

# Canada

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STATEMENT BY

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

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 8, 2003

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DÉCLARATION DE

M. PAUL MEYER  
AMBASSADEUR POUR LE DÉSARMEMENT

À LA PREMIÈRE COMMISSION  
DE LA CINQUANTE-HUITIÈME SESSION  
DE L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES

NEW YORK, LE 8 OCTOBRE 2003

Mr Chairman,

Let me extend my warm congratulations on your election. You can count on our support in making this a most productive session.

As the General Assembly forum entrusted with consideration of security and disarmament issues, this Committee must acknowledge that the world is as full of challenges to the non-proliferation and disarmament order as it is of manifestations of the benefits that order has provided for humankind. As custodians of an edifice built up over decades, we must be vigilant in ensuring the integrity of the structure and its relevance to current conditions. This requires preventive maintenance, as well as the occasional renovation and new addition. There is no substitute, however, for the basic norms and commitments embodied in this multilateral structure. Without its shelter, we would all be more vulnerable to the blasts of the threat or use of force.

The challenges are evident: the withdrawal of a state party to the NPT is a bitter setback to the enterprise to make this keystone of our nuclear-free construction a universal one. Similarly, it is discouraging to see states sacrifice their treasure to the false gods of nuclear armament at the cost of human development, or to consider devising new types of nuclear weapons and applications, rather than concentrate on their progressive and systematic elimination. There is no escaping the reality that premising security on the existence of nuclear weapons is a dangerous approach, fraught with the risk of annihilation. The sooner we add nuclear arms to the WMD scrap heap the better. In addition to the dangers of state use of WMD, we must also now confront the risk of use by terrorists or other non-state actors. The only sure solution to this problem is ensuring the elimination of WMD according to international law.

At the same time, as we face up to the challenges, we should also recognise and celebrate the progress that has been registered in non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament (NACD) fora since we last met in this Committee. There have been important new adherents to the central non-proliferation and disarmament conventions. We have witnessed the launch of a significant new code of conduct to start addressing the major role that ballistic missiles play in our security environment. The second annual meeting of this Hague Code took place here only last week. UNCAR experts agreed to substantial expansions of transparency with respect to conventional arms. There has been great recognition of the human dimensions associated with Small Arms and Light Weapons at the first biennial meeting on the implementation of the UN Plan of Action, which revealed an impressive range of action at all levels and an exemplary partnership between governments and civil society in coming to grips with this hydra-headed problem. A legal instrument under the CCW to deal with the pressing issue of explosive remnants of war appears close at hand. A Fifth meeting of States Party to the Ottawa Convention revealed ever growing support for the eradication of anti-personnel landmines. A constructive exchange on national practices relevant to the BTWC occurred this summer, and we expect to see further action to strengthen this critical prohibition at next month's Annual Meeting. There are even fresh signs of responsible compromise and an emerging consensus that would permit the Conference on Disarmament to resume productive work.

Without diminishing an iota from the seriousness of the threats and challenges to our enterprise that confront us, I think it is necessary to remind our publics and ourselves of the

progress that is being made in domains affecting human security world wide.

Mr Chairman, this Committee provides a unique opportunity for the entire membership to set out its views on the security/disarmament agenda of the day. This takes many forms, from national statements to interventions during thematic debate to formal resolutions. It is incumbent on those who value the importance of NACD in global affairs to make optimal use of the time allotted to our work here. You can count on the support of my delegation in trying to reduce and rationalize the workload and to improve the quality and utility of the discussions during this assembly. We will have specific suggestions to put forward during our dedicated exchange on the Committee's working methods.

We hope to set an example in trying to minimize the "laundry list" nature of national statements in favour of providing more subject-specific commentary during the thematic debate. In this way, it may be possible to have a more meaningful discussion of key disarmament matters during our session and ideally yield something richer than a litany of national positions or a mechanistic output of resolutions. In the end, we will be measured by action to achieve our common NACD goals, not by the number of resolutions adopted.

Canada is committed to playing an active role in promoting NACD, across a wide spectrum of sectors. We are determined to strengthen the prohibitions against WMD, to reinforce the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, to advance the promising conventional arms control agenda and to contribute to the efficacy of UN and multilateral machinery in the entire field. We must squarely face up to the dangers that non-compliance poses to the integrity of our regimes and develop more effective measures to deter, detect and reverse such behaviour. In doing so, we must look to improve our compliance and verification mechanisms creatively, both within the treaty framework and in the broader UN context.

In addition to ensuring the efficacy of the existing instruments and measures, we will continue to explore possibilities for preventive diplomacy in the NACD realm, to preclude the introduction of arms and adversarial attitudes into new environments. Outer space is one such realm, in which humanity has an increasing stake in maintaining a non-threatening, non-weaponized environment.

In all our endeavours, Canada will continue to forge partnerships with civil society and the private sector in realising our common security goals.

We live in a global village, in which insecurity in one quarter, if ignored, will eventually undermine security elsewhere. The widely held goals of NACD will only be fully realised when we focus on international cooperation and our collective responsibility to implement and promote an effective rules-based multilateral security system.

Thank you