

The Permanent Mission of Canada
to the United Nations



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auprès des Nations Unies

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STATEMENT BY

JOHN GOSAL, SECOND SECRETARY
PERMANENT MISSION OF CANADA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

TO THE 2003 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

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DÉCLARATION DE

JOHN GOSAL, DEUXIÈME SECRÉTAIRE
MISSION PERMANENTE DU CANADA
AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES

À LA SESSION DE FOND DE 2003 DE LA
COMMISSION DE DÉSARMEMENT DES NATIONS UNIES

NEW YORK, LE 1ER AVRIL 2003

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to join the distinguished representatives here today from Member States in this opening session of the UN Disarmament Commission. We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for all of his efforts on behalf of disarmament and non-proliferation over the years and wish him all the best for the future.

Mr. Chairman,

The imperative for nuclear disarmament remains, as always, fundamental to international peace and security. Canada remains convinced that the elimination of nuclear weapons can be achieved, sooner rather than later, by universal adherence to and compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference established the 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to achieve complete disarmament. These 13 steps provide the world with a road map to achieve what successive generations have sought since 1945: a world without nuclear weapons.

Since the creation of the NPT's 13 practical steps, there have been both successes and setbacks. Recent positive steps include the Treaty of Moscow, which commits the United States and the Russian Federation to significant reductions in their nuclear stockpiles. We call on the Russian government to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. The Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction launched in Canada last year at the G8 Summit in Kananaskis is helping Russia dispose of its stockpiles of nuclear and chemical materials. Cuba's adherence to the NPT was a most welcome addition to the nearly universal commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as was its ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Canada also welcomes the agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation that will allow the last three Russian nuclear reactors capable of producing weapons-grade fissile material to close down by 2009.

We note, however, that the CTBT remains 13 ratifications short of entry into force and that the Conference on Disarmament remains without a Programme of Work to enable much-needed negotiation of agreements on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as work towards nuclear disarmament. Of great concern is the DPRK's announced withdrawal from the NPT. We reiterate our call to the DPRK to reverse its decision to withdraw from the NPT.

This year, during our deliberations on "ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", this Commission has a chance to contribute to forward movement on the road to nuclear disarmament. Canada is pleased that the Chair's revised discussion paper incorporates all of the NPT's 13 practical steps. We are also pleased that the Chair has built upon these solid foundations by developing a useful compendium of recent events in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and has included elements such as the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones, the conclusion of safeguard agreements and Additional Protocols with the IAEA, and the steps toward the non-proliferation of ballistic missiles.

The recommendations that this session of the Commission will decide upon as the outcome of its work will provide valuable guidance to the UN General Assembly. As well, the outcome will undoubtedly inform and contribute to the upcoming Preparatory Committee meeting of the NPT Review Conference in May and to the CTBT Entry into Force Conference this fall. Canada hopes that the Commission's recommendations will emphasize that achieving nuclear disarmament requires unwavering support, both material and political, for the international framework of treaties and mechanisms we established over 50 years. We should also emphasize the importance of full implementation, strengthened transparency, the need to universalize acceptance of these norms, to improve verification measures and to strengthen the multilateral means to address issues of non-compliance. Canada hopes the Commission's recommendations will recognize the invaluable work of the NGO community in efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament.

I now turn to the second item on the agenda: confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. In 1991, sharing a common vision, the European Community, Japan and Canada catalysed the initiative to establish the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms. In 2001, we celebrated UNCAR's tenth anniversary and its success in building a global norm that promotes transparency in order to build confidence. UNCAR has fulfilled a key role as a CBM designed to improve the security of states both within their regions and, ultimately, globally. UNCAR and the UN Military Expenditure Instrument are the only two global transparency instruments which the UN incorporates as a part of its Transparency in Armaments initiative.

Lessons learned from regional workshops held in 2002-03 highlighted the value of the Register as a confidence-building measure. The Transparency in Armaments instruments have been useful in breaking down the traditional resistance to declaring weapons holdings as well as military budgets. Lessons learned have also demonstrated that although achieving transparency is not always easy, doing so is possible, especially in a regional setting. Where a group of nations determine together to institute transparent practices and provide data on conventional weapon transfers and military budgets, initial resistance by some is replaced by a cooperative approach.

For instance, both the OSCE and the OAS have considered how to integrate aspects of the UNCAR and the Military Expenditures Instrument into their respective regional reporting instruments. The OAS is to be commended for the recent entry-into-force of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Arms Acquisitions. This Convention sets up a concrete mechanism for strengthening regional stability through mutual confidence and transparency, and it imposes a legally-binding obligation whereby states parties report annually to the OAS on imports and exports of conventional weapons covered by the convention.

Ensuring that the Register continues to be relevant is an important challenge. In this regard, among other things, we strongly support positive consideration of expanding the range of items covered by the Register. Increasing the level of participation in UNCAR, with the aim of universalization, should be a priority. The 2003 Group of Governmental Experts, which began consultations in March, is working on the premise that "in view of the scarcity and limited nature of global arrangements devoted to conventional weapons, it has a duty to improve and further develop the UNCAR".

Canada is pleased that the Chair's revised discussion paper recognizes the value of the creation of national legislation and administrative regulations on arms export, import, transit, re-export and diversion as confidence-building measures. The Commission could make a recommendation to have Member States submit their national laws, regulations and procedures on export, import, transit or retransfer as well as the changes therein, to the Secretary-General, and make this information available to Member States, as appropriate. The Commission could also recommend that the UN play a larger role in the follow-up to the information emerging from UNCAR. Ways and means to detect build-ups and consistent mismatches could thus be identified and addressed.

Canada strongly supports UNCAR, and will continue to promote universalization and mobilization of support for the Register as well as the Military Expenditure Instrument. You can count on sustained engagement by Canada to see that the investment made through the regional workshops will bear fruit. This will ultimately allow us to realize our goals of transparency and universal participation in both of the UN Transparency in Armaments Instruments.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, the Canadian delegation looks forward to participating in the discussions and negotiations in both working groups. We are committed to working in cooperation with yourself, the Bureau and fellow Member States in ensuring that the Commission produces concrete recommendations that advance our common objectives.