



CANADA

The Permanent Mission of Canada
to the United Nations
at Geneva

La Mission Permanente du Canada
auprès des Nations Unies
à Genève

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR J. ALAN BEESLEY

BEFORE THE

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1984

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Mr. President:

I have asked for the floor to stress the urgency and importance which the Canadian government accords to certain of the arms control and disarmament issues before us, and in so doing take stock of our progress on them.

I join others in congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the CD. Canada and Sri Lanka have had a long and fruitful association, cemented by Commonwealth ties, going back beyond the origins of the Colombo plan; indeed our shared views on world peace and security were most recently

publicly proclaimed in the Declaration at the end of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit held at Goa last year.

The method of consultations with the President has been, in our view, both welcome and effective in dealing with the procedural issues before us. Your initiative and determination in this regard has been and is particularly valuable.

Mr. President:

In commenting on some of the issues we consider most urgent and important now before the Committee on Disarmament, we propose to address both substance and procedure.

As a general comment, we deeply regret that it has not proven possible to make more progress in the CD this year, even on matters of procedure. It is open to serious question whether we can afford to maintain the present practice of reviewing each year, as if all items were new, the necessity for and terms of reference of, each of the CD's subsidiary bodies. Most will agree that the time expended is disproportionate to the results obtained and indeed, as many

have suggested, may well be unnecessary. We fully support efforts now underway to improve our work methods. This said, process cannot be confused with progress.

There is no point either in repeating the need for governments to implement in a concrete fashion the rhetoric they have so often voiced on arms control. This need is obvious, and has been expressed many times. What is needed, if this body is to retain its credibility, is to begin to register, as the result of decisions made in capitals, the progress that so many have demanded and which is so clearly required for the maintenance and strengthening of mutual security.

The process in the CD as it pertains to the chemical weapons issue had apparently developed and matured and had succeeded in concluding for the year on an up-beat note. Some dared to suggest, perhaps overly optimistically, that for the 1984 Session, the experience gained in that area might inject itself into other areas of immediate concern.

I must confess however that if this has occurred, it is not immediately apparent. The immediate impression of the

process - the public impression, I have no doubt - is that there is a danger of spreading even more thinly our limited resources over a proliferation of issues many of which are marginal to the significant issues of the day. In this body there is no lack of commitment, no absence of world-wide deeply held concerns, but this contrasts strongly with the lack of practical progress in the negotiation of matters that are among the most complex, urgent - and vital - issues of our times.

It is, however, in our view pointless and unfair to criticize the Conference on Disarmament for this lack of progress. In the final analysis, difficulties experienced in this Conference nearly always reflect substantive concerns relating to perceptions concerning national security, and those difficulties can only be resolved in capitals. Unfortunately, what is lacking in all too many cases is the willingness to negotiate seriously on those very issues on which informed public opinion the world over is demanding urgent action.

Mr. President:

I now wish to turn to three of the issues which we consider of paramount importance, on which, I suggest, our major efforts should be concentrated during the summer session. These issues are a chemical weapons treaty, a nuclear test ban and outer space. I propose to comment also, very briefly, on the question of radiological weapons.

It is common ground that it is in our negotiations on a chemical weapons ban that the greatest progress has been made. All members of the Conference have contributed: first, through the more than 200 working papers which had been submitted to form the basis for our negotiation and, secondly, through the negotiating process from which the consensus report CD 416 emerged last summer. The momentum has been sustained by a number of significant developments since the first of the year. There are, of course, at least three previous draft treaties dating back to 1972 and more than twenty other working papers, including four from Canada, pertaining to specific aspects of a convention. But certainly the U.S. submission on April 18, 1984 is the most comprehensive and detailed draft treaty and one which, if it could be put into force tomorrow,

would virtually assure a chemical weapons free world within ten years.

Many have commented on the recent initiatives undertaken by both the United States and the Soviet Union in the field of chemical weapons. In our view, they reflect a common desire to proceed with serious negotiation and to achieve concrete results.

