STATEMENT BY

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TO THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF
THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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DÉCLARATION DE

M. CHRISTOPHER WESTDAL
AMBASSADEUR POUR LE DÉSARMEMENT

À LA PREMIÈRE COMMISSION
DE LA CINQUANTE-SEPTIÈME SESSION
DE L’ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES

NEW YORK, LE 30 SEPTEMBRE 2002
Mr. Chairman,

Congratulations on your election. We will do all we can to help you succeed.

We met a year ago in the shadow of horror that made us all feel vulnerable to new threats to our security. Without a vote, we endorsed multilateralism as a core principle in our fight with terrorism. We knew we had to make multilateralism work to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Now, after a year of drama, we meet again with urgent responsibility to set new standards for common, practical action to strengthen vital non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and procedures.

Many States have taken decisive action. For its part, the G-8, meeting in Kananaskis, Canada, launched a Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction to prevent terrorists or those who harbour them from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical, radiological or biological weapons; missiles; and related materials, equipment and technology. The G-8 made a commitment to raise up to 20 billion dollars over the next ten years to destroy chemical weapons, dismantle decommissioned nuclear submarines, dispose of fissile materials and employ former weapons scientists. G-8 leaders invited other states who also seek to promote the adoption, universalization and full implementation of multilateral treaties and international instruments designed to prevent the proliferation or illicit acquisition of weapons or materiel of mass destruction, of missiles and of related technology to participate and contribute.

Foremost among these instruments is the NPT. Its universalization remains a key Canadian priority. That is why we were happy to welcome Cuba’s decision to adhere to the NPT and to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That welcome act reinforces rules-based multilateralism to contend with threats old and new to international security. Canada calls on India, Israel and Pakistan, still outside the Treaty, to join.

A related high priority is enhanced accountability, the base on which the NPT was indefinitely extended seven years ago. At the PrepCom this spring, we emphasized the reporting requirement in the 13-step Action Plan agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. We are consulting with interested States Parties and will address this subject in further preparations for the 2005 Review. At the heart of the NPT, non-proliferation and disarmament are bound one to the other. Canada thus welcomed the Treaty of Moscow, in which the United States and the Russian Federation, launching a new security partnership and high-level dialogue through the Consultative Group on Strategic Security, agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals. Codification, verifiability, transparency and irreversibility set the highest standards by which the international community marks progress in this field.

We are committed as well to a comprehensive nuclear test ban, essential to both non-proliferation and disarmament. Though several key states have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT, encouraging progress has been achieved. Ninety-four states are on board and an impressive international monitoring system has been established to deter and detect explosive nuclear tests. We urge all states to ensure its continued funding and to support the Provisional Technical Secretariat’s vital work - and, of course, we urge all states to sign and ratify the Treaty itself. Meanwhile, it is crucial that the moratorium on tests be sustained.
Mr. Chairman, the events of the last year surely reinforce the case for a fissile material cut-off treaty. Canada will again this year seek the Committee’s consensus support for the negotiation of an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament. Those events also surely underscore the vital contribution of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We applaud its determined campaign to strengthen safeguards and acknowledge the need for the Agency to have adequate resources to fulfill its mandate in this area. As well, we urge all States who have yet to do so to sign and implement comprehensive safeguards agreements and the IAEA’s Additional Protocol. I note further that, to enhance our security, we want a stronger Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

Mr. Chairman, other weapons of mass destruction pose ominous threats. We are thus concerned that the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention lacks effective means to ensure compliance and that our sustained effort to negotiate a Protocol to that end has so far been fruitless. At the resumed Review Conference next month, we want to reaffirm that biological weapons are repugnant, abhorrent. And we will want to plan concerted, cooperative, practical BTWC implementation.

Another old threat – chemical weapons – haunts us still. Since we last met, the Chemical Weapons Convention has marked its fifth anniversary in force. The Convention is now supported by 146 states parties, a remarkable total, and there are good prospects for more adherents in the near future. The less good news, though, is that the OPCW still struggles to fulfill its vital mandate. Next month, State Parties must ensure that the organization gets the resources it needs to do its job, verification and inspections above all.

Mr. Chairman, we recognized anew a year ago that we need multilateralism that works, disarmament and non-proliferation pacts that sustain confidence. That means transparency and verification. It also means effective action to ensure compliance. The headlines these days are all about our response to suspected violations. There is much at stake for the future of multilateral arms control. We all know that doing nothing is not an option. We know as well though that we need to get it right. Canada favours collective action through the United Nations.

I have dealt so far with weapons of mass destruction. The fact is, though, that small arms and light weapons still do the mass of the killing, one by one. To stem the carnage, states convened last year to plan practical action through multilateral engagement to support regional and national efforts. It remains the responsibility of each state to work towards the implementation of the UN Programme of Action, which could protect millions around the world. Its implementation will also depend on sustained multilateral and regional cooperation, concerted political will and real resources.

Mr. Chairman, in a few weeks we will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction. One hundred and twenty-nine states are now on board, including many of the most mine-affected countries in the world. We want every state to join. And we want to sustain focus and action on the Convention’s core humanitarian objectives: mine clearance, stockpile destruction, mine risk education and help for survivors.
We are determined as well to deal with other explosive remnants of war. Last December, States Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons took a key step forward, extending the scope of the Convention to armed conflict within, as well as between, states. I am pleased to say that Canada was the first state formally to accept this amendment. We hope other High Contracting Parties will follow suit, bringing the amended provisions into early force. And we urge that they join us and many others in establishing a negotiating mandate on explosive remnants of war at this December’s CCW meeting.

Finally, I draw attention to Canada’s enduring commitment to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The risk inherent in any notion of war in space of a “tragedy of the commons” is utterly compelling. It would forever deprive humanity of the immense economic, social and security benefits of peaceful use. We will support the peaceful uses of space here and we will keep pressing to deal with its non-weaponization at the CD.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to pay tribute to the contribution to our deliberations of civil society. NGOs play a vital role in research, analysis and information sharing. Our work would be virtually impossible in this day and age without them. Canada consults systematically with national and international NGOs. We welcome and value their interest and active support.

The responsibility we share in this First Committee is compelling, Mr. Chairman. It is to build and defend a universal framework of indivisible, sustainable security. It is to protect the credibility and enhance the effective force of multilateral agreements. It is not just to yearn for security; it is to plan and to act to make it happen, to make it real.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.