October 10, 2006

Thank you, Chair.

These are challenging times for nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in particular. We can all agree that we have not made the progress we would have hoped. Some have even questioned whether the entire multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament infrastructure is losing its relevance, and thus its effectiveness. However, the principles underlying the NPT, as well as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and other international instruments, are just as relevant in today’s world as they ever have been.

North Korea’s irresponsible and dangerous act of announcing that it has conducted the testing of a nuclear explosive device demonstrates vividly the vital requirement to preserve and further strengthen the existing nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regime. Canada believes that the NPT must continue to serve as the cornerstone of this regime. The alternative to a strong NACD regime, anchored by the NPT, is inevitable unconstrained growth in the number of nuclear weapons states.

Now is not the time for despair or resigned passiveness. Canada believes the power and authority of the NPT needs to be reinforced rapidly in the face of these real world challenges.

As for individual states themselves, they must work to ensure that policies, pronouncements and actions continue to be compatible with a progressive and consistent movement towards nuclear disarmament. There is a role for both nuclear weapons state and non–nuclear weapon states in this regard. There have been some steps forward. A number of nuclear weapon states have made significant and welcome progress in reducing their nuclear arsenals. However, there continue to be worrying
signs as states demonstrate increased reluctance to consider further reductions, new doctrines are mooted which would assert a role for nuclear weapons as war-fighting tools, and plans for new nuclear weapons are discussed. These developments directly challenge our nuclear disarmament efforts. We encourage all states possessing nuclear weapons to continue to reduce and dismantle their nuclear weapons in a secure, irreversible and verifiable manner. The role of confidence- and security-building measures in contributing to this process should also not be overlooked.

The CTBT remains a key piece of unfinished business in the nuclear weapons file. We need to encourage the last ten Annex II states to sign or ratify the treaty and to join the 176 signatories who wish to put a definitive end to nuclear weapon testing. Existing moratoria on nuclear tests are welcomed signs of restraint, but they can be terminated with a press release. Yesterday's announcement by the DPRK underlines the necessity of a universal, legally-binding and permanent international ban on all nuclear test explosions. Political declarations of intent can be encouraging, but not enough in themselves. There are no substitutes for a legally binding compact. Canada was pleased to join with other “Friends of the CTBT” here last month to direct political attention to the need to put into place this crucial support beam for the nuclear non-proliferation edifice. In an effort to make further progress in universalizing the Treaty, Canada and Mexico will co-host a regional workshop in Mexico City from October 11–13 on the implementation of the Treaty in the Greater Caribbean. States should also continue to support the CTBTO’s International Monitoring System, which is unique in its capability as a global, real-time verification mechanism.

From Canada’s perspective, the next milