COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE
FIFTEENTH SPECIAL SESSION
Working Group I
Agenda item 10

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS
TENTH AND TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION

Working paper submitted by Canada

1. Canada regards agenda item 10 on the assessment of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the General Assembly at its tenth and twelfth special sessions as an essential component of the work of the current third special session devoted to disarmament.

2. While it would be folly to pursue a rigid and uncritical adherence to past approaches to arms control and disarmament which ignore changing global conditions and attitudes, it would be equally impossible to set rational policy objectives for the future without a realistic appraisal of past experience. In the Canadian view, if multilateral institutions and processes are to make a productive contribution to the arms control and disarmament process, they must reflect a balanced appreciation of both past and present. The task ahead of us includes the identification of areas where greater efforts are required. However, full recognition must also be given to progress that has been achieved and efforts must be directed to encouraging and enhancing future progress.

3. The decade of the 1980s can be divided into two distinct periods from an arms control and disarmament perspective. The first half was notable for the lack of progress in this area. Since 1985, however, the pace of developments has been very encouraging, even startling in some respects. The achievements of the past few months alone are comparable to the accomplishments over the entire preceding 15 years.
4. The focus of activity has of course centred on the United States of America/Soviet negotiations. The signing of the agreement to eliminate all American and Soviet intermediate-range land-based missile systems in December 1987 constituted a landmark manifestation of progress. Although the treaty affects only about 5 per cent of the combined United States/USSR nuclear arsenals, it is the first ever to actually reduce nuclear arms by eliminating the entire category of such weapons. Furthermore, while it constitutes only one element of a larger process whose aim is to enhance security at lower levels of weapons, particularly in the European context, the treaty is of immense symbolic importance. After a long disarmament hiatus, the treaty has demonstrated that real progress is achievable and has paved the way for more significant reductions of nuclear weapons. The near-term prospect for reaching agreement on a 50 per cent reduction of strategic nuclear arsenals has become, in consequence, a more realistic possibility.

5. A further recent event of major significance was the commencement of full-scale stage-by-stage negotiations between the United States and the USSR on nuclear-testing limitations in November 1987. The first stage concerns the development of improved verification techniques so that the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty can be finally ratified. The negotiations will then turn to consideration of further limitations on the size and number of tests. Canada warmly welcomed the start of these negotiations because early ratification of the two treaties would constitute, in our view, a useful first step in moving toward the widely shared comprehensive nuclear-test ban treaty objective.

6. Since the first special session devoted to disarmament of the General Assembly in 1978, there has been growing international recognition of the importance of confidence-building measures and the step-by-step approach to arms control and disarmament. The agreement reached at the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe in September 1986 recognized that confidence-building measures constitute an essential precursor to complex disarmament agreements - in this case to conventional disarmament measures in Europe. Follow-up work is continuing at Vienna with the aim of outlining mandates for new East/West negotiations on conventional arms control and disarmament in Europe.

7. Recent progress has not been restricted to the East/West arena. In other forums, tangible progress has been achieved at both the regional and global levels. With 138 adherents, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) enjoys the broadest political support of any international arms control and disarmament agreement. Since the first special session in 1978, which called for the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, 31 additional countries have become full parties to the Treaty. The Canadian Government believes that the current special session should provide a solid endorsement of the nuclear non-proliferation objective and of the Treaty as the principal instrument for its achievement.
8. In the absence of universal support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones can make a useful contribution to the nuclear non-proliferation objective where they promote stability and security at both regional and international levels and command the support of the major countries of the area. Canada has voted in favour of United Nations resolutions calling for the establishment of such zones in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. We have also supported measures which would consolidate a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In December 1986, a new nuclear-free zone was created in the South Pacific under the Treaty of Rarotonga. This zone further expands the geographical area officially free of nuclear weapons.

9. At the global level, significant progress has been made in the negotiations on a comprehensive, effectively verifiable, global ban on chemical weapons within the Conference on Disarmament. While complex legal and technical details remain to be worked out, the third special session should give full recognition to the progress which has been made in this area.

10. Also in the Conference on Disarmament, the Group of Scientific Experts has made considerable progress in the past two years in developing a global seismic monitoring network, which would be required to verify an eventual comprehensive test ban treaty. We are very pleased that the Canadian representative has been selected to co-ordinate a major future test of the global seismic data exchange. While much work remains to be done before a workable monitoring network which would inspire the confidence of the parties concerned can be put in place, the Group of Experts is moving in the right direction. In order to enhance the effectiveness of its work, Canada urges the fullest possible participation in the work of the Group of Experts and co-operation in promoting the Group's objectives.

11. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is one of the most important arms control and disarmament objectives the international community has set for itself. Of the numerous existing international treaties which define the kinds of military activities that can legitimately be conducted in outer space, the most significant one is the outer space Treaty of 1967. This is the closest we have to a "constitution" for outer space. We must support the spirit and specific provisions of that treaty, including its ban on the stationing of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space.

12. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 between the United States of America and the USSR is also a key element of the existing legal régime governing the role of arms in outer space. The manner of its interpretation and application is without doubt of interest to the international community as a whole. We urge strict compliance with that treaty as signed.

13. The prevention of an arms race in outer space is also an important agenda item at the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has been attempting to determine what additional international legal measures, if any, may be necessary to prevent an arms race in outer space. Some useful work has been done in clarifying the existing legal régime governing military activities in outer space and a variety of suggestions have been made for possible additional measures.
14. A further global success was the agreement achieved at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in September 1987. The Conference succeeded in eliciting a commitment by all participants to pursue both disarmament and development objectives while establishing that the relationship between the two distinct processes is based on security. The Conference was particularly notable for its acceptance of a broad definition of security as being dependent on a wide variety of factors. That should be extremely helpful in ensuring that the arms control and disarmament process is seen not as an end in itself but as one building block in the construction of security.

15. We have focused on the developments which have received particular world attention. Equally significant, if less sensational, were the successful conclusion of the Review Conferences of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985 and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in 1986. Canada is especially gratified that the United Nations Disarmament Commission also succeeded in reaching agreement on a set of 16 verification principles which codify international acceptance of the essential role of verification in the arms control and disarmament process. These principles are very significant because they represent a new consensus by the international community respecting this important subject and lay a new foundation for all future activity by the United Nations in this area. Such developments constitute the important confidence-building blocks which establish the foundation for future progress. The special session should reaffirm the validity of these verification principles as adopted by consensus by the Disarmament Commission.

16. This special session would be remiss and out of touch with reality if it failed to take full account of the recent successes in the field of arms control and disarmament. That is not to say, however, that those areas where much greater efforts and stronger exercise of political will are required should not be overlooked. Canada shares the disappointment of many that the Conference on Disarmament has failed to reach agreement on a balanced formula for consideration, in a realistic and practical manner, of the nuclear-test ban issue.

17. In another area, although the Non-Proliferation Treaty boasts the widest adherence of any arms control agreement, it remains a major concern to Canada that a key group of countries continues to refuse to become parties. Regional disputes and tensions appear to stand behind the reluctance of some countries to become parties. However, it could be said that the failure to sign the Treaty merely enhances the distrust of the intentions of others and exacerbates these tensions. The prospect of the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons could have frightening implications.

18. In the field of chemical weapons, although progress is being made in working towards a global ban on these horrific and indiscriminate agents, their use in the Gulf War, as verified by the Secretary-General, should be strongly condemned. Moreover, reports of an increasing number of countries having acquired or seeking to acquire a chemical-weapons capability should be viewed with growing concern.
19. What are the lessons that can be drawn from the past decade? For one, the successes have demonstrated that progress can only be made through a step-by-step process of negotiation. It is also evident that the prime goals of this special session will be different from those of previous special sessions on disarmament. At the first and second special sessions, the challenge was to get the arms control and disarmament process going. The opening of the third special session coincides, almost symbolically, with the Moscow Summit. The first goal of this special session will be to protect and enhance the current East/West process and build upon its gains. Although this process is finally working, it is fragile and will not benefit from unrealistic declarations or proposals. It is therefore incumbent on us all to work together to enhance the momentum of these negotiations so that they will produce even more significant results and, in turn, stimulate progress at the multilateral level.

20. It would be unrealistic to expect this special session in four short weeks to resolve problems which have plagued the international community for months and years. Nevertheless we should be able together to move closer to agreement or at least a meeting of minds on some of the difficult issues before us. We would expect the special session to build upon the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session (General Assembly resolution S-10/2). It provides the most comprehensive set of principles for disarmament adopted by the international community and as such is a landmark achievement.

21. A measure of the success of the third special session will be the degree to which it succeeds in finding common ground. That ground clearly will not materialize where firmly held national positions are ignored. Nor will the special session succeed in prescribing solutions which have long eluded consensus. Rather, it must place the emphasis on those areas where agreement is possible. In the Canadian view, it is far preferable to aim for modest gains, though by no means insignificant, than to adhere rigidly to positions which others cannot accept and which will lead inevitably to a polarization of the special session. A pragmatic approach is the route to a successful third special session.

22. The very essence of the arms control and disarmament process is a step-by-step approach based on the development of confidence and the enhancement of security. Nations will not disarm if their security is threatened; neither will they respond to disarmament timetables or processes in the absence of confidence-building measures and verification. If participants take these realities fully into account, the prospects for a successful conclusion to this special session will be enhanced.