general categories: first, questions on which differences preventing final agreement are small; second, areas in which significant differences exist between the position of the two sides; third, questions which have not as yet been comprehensively explored in the Disarmament Committee.

Under the first heading, the differences in the position of the two sides concerning conventional armaments and armed forces have been greatly lessened, as a result of changes introduced in both plans during the course of negotiations in Geneva. Canada believes that agreement on the question of conventional disarmament has now come within reach. There are also good prospects of overcoming the remaining differences in a closely related field -- the level of armed forces at the end of stage one and there is already virtual agreement concerning the level of armed forces at the end of stage two. In the field of conventional armaments and armed forces, it will also be important for the Disarmament Committee to study the obligations of smaller countries with regard to the levels of conventional armaments and armed forces which they may be permitted to retain during stages two and three.

In the second category, one of the key areas where substantial differences exist is that of the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons vehicles. Although this question was explored during the last round of discussions in the Disarmament Committee, further consideration is necessary in order to develop a basis for agreement. The Secretary of State for External Affairs for Canada, the Honourable Howard Green, in the Plenary Session of the United

Nations General Assembly on September 25 welcomed the decision of the Soviet Union to modify its proposals for eliminating nuclear weapon vehicles. The Soviet Union's new proposals introduce a change in principle which may possibly be far-reaching, although a detailed examination in the Disarmament Committee will be necessary in order to determine their full significance and effect. While the Canadian delegation wishes to reserve its final views until more is known about what is involved, we consider that the Soviet Union's proposals may help to remove the block to negotiations created by the opposed positions of the two sides on this question.

With regard to the third category -- questions not yet sufficiently explored - - the Eighteen-Nation Committee can, for example, make a valuable contribution in the field of peace-keeping. Both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics draft treaties recognize the importance of improving the means of keeping the peace and contain provisions in regard to it.

The joint statement of agreed principles stipulates that disarmament must be accompanied by the establishment of reliable procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes and effective arrangements for the maintenance of peace in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Chairman, for all of the reasons which I have given, the Canadian Government considers it to be of the highest importance for the Eighteen-Nation Committee to resume its work at once and to make the greatest possible effort to achieve progress in the tasks before it. My delegation, therefore, supports the statement of the distinguished representative of the United Arab Republic and of many other delegations welcoming any initiative which would take note of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee reports, urge that disarmament negotiations be expeditiously continued in a spirit of compromise and request that a progress report be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly within a reasonable period of time. Canada hopes that the United Nations General Assembly will with one voice support a resolution to this effect.