



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, O.C., Q.C.

BEFORE THE

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

THURSDAY, JULY 09, 1987

GENEVA

Mr. President,

As this is the first opportunity that I have had to take the floor this month I would like to express, on behalf of Canada, my pleasure at seeing you, the distinguished representative of Ethiopia, assume the role of President of our Conference for the month of July. I would also like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation for the fruitful and constructive efforts made by your predecessor, Ambassador Alfarargi, to move the work of this Conference forward.

The purpose of my statement today is to express the views of the Canadian Government on the current state of our efforts to negotiate a comprehensive, verifiable ban on chemical weapons and to announce our intention to place before this body further results of Canadian research relating to the investigation of allegations of use of chemical weapons. I will also make some brief comments on the document CD/766 which proposed an Annex to Article IX of the draft convention, dealing specifically with procedures for the verification of allegations of use. We have been pleased to submit with Norway this document to the Conference on Disarmament.

The earliest possible conclusion of a comprehensive, adequately verifiable ban on chemical weapons remains one of the priority arms control objectives of the Canadian Government. Such a convention should, in our view, provide for the immediate cessation of all chemical weapons production and for the systematic destruction within a specified period of all existing stocks of chemical weapons. The legitimate concern for security should be addressed in a way which ensures that implementation of the Convention will not create any new kinds of imbalance which might undermine the security of any State Party. However, the convention must constitute not just an arms limitation measure but be seen from the outset to be a real disarmament measure, involving the complete elimination of an entire class of a weapon of mass destruction.

The successful conclusion of such a Convention would make a direct and lasting contribution to international security. It would, moreover, go a long way toward reviving public confidence in the relevance and efficacy of the multilateral arms control process in general and the authority of this negotiating forum in particular. This would be indispensable to the long-term effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament.

For these reasons, Mr. President, the Government of Canada takes considerable satisfaction from the serious, constructive and business-like approach to the negotiation which characterized our work during the 1986 session and which has persisted in the present one. Progress, indeed, continues to be made. The presence here this week of a number of industrial experts from several countries, including Canada, indicates the practical emphasis of our current endeavours. I would like to express special appreciation to Ambassador Ekéus for the energetic but sensitive way in which he is presiding over our work. All delegations of the Conference are now working with a seriousness of purpose which augurs well for prospects for continuing significant negotiating progress.

Such progress is all the more urgent when seen against the distressing fact that chemical weapons continue to be used. Moreover, there is strong evidence that an increasing number of countries have acquired or are seeking to acquire a chemical warfare capability. The Canadian Government was dismayed at the most recent report of the United Nations Secretary-General which again confirmed the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Iraq-Iran War. Canada abhors and condemns this use of chemical weapons in clear breach of the legal obligations embodied in the 1925 Geneva Protocol, to which both Iraq and Iran are parties.

We again laud the Secretary-General for his initiative in launching an investigation and in bringing its results to the attention of the Security Council. It is a matter of regret that, thus far, no effective means has yet been found, not only to prevent the repeated use of chemical weapons, but to bring an end to that tragic conflict. We again call on all parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol to adhere to their obligations and we urge the combatants in the Gulf war to seek, through negotiations, a termination of hostilities in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 582 and 588.

The implications of this repeated use of chemical weapons, and of the reported interest of a number of countries in acquiring a chemical warfare capability, are alarming in several respects. They reinforce mutual suspicion and insecurity. They undermine the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. They also constitute an all too tangible reminder that the chemical weapon threat is not confined to one particular region or to one arena of potential conflict. They underscore that chemical weapons are a global problem which must be addressed on a global basis. This should reinforce our sense of urgency and our determination to persevere in the negotiation of an agreement to ban these weapons from the military arsenals of all countries.

It is against this background that the Canadian Government decided that, pending the conclusion of a chemical weapons convention, certain practical steps should be taken with a view to limiting the danger of the misuse of chemicals for weapons purposes. Beginning in 1984, and in coordination with a number of other countries, Canada has placed export controls on several chemical compounds considered particularly useful for the manufacture of highly toxic chemical weapons. Canada has recently increased the number of chemical compounds whose export is controlled. The Canadian Government has been pleased to note that a number of other countries have acted similarly and have placed controls on the export of certain chemicals. We consider it would be useful if still more countries were also to do so.

Mr. President, as part of our effort to facilitate these most important negotiations, Canada has regularly assembled and made available to all CD delegations, compendia of all relevant plenary statements and working papers. These, I hope, have proven to be of value to us all as working tools in this highly complex negotiation. I am pleased to report today that compendia comprising the documentation from the especially busy 1986 session are now available and will be distributed to all delegations in the very near future.

Canada's long-standing interest in the broad issues of verification is by now well known. In the context of chemical weapons, we have devoted special attention, and considerable research effort, to questions relating to the verification of allegations of chemical weapons use. Last year, I tabled in this forum a Handbook for the Investigation of Allegations of the Use of Chemical or Biological Weapons, which had earlier been presented to the United Nations Secretary-General. I am pleased to announce that we will be shortly submitting to the Conference on Disarmament a report entitled Verification: Development of a Portable Trichothecene Sensor Kit for the Detection of T-2 Mycotoxin in Human Blood Samples. It was conveyed to the UN Secretary-General on May 20, 1987. In his letter to His Excellency Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, said the following:

"The recent confirmed use of chemical weapons, in violation of international law, underlines the need to add to the body of knowledge which will contribute to the efficacy of a future treaty banning chemical weapons altogether. Such a treaty will, of necessity, make provision for the verification of allegations of the use of these weapons, with a view to deterring their use."

In referring specifically to the portable trichothecene sensor kit, Mr. Clark pointed out that:

"This research project was undertaken as a case study, to develop a better understanding of the technical problems associated with the provision of appropriate sensors to an investigating team. The speedy collection and subsequent analysis of samples pose many problems to an investigating team. These problems are compounded if the allegation relates to a "novel" agent, that is, a chemical substance not previously used for or associated with hostile purposes."

The report which I will soon be submitting, while documenting two years of work, still leaves many questions unanswered.

Nevertheless, we wish to share this work with other members of the international community who are also concerned with these matters.

Mr. President, there is general agreement that, in addition to providing for the cessation of production of chemical weapons and for their destruction, the convention we are negotiating should also expressly ban the use of such weapons. The inclusion of such a provision will not only reaffirm the ban on use as set out in the 1925 Geneva Protocol but, by doing so in a context which includes specific provision for the verification of any allegations of use, will significantly strengthen the authority of the Protocol. We must ensure, of course, that nothing in the Convention undermines the continuing authority of the 1925 Protocol, a point raised by Ambassador Huslid earlier this week and by France which we regard as a guardian of the 1925 Protocol.

Canada was therefore particularly pleased to join with Norway in preparing a proposed Annex to Article IX entitled "General Procedures for Verification of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons". It attempts to set out a practical, workable framework for verifying allegations of use. We are indebted to Ambassador Huslid for the clarity with which he introduced this joint proposal for our collective consideration. Norway, although not yet officially a member of the CD, has consistently contributed most usefully to our work over many years. Like Canada, Norway has devoted special attention to questions relating to chemical weapons use. This has proved invaluable in the formulation of the proposed Annex to Article IX. Yet, I suggest, the full value of Norwegian and Canadian research efforts in these areas, much of which is of a highly technical nature, may come to be appreciated only after a convention is concluded and a technical secretariat has been set up to implement the convention and all its verification requirements. The same point could be made about the valuable work which Finland has shared, over the years, with the Conference on Disarmament and its predecessors.

The proposed Annex reflects our view that any type of use of chemical weapons would constitute the most serious kind of breach of the convention and that the verification requirement must be of a rigour that reflects the gravity of any such allegation. It takes cognizance of what seems to be an emerging consensus within this forum that the investigation of an alleged use must