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SPEECH BY THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

TO THE

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT

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Secretary of State for External Affairs | Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures

Canada

Mr. President

Six years ago, at the outset of the Second Special Session on Disarmament, the President of that Assembly could correctly observe that nothing had been achieved in the field of disarmament and arms control since the First Special Session.

This year, we meet in circumstances which are vastly different. The past six years have recorded progress and achievements that will have major implications for Arms Control and Disarmament. The measure of success of this Special Session will be the extent to which our deliberations sustain further the spirit so essential to continued progress and achievement in international disarmament. We must therefore reaffirm our dedication to the success of arms control and disarmament, and pledge ourselves to advance ideas which will keep hope and progress alive.

Our efforts here can only be aided by the outcome of the recent meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev.

That Summit clearly demonstrated the degree of progress which has been made in East-West relations. It was the fourth such meeting between the two leaders in just over two-and-half years, an unprecedented pace for discussion and negotiation.

I was struck by how many observers of the Summit referred to the new agreements signed in Moscow on verification and testing as "minor" arms control measures. When we gathered in previous Special Sessions, the very notion of "minor" arms control agreeements would indeed have sounded strange. We have come to have high expectations of this process.

It is in the vital Soviet-American relationship that much of the progress has been made since the last Special Session. Intensive negotiations between those two States in the last several years have brought new and historic achievements, most notably in the landmark INF Agreement signed in Washington last December and the agreement in principle to reduce strategic nuclear arms by fifty per cent. Those accomplishments present this Special Session with both the opportunity and the stimulus to pursue other avenues leading to greater international security and stability.

The multilateral arms control process has also had significant success in the context of East-West relations. The Stockholm Agreement, which came into effect in January 1987, has brought greater openness and predictability about military activities in Europe. Anticipated new negotiations on conventional stability covering the whole of Europe between all Members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact offer us the opportunity for more progress.

There has also been some movement forward in non-East-West forums but it has been much less spectacular. The Conference on Disarmament has made some progress on negotiations on a global convention to ban chemical weapons, but the repeated reports about the use of chemical weapons in the Gulf War only demonstrates how far we are from an effective agreement and the urgency of our obligations. There was also progress in last year's successful Disarmament and Development Conference, the endorsement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the Third Review Conference of the Treaty; the inclusion of conventional disarmament on the agenda of the United Nations and the consensus report of the UNDC on verification.

In this Special Session it is important that we take realism as our guide and apply what we have learned from our successes, and from our failures. We have learned that arms control and disarmament cannot be viewed as ends in themselves. Both have value only if they contribute to security and well-being. Most countries accept the desirability of constraining or banning weapons systems. But we cannot aspire to the reductions we seek, or the agreements necessary to sustain them, unless all States take advantage of opportunities to support those objectives.

Experience has shown that successful arms control and disarmament agreements share a number of essential qualities. The first and most obvious is enhanced security. Arms control agreements must maintain and enhance the security of all those involved in the negotiation.

There are other essential qualities as well.

One is mutual benefit. Realism in arms control demands that a successful negotiation offer something for all parties.

Negotiations must also be substantive. We must not spend our time negotiating the non-essential or the frivolous. A proliferation of arms control forums is not likely to lead to more arms control agreements unless they have clear and substantive mandates.

Arms controls agreements must also be crafted to ensure that the benefits of limits on weapons are not undone by redeployment or by qualitative improvements to remaining weapons.

A fifth, and related criterion, is non-transferability of the threat. Arms control agreements will achieve little and are unlikely to succeed if they remove the threat from one region by increasing it in another.

Finally, an arms control agreement must be verifiable. The agreement must include not only thorough verification provisions, but the substance of the agreement must be such that compliance can be effectively demonstrated.

These essential qualities are demanding.

Nonetheless our experience clearly shows that while the negotiation of agreements will not be easy, it is not impossible. An effective disarmament and arms control regime can meet these criteria only through measured and individual steps which see every contentious aspect settled. The issues on which we seek agreement vary much too widely and are too complex to allow us to behave otherwise.

Canada sees confidence-building as essential to arms control and disarmament. We regard the concepts of openness, transparency and predictability as imperative. The establishment of agreed procedures for inspections at the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe in September 1986 is an accomplishment which stands as a precedent and model for other arms control negotiations, at bilateral or regional levels.

The principles essential to the success of confidence-building measures should be promoted on every occasion. In this regard, we urge Members of the United Nations to comply with the General Assembly recommendation on reporting annual military expenditures. Only twenty or so countries regularly comply with this recommendation. It is a small step, but we cannot hope to take larger steps without more members of this Assembly giving effect to our own recommendations.

Indeed, one of the happy consequences of the Reagan-Gorbachev summits is to broaden the responsibility for arms control. For some time, the focus of arms control discussions was to encourage the superpowers to act. Now the superpowers are acting, and the question becomes whether other States are prepared to demonstrate themselves the leadership we have asked of the United States and the Soviet Union. It is no longer enough to advocate action by others. Whether the issue is chemical weapons or adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, or fidelity to the recommendations of the General Assembly, the new climate imvolves new obligations for all of us.