Earlier this session, in our statement of February 21, we welcomed the Soviet proposal for on-site inspection of destruction of chemical weapons stocks. At the time, speaking immediately after Ambassador Issraelyan, we said that this Soviet initiative was a most welcome development in the ongoing negotiating process on a ban on chemical weapons, and represented a significant step forward. We also said that we hoped that this Soviet proposal had broader implications. We reaffirm our satisfaction at this Soviet initiative, which we are confident will assist in providing impetus, along with the recently-tabled USA draft on a chemical weapons ban, to our negotiations on this subject.

The unpalatable truth about chemical weapons is that restraint in their use in many cases has been motivated more by

fear of retaliation than by legal considerations. Whatever one's legal position may be about the universality of the legal principles embodied in the Geneva Protocol of 1925, we must assume that there is sufficient general agreement on the need for the banning of the development, production, stockpiling, retention, transfer and use of chemical weapons that there is a realistic prospect for agreement. Similarly, it is our view that there must be acceptance of the principle that unless there is adequate assurance of verification of compliance with the terms of the Convention by all parties, states will be extremely fearful of giving up their deterrent.

Many are still studying the U.S. draft treaty submitted by Vice-President Bush last week; many are also awaiting further elaboration of the Soviet position on on-site inspection of the destruction of chemical weapons stocks. The test is now whether these two related proposals will give the needed impetus to the negotiation - and general acceptance - of the essential agreement we are pursuing.

The U.S. proposal is, as already stated the most comprehensive and, not surprisingly, the most detailed. Like the USSR approach, it also embodies a bold step forward on the path we all wish to follow. With respect to the U.S. proposal,

we should all recognize this initiative as a genuine attempt on the part of a superpower to bring about disarmament on chemical weapons. Whatever the reaction to the specific provisions, the draft treaty must be recognized as a development of major importance. While there are stipulations, particularly in the compliance aspects of the treaty, which may be viewed as stringent, nevertheless, these provisions are mutually applicable, indeed generally applicable. By including them in the draft, the United States has signalled, in advance, its willingness to comply. It is fundamental, in our view, to recognize at the outset of our negotiations on treaty language that the alternative to effective verification is either complete trust or continuing reliance on a state's own capabilities; the former is perhaps the ideal, but is unrealistic; the latter is the reverse of the ideal, and it is undesirable. Clearly, only very stringent verification measures would motivate states to put their faith - and their national security - in treaty provisions rather than self-help. This is an apparent truism, but one which warrants most careful consideration. Stringent verification provisions may be not only our best alternative to self-help, with all its attendant horrors - but the only alternative.

The United States initiative, which is directed at replacing deterrent stockpiles of chemical weapons by treaty safeguards, thus constitutes a very significant contribution toward our common goal of achieving a global ban on chemical weapons, a long-standing Canadian objective of prime importance. We pledge our readiness - indeed our determination - to participate actively in achieving this objective, and we encourage all CD members to approach the proposal in an open-minded and cooperative manner. We must bear in mind that we are all here not only as representatives of our respective governments but are in a broader capacity, representing the international community as a whole. If problems are encountered, they should be met with alternative practical suggestions.

It is essential also that we recognize that a chemical weapons convention could serve a double objective. If successfully negotiated and concluded, it will contribute to mutual security by defining and controlling a ban amongst those who now possess chemical weapons. Of equal importance, however, a treaty banning chemical weapons would have a horizontal dimension to complement this vertical dimension: it would regulate and control the enforcement of a ban amongst countries not now possessing chemical weapons. It is in this

sense of non-proliferation as a fundamental objective, that such a treaty could have truly universal implications. Its effectiveness, however, and even the degree of its universality, could be proportional to its enforceability, a point we have already emphasized.

There is yet another consideration of potentially far-reaching importance: while our negotiating process on chemical weapons is significant in its own right, it may have implications going beyond CW. Even our progress to date provides evidence that mutual security - and the mechanisms necessary to ensure it - are not simply the product of a process whereby gains in security by one or more parties result in a lessening of the security of others. Surely it is obvious that the successful negotiation of a generally acceptable convention prohibiting the proliferation of chemical weapons would contribute to the security of all.

There are, of course, political and even legal as well as practical or procedural difficulties. Each government has its own perception of its respective national interests as regards the CW Convention, and understandably so. All these interests must be fully taken into account through the negotiating process in order to create a document representing

the highest common denominator of agreement on the essential goals we are pursuing. If the negotiating process is to work, these difficult issues mentioned must be faced squarely and honestly, without resorting to polemics or casting doubt upon one another's motives.

The reality of the use of chemical weapons in some areas of the world serves to underline the urgency and importance of the task which confronts us. This Conference has, I think, been wise to isolate such tragic events from our ongoing negotiations, except as a constant reminder of the immediacy of our work.

Before concluding our comments on the subject of chemical weapons, I should like to point out that our experience on this matter proves definitely that we can overcome procedural problems when there is a common desire - in this case, perhaps a determination - to do so.

We are, of course, gratified that procedural problems were overcome, and that the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the period 16 January - 6 February was adopted by consensus at this session. We are mindful of the fact, however, that notwithstanding the recommendation in that report that

negotiations on a CW Convention begin immediately, procedural difficulties again prevented such an immediate commencement of negotiations by this body. That such procedural difficulties should occur, in the light of a carefully-negotiated pre-existing consensus document, - one of the major aims of which was to avoid such delays, - is particularly regrettable, and, I suggest, provides a lesson to all of us concerned to preserve both the effectiveness and credibility of this forum. This is a matter to which we should give most careful consideration, not merely because, as I mentioned earlier, we are here in a representative capacity, but because we are all answerable - admittedly to varying degrees - to our respective publics. Like it or not, however, we are collectively answerable to world public opinion, and we would do well to remember this and ensure that this forum is not misused.

I should like to take this opportunity of singling out Ambassador Ekéus as a classic example of a "servant of the Conference" who, as Chairman of the Chemical Weapons Committee, has shown us how it is possible, given patience and perseverance, coupled with concern and commitment, to move our work along, in the face of a series of procedural problems, some familiar and some new. It is to his credit, and to his working group coordinators, Messrs Akkerman of The Netherlands,

Duarte of Brazil and Thielicke of the German Democratic Republic, that we have been able to resume our work which was unnecessarily interrupted. Ambassador Ekéus has shown us, as did his predecessor Ambassador McPhail, how we can pick our way through a procedural maze when we are sufficiently motivated to do so.

We are honoured that Ambassador Ekéus has asked Canada to undertake consultations on his behalf to determine how the question of use may best be incorporated into the terms of the convention. We shall undertake these consultations objectively and impartially with a view to achieving the best possible result for all.

Turning now to the issue of a comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban, I need hardly remind this Conference that a Nuclear Test Ban was one of the four basic elements of the strategy of suffocation proposal by Prime Minister Trudeau at UNSSOD I in 1978. It remains a fundamental objective of the Canadian government. As the Prime Minister observed at the time, such a ban could be implemented only by the mutual agreement of those

nations carrying out such tests. Unfortunately, it is not realistic in present conditions to expect a unilateral acceptance of a comprehensive test ban.

For this Conference there are two sides of the nuclear test ban which must be addressed. There is the procedural dimension, that is, the establishment of an ad hoc committee, which is the responsibility of member nations represented here. The goal of a nuclear test ban has been a basic goal for most of us - indeed for all, I hope - for two decades. Indeed, two treaties implemented, or at least observed, over the last twenty years, the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974, have moved us some distance in the right direction. On February 9 this year, in Canada's House of Commons, Prime Minister Trudeau stated that ratification of the latter treaty by both the USA and the USSR would have both a practical and symbolic effect in raising the clouds of suspicion which seem to continue to hinder the negotiating process. A halt to all testing was, of course, the original goal of the negotiations that led to the 1963 treaty. It is worth recalling that the Threshold Test Ban was described by the US President in 1976 as a "wholly inadequate step beyond the limited test ban". As a result, he was instrumental in establishing the trilateral talks with the aim of achieving a

total ban in 1977. The ability to verify compliance became a central area of dispute and, regrettably, these talks were suspended in 1980.

The contested legacy of these talks has fallen to the Conference, and the achievement of a nuclear test ban remains the goal, distant or otherwise, of this Conference. From the Canadian perspective, it is essential that an ad hoc committee be established as a matter of urgency to address the political dimension and our efforts will be directed towards that objective. At the same time it is equally essential, in our view, that we recognize that progress will be negligible unless the practical aspects of verification of compliance are resolved. Let us set up the mechanism as soon as possible to enable us to determine if we have resolved that problem.

It follows that from the standpoint of this Conference, the significance of the Seismic Experts Group and its continuing work program cannot be over-emphasized. We intend to intensify our support of the Experts Group's activities and we look forward to participating in the International Seismic Data Exchange exercise in the autumn of 1984. It is the development of practical demonstrations such as this which will provide the essential data to support the

political - diplomatic work of the Conference in achieving a global nuclear test ban, thus helping to suffocate weapon development.

In our view, our debate over the mandate of the Nuclear Test Ban Committee is so rarified as to be almost artificial. Some argue that our present mandate has not yet been fulfilled, while others maintain that progress toward a Test Ban cannot be made unless the Committee is immediately accorded a mandate to negotiate. That substantive progress can be registered, and that agreement is indeed possible, is illustrated by the accomplishments of the group of seismic experts, itself working within a limited mandate. Must we continue to mark time, and even retrogress, because of differences over the inclusion of the word "negotiations" in the mandate? Is it not possible to get on with our work without doing violence to the position - expressed as a matter of principle - of any participant?

If we look at our work on chemical weapons as an instructive example - a precedent, if you wish - were able to do much useful work, culminating in a consensus document, under a mandate which did not include the word "negotiate". Let there be no misunderstanding. We can accept a "negotiating"

mandate on NTB. Indeed, we strongly support it. But is this issue worth foregoing any useful work?

Such a stalemate is tailored to order for anyone - and I trust there is none such here - who wants no progress whatsoever on the matter. On this single issue we may be in danger of destroying the credibility - and thus the effectiveness - of the Conference on Disarmament.

We support a step-by-step approach: let us first agree on a mandate. It is our view that we should then seek to establish common understanding in one area, which may be a pre-condition to further progress, namely the means of verifying an agreement, and then move on to the next area. Clearly, negotiations must be our objective - certainly that is the Canadian position - but the necessary foundations for concrete negotiations can and should first be laid.

I must now address an issue whose importance and urgency can hardly be over-emphasized. I refer to the question

of arms control and outer space.

We have viewed with considerable apprehension and regret the apparent inability of the CD to come to grips with the very real and pressing problems of Arms Control and Outer Space, an issue with a potential for seriously destabilizing effects, not to mention the possible financial outlays of almost unimaginable dimensions. It would be unproductive to attempt to attribute responsibility for lack of movement in this issue. The fact is that no ad hoc working group was established last year and we have not yet been able to agree on the creation of a subsidiary body at the current session. Let me suggest that, as in the case of our goal of a nuclear test ban, we use the experience gained in other areas of negotiation to recognize the essentials required. We are facing an almost unique situation in that this Conference is being offered an opportunity - and a challenge - to tackle a new, substantive and vital issue. No matter what the scope of the mandate agreed to, surely no one would deny that certain basic research is required. It is not unreasonable to assume that a survey of existing treaties and international law as it pertains to the subject is an essential first step. It follows that the definitional aspects also constitute basic and essential elements which must be addressed at the outset.

I suggest therefore that we can and should agree immediately to the format of an ad hoc committee to take up these aspects of the outer space issue. If past experience is an example, there is more than enough work to occupy an ad hoc committee with such a mandate for the remainder of the summer session. In any case, upon the successful and, we hope, speedy fulfilment of this initial mandate, the Conference could then move to other and more detailed consequential aspects of the issue.

In case there is any doubt as to where we stand on this matter, I would remind the Conference that Prime Minister Trudeau at UNSSOD II in June 1982, urged the international community to undertake the negotiation of a treaty to ban weapons for use in outer space. This remains one of the most important Canadian arms control objectives. Canada was one of the first delegations to table, in this Conference, a substantive working paper on the subject in 1982. That paper dealt with the stabilizing and destabilizing features of systems in space. Our message then was that in dealing with the outer space issue, it would be necessary to consider, with all due deliberation, the overall net effects on a system-by-system basis. For example, the arms control aspects of

reconnaissance satellites might well outweigh their targetting capabilities.

Since then, the Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons on February 9, 1984 his intention to circulate in the Conference on Disarmament a proposal to ban high altitude anti-satellite systems. The Canadian Government has now initiated a number of long range studies on certain aspects of the outer space issue. It is our intention to contribute in an innovative manner to the deliberation of the proposed ad hoc committee, making use of the resultant research. We propose to deal with outer space as a whole as well as specific aspects related to low and high altitudes. The distinction between low and high altitudes is one which we believe merits particular attention, and is one which Prime Minister Trudeau drew attention to in a speech in Montreal last November in relation to ASATs. We intend, at an appropriate stage, to contribute a number of working papers which will provide a more detailed discussion of the approach, and in particular as it pertains to high altitudes.

I propose now to comment very briefly on the question of radiological weapons. This issue, in which progress has long appeared possible, is one on which we seem to have shown a singular lack of imagination and commitment. The effort expended by successive chairmen of the RW committee, and I single out as an example Ambassador Wegener of the Federal Republic of Germany, has been nothing short of prodigious. Last year, the Soviet Union and the United States chaired contact groups which attempted to reach consensus but ultimately fell short of the mark. I suggest that we should all review our positions with the objective of coming to an agreement and approving a draft treaty during the summer session. Let us consider the opportunities. First, it is an area in which the Soviet Union and the United States are in agreement, as indicated in their 1979 proposals. Surely this in itself an important fact of life for this Conference. Secondly, a draft treaty would effectively ban a weapon system before it has been developed and deployed. Indeed, it would preclude the research and development of such a system. Finally, and of no small importance, it would give a psychological lift to the international community, which by all counts not only deserves but needs it. We could provide a message of hope, where one is badly needed, and on a

future-oriented problem which might contain lessons applicable to other issues.

We recognize that there are deeply-held convictions that the joint treaty of 1979 should deal with other aspects. While not disagreeing with those who argue that other matters should be addressed, we suggest that such questions be addressed in subsequent negotiations. The Canadian delegation supports a review of the issues pertaining directly to radiological weapons with the objective of simplifying the negotiating process. Indeed, we could agree to a draft based on the original 1979 submission. It is an embarrassment to us and, we suggest, to the Conference, that this relatively uncomplicated issue should remain unresolved. It would serve us all well to remove radiological weapons from our agenda by reaching consensus on a draft treaty. This would permit us, in turn, to focus our attention on other substantive issues.

Mr. President, before closing, I would like to draw the Conference's attention to the fact that last week the Canadian government introduced into Parliament a draft bill to create an independent publicly funded, "Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security". The purpose of the Institute is two-fold. First, it would increase knowledge of

issues related to international peace and security, with particular emphasis on defence, arms control and disarmament through the collection and dissemination of information and ideas on these subjects. Second, it would encourage public discussion on international peace and security issues. This would be achieved through the promotion of scholarship, the fostering, funding and conducting of research, as well as by the sponsoring or convening of conferences or seminars in all parts of Canada.

It is the Canadian government's intention that the Institute will have maximum flexibility and independence and will be free to engage in research, information gathering and dissemination, as well as publishing, as it sees fit. Our hope, Mr. President, is to create a world class institute which will make a major contribution to deepening and widening Canadian consciousness and understanding of the fundamental question of international peace and security and in the process enhance our ability to contribute at the international level to the solution of the vital problems of arms control and disarmament.

Mr. President:

In closing, I would now like to offer some further very brief comments on public perceptions of this Conference and its ability to negotiate Conventions. I think we would all agree that the international community has a right to expect progress on urgent arms control and disarmament matters from a forum which is, after all, entitled the "Conference on Disarmament". Whether the blame lies with governments or their representatives here, or both, regrettably, we have little to show for our labours during this spring session. It is our conviction that we must make better use of our summer session so that we can give evidence of tangible progress to the peoples of the world, who expect so much of us - so much more than we have thus far delivered.