UNIVERSAL NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

DECLARATION OF THE 1980s AS A DISARMAMENT DECADE

Report of the Secretary-General

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Canada supports the decision to declare the 1980s the Second Disarmament Decade because it draws attention to the continuing significance of disarmament as a goal for the international community. It is equally important, however, that the credibility of this goal not be undermined if it is to remain a matter for action as well as words and if the United Nations is to contribute to its achievement.

Resolution 34/75 rightly draws attention to the fact that the purposes and objectives of the First Disarmament Decade have not been realized and that a substantial part of world resources continues to be wasted on armaments. If 10 years from now the United Nations is not to draw the same sombre conclusion, it will be important that the declaration of the 1980s as a disarmament decade be aimed at realizable objectives within the framework of a comprehensive programme of disarmament, which in turn is considered to be a long-term process. Canada believes it would be misleading to indicate specific targets during the Second Disarmament Decade "for accomplishing the major objectives and goals of disarmament". These objectives and goals will remain credible in the eyes both of peoples and Governments as long as some progress is being made towards them, but will not do so if they are associated with artificial time frames. One enemy of disarmament goals is public apathy, if not cynicism. The gap between declarations and concrete actions is growing and ought not to be allowed to grow wider.

While keeping in view the goals themselves, the declaration of the 1980s as a disarmament decade might therefore suggest some intermediate and specific steps to achieve them. It should recall that during the 1970s some limited progress was made, particularly in respect of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and that negotiations are continuing in several areas of arms control despite political obstacles and new technical challenges. One difference between 1970 and 1980 is that all nuclear weapons States are now participating in negotiations on arms control and disarmament.

The Final Document of the United Nations special session on disarmament remains the basic statement of disarmament principles and measures. The declaration should build on this Document, taking into account as well the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1979. Canada believes it should refer in particular to the following principles and guidelines:

Arms control and disarmament negotiations are an integral part of efforts to strengthen international peace and security, including procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes,
Negotiations ought to observe the principle of equal security for all, keeping in mind that some weapons systems threaten the survival of States and of millions of people.

Negotiations on disarmament and arms control measures may be pursued concurrently, whether in a regional or a global framework, or on a comprehensive or restricted basis;

Nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility to engage in negotiations in regard to these weapons, including both quantitative and qualitative controls;

Notwithstanding this special responsibility, steps should be taken to reduce levels of conventional armaments, by limitation of arms transfers, reduction of military expenditures, and any other useful means;

The role of the United Nations system in promoting and implementing disarmament negotiations and agreements is of continuing importance, especially in so far as the United Nations can collect and distribute information, help with measures of verification and sponsor research;

Greater openness by States in co-operating with others through agreed measures of inspection and observation, as well as procedures for communication, would enhance international security by raising the level of confidence, the lack of which can inhibit or prevent agreements; this is especially the case in respect of codes of conduct in crisis situations which might otherwise lead to war.

The declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade should be a strong, forceful and realistic call to all nations to move positively towards disarmament. The unanimous adoption of a resolution at the thirty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly calling for a declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade reflected a general desire for international peace and co-operation in the decade ahead. The declaration can provide the framework; the Member States must provide the content.

DENMARK

[Original: English]

[2 May 1980]

... The Government of Denmark attaches the greatest importance to arms control and disarmament objectives and accordingly welcomes the fact that the General Assembly of the United Nations at its thirty-fourth session adopted by consensus resolution 34/75 which declares the Decade of the 1980s as the Second United Nations Disarmament Decade.

/...
In the view of the Danish Government the declaration should take note of a series of successful negotiations which have been concluded both at the global level and between the major Powers during the First Disarmament Decade. Thus, it should include references to the entry into force of the non-proliferation Treaty, the strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT I), the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor, the biological weapons Convention and the Convention banning the military use of environmental modifications techniques.

At the same time, however, the declaration would have to note the continuing nuclear and conventional arms race and growing total world military expenditures. Against this alarming background, it is essential to reaffirm the basic principles and the programme of action set out in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly.

In addition the declaration should reflect the need for agreement of universally acceptable and effective verification measures, in order to facilitate the conclusion and implementation of disarmament agreements and to create confidence.

It should also be stressed that an active public opinion in favour of positive action in the field of disarmament is highly necessary. Consequently, studies of relevant issues under the auspices of the United Nations should be encouraged and a conscious and determined effort should be made, through wider dissemination of relevant information, to project the dangers of the continuing arms race on the consciousness of world opinion during the Second Disarmament Decade.