Ultimately, neither arms control nor disarmament can succeed without a general will to make them succeed. The issue is fundamentally political, and this Special Session is one assembly in which political wil can be cultivated and demonstrated. Increasing trust, good relations and arms reductions go together: they are mutually reinforcing.

It is not enough that the established framework of international institutions and laws must remain in place; they must as well be respected in practice by Members of the United Nations.

The strength of this institution is not the responsibility of any one group of nations; it is the responsibility of all of its members. We must all work in support of the UN and not undermine it. We cannot ask it to do the impossible. We have to set realistic goals, and we have to give it the means to achieve these goals.

In that context the frequent calls we have heard at this Special Session for a new Fund to transfer the resources saved from disarmament to development is an example of a failure to learn from past experiences. Last year the Disarmament and Development Conference issued a final document stressing the multi-dimensional nature of security. The participants rejected both a direct linkage between disarmament and development and the creation of a fund. Nations like Canada already have mechanisms for providing funds to development, as does the United Nations itself, and in many developing countries there are ample existing claims upon any resources made available through disarmament.

Just as arms control and enhanced security are not a monopoly of the superpowers, neither is disarmament limited to nuclear arms alone. The terrible consequences of military actions in the decades since the Second World War have been caused by conventional, and latterly chemical weapons. We must face this issue squarely.

No conflict or arms build-up, however small or isolated, is irrelevant or can be ignored as any of them can undermine the security of all of us.

Canada is determined to play a leading role in moving the agenda forward. Our commitment and contribution to the cause of arms control and disarmament is well established. We will use the influence we have, and make available the expertise we hold to help reduce the danger of conflict, and to reverse the build-up of arms.

Our first goal at this Special Session, therefore, should be to endorse continued adherence to a well founded and realistic approach to arms control and disarmament.

This requires that we set clear, realistic goals, and that we choose and adhere to priorities. In arms control and disarmament, priorities must be established no less than in other areas if we are to have specific landmarks against which to measure progress. This lesson is especially true for the United Nations and for its arms control activities.

This Special Session will help to keep alive the spirit of progress and achievement if it can identify and isolate those areas which command consensus and where we can agree we should concentrate our efforts. Canada has listened with interest and attention to the statements of the Special Session. We believe that a measure of agreement does exist on certain issues where Canada considers it would be worthwhile to concentrate our attention in the future.

First, deep and verifiable reductions in the arsenals of nuclear weapon must remain as the highest priority in international disarmament.

The achievement of a comprehensive Test Ban Treaty remains a fundamental and enduring objective for Canada. The Special Session should recognize the successful efforts already made in Soviet-American negotiations in this area and endorse this full-scale stage-by-stage negotiating procedure.

No measure demonstrates the commitment of a nation to nuclear disarmament more effectively than adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Beginning last week and throughout this session, officials of the Canadian Government, on my instructions, will be calling on the Governments of all non-signatories of this Treaty, strongly urging any nation that has not done so to accede to this essential arms control treaty. I hope that the Special Session will issue a similar call. It is no longer possible to argue, as some have, that the superpowers must first reduce their own nuclear arsenals. If that was a condition preordinate, it has been met.

The focus of attention on nuclear arms should not, however, be allowed to deflect atention from the need for progress in arms reduction in the field of conventional arms. This question must be addressed with no less urgency than that attached to nuclear questions. It is in this area that regional approaches to arms control and disarmament may well provide the best returns.

The negotiation of a Convention prohibiting chemical weapons and eliminating their stockpiles must be regarded as a matter of paramount importance. This Session should unequivocally condemn their use. While progress has been accomplished, greater efforts must be made to conclude an effectively verifiable comprehensive ban on chemical weapons.

Until such an Agreement is reached, every step must be taken to prevent the transfer to other states of chemical weapons, and to follow the example of those countries which have moved to control the export of highly toxic chemicals and to institute a "Warning List" procedure for others.

The prevention of an arms race in space remains a major goal of Canadian policy and a matter which concerns us all. Canada will continue to work to ensure that outer space is developed for peaceful purposes.

Verification is essential to the Arms Control and Disarmament process. It has been a major preoccupation for Canada and we are encouraged that so many speakers in this forum share that priority.

Already, a welcome new international consensus has developed on this subject. In May, last year, the Disarmament Commission established a Working Group on Verification which Canada chaired. This year, the Working Group adopted a report which included sixteen verification principles amplifying the provisions on verification agreed at the First Special Session. I would urge all Members of the United Nations to reinforce the efforts of the Disarmament Commission and subscribe fully to these principles.

To help promote the cause of multilateralism in this field, we and the Netherlands have proposed that an in-depth study be undertaken by a United Nations Group of Experts. Such a report will advance international understanding of verification within the UN framework, and help develop an appropriate role for the Organization in this field. I ask that Members of the United Nations support this proposal.

Mr. President, in the last six years, we have shown that arms control and disarmament can work, and that it can be made part of the growing fabric of our international relations. Canada stands ready to work with member States in the pursuit of goals agreed by this Special Session. Let us continue to nourish further the cause of arms control and disarmament.

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