

4 July 1985

Mr. Beesley (Canada)

CD PLENARY

Mr. President, after some considerable reflection, I have decided to address a rather sensitive issue of some considerable importance raised on Tuesday by our distinguished colleague Ambassador De Souza E Silva. In so doing, I hardly need to underline that I make these observations in a spirit of the greatest friendship. In fact, it is precisely because of the deep respect we all accord him, personally, as well as his country, and also because of one of the warmest personal regards that we all hold for him, that I am taking this opportunity to offer certain observations on a very important question that he has raised, on the propriety of certain comments of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, concerning the non-proliferation treaty. I should emphasize that I do so not as a partisan of that treaty, which I freely confess that I am, but as a strong supporter of the importance of the office of the Secretary-General and also, I may say, of regard for its present incumbent, which I think is an attitude shared by my distinguished colleague of Brazil. Indeed he said as much. It goes without saying, of course, that I do not speak in any sense as a right of reply, which would be highly presumptuous, but rather as one who has thought a good deal about this issue on a number of occasions.

It will be recalled, for example, that last fall, the Secretary-General made an extremely significant

statement on arms control and disarmament in the General Assembly. In so doing he expressed views on certain questions on which the position of member states differed, as is well-known. I would mention in passing the doctrine of deterrence. Yet it never occurred to the Canadian Government or the Canadian delegation here to make a public or even private expression of reservation about that statement. May I emphasize again, that what I am saying is in no sense intended as a criticism of what was said on Tuesday, but as an expression of a different point of view. If I might cite another example, namely a legal instrument of some considerable significance, that is the Law of the Sea Convention, successive Secretaries-General have praised that instrument as one of the most important achievements, to date, of the United Nations, yet, none of those governments who continue to have reservations about that Convention, have criticised, to my knowledge, the Secretary-General for such comments nor have those of us who strongly support it, including of course, Brazil and Canada, on the grounds that the Secretary-General and his predecessor have understated the case in referring favourably to that legal instrument.

I know that it was not the intention of my distinguished colleague, the Ambassador of Brazil, to even hint at the possibility of censoring the Secretary-General. He had every right to make his observations and I know full well they were made in good faith. But, for our part, we want the Secretary-General to be neutral but not neuter, we welcome his efforts to put pressure on us all, whether

or not we agree with every point he makes. Indeed, were he to speak only when there is a pre-existing consensus, then there would be little or no need for him to speak at all.

If I may personalize for a moment, it happens that I have very recently written an article, a relatively unimportant article, in which I praise the Secretary-General for making statements in the full knowledge that not everything that he says would be equally well received by all member states. I am happy to say that I wrote that article well before his comments last week, and those made on Tuesday in the Conference on Disarmament.

I hope that the Secretary-General continues to speak out and I have no doubt whatsoever that the distinguished representative of Brazil will continue to express his views with his usual elegance, frankness and wisdom. I, of course, can at least speak with frankness.