Intervention by Canada during Thematic Debate on Nuclear Disarmament
October 18, 2004

Thank you, Chair

• As we noted during our opening statement, the universal nature of the membership of the UN’s First Committee on Disarmament and International Security gives a unique status to its discussions and decisions. It is only here that all states can debate an issue that remains a fundamental objective of the international community and to which all states have, in this forum, committed themselves. It is here, in the First Committee, that states can discuss their responsibilities in light of these commitments and account to the international community both individual and collective achievements. Here also, during this debate, we have an opportunity to define the work that remains to be done.

• In his statement to the UN General Assembly last month, the Prime Minister of Canada reaffirmed Canada’s longstanding position that non-proliferation and disarmament remain fundamental pillars of the United Nation’s commitment to international peace and security.

• Canada maintains the view that there is no substitute for the basic norms and commitments embodied in the multilateral structure whose cornerstone is the NPT. The NPT’s Review Conference is only months away. We must be well-prepared to address the challenges that the Treaty now faces, and ensure that our deliberations leading up to that Conference position us for work that will not only strengthen the NPT’s basic aims, but ensure that its processes are reinforced to withstand future challenges.

• In this regard, Canada has advocated overcoming the Treaty’s institutional deficit, through annual meetings, a standing Bureau and provision for extraordinary meetings should the need occur. This will give NPT States Parties greater ownership of their Treaty and provide us with a key tool in overseeing its implementation and more effectively addressing challenges to its authority and integrity. We look forward to its adoption at next May’s Review Conference.

• If we cannot mark progress in implementing promised steps to disarmament, than we risk weakening the NPT’s ability to ensure that all its pillars - including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology - are not undermined.

• The NPT review process is an invaluable tool assisting the Treaty’s more effective implementation that has, itself, been strengthened since 1995 when the Treaty was extended indefinitely, with the bargain of “permanence with accountability”. Canada has focussed on encouraging transparency, such as enhancing reporting, one of the 13 Steps, which contributes to achieving the NPT’s implementation.
This Committee will debate resolutions that strive to elaborate key disarmament steps that have been developed to support and strengthen the NPT. Some of these steps are legal mechanisms already negotiated by the international community, such as the CTBT.

While the CTBT’s membership steadily grows with each ratification, and its international monitoring system has been built up steadily into a modern verification regime with global reach, the Treaty’s legal entry-into-force remains frustratingly out of reach. We welcome the appointment of the Special Representative, Ambassador Ramaker, and we urge those eleven states whose ratification is needed for entry-into-force to find the political will to work within the CTBT, to ensure its effectiveness and implementation.

Other disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms, such as the FMCT, remain to be negotiated. Some, like the Additional Protocol under the IAEA, have been established to keep pace with technology and make non-proliferation safeguards more effective. While we continue to work to reinforce the NPT and its supporting structure, we cannot lose sight of one of our basic objectives: the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

The integrity and viability of the NPT depend on continuing strong momentum in nuclear weapons reductions. There can be no going back to the nuclear arms race of the 20th century. We encourage the nuclear-weapon states to securely reduce and dismantle their nuclear weapons arsenals in an irreversible and verifiable manner. We continue to call on those states outside the Treaty to join as non-nuclear weapon states.

Mr. Chair, the international community is currently faced with a number of disarmament and non-proliferation challenges. We expect this Committee to discuss how all states can implement fully universal disarmament and non-proliferation norms and propose practical options so states’ obligations and undertakings can be carried out. We must seriously reflect on how to better address these challenges, such as non-compliance, and how to strengthen in a comprehensive manner the NPT’s implementation.

One such option remains resumption of work by the sole international body charged with negotiating disarmament mechanisms. In his statement, Canada’s Prime Minister recalled the UN’s responsibility to deny. He called on the Conference on Disarmament, charged with the responsibility for negotiating new multilateral instruments, to get back to productive work. We look forward to returning to work in the CD and strongly urge member states to adopt a Program of Work based on the balanced proposal that has been before that body for over one year.

Mr. Chair, we will introduce a related resolution in the separate portion of this session.

Thank you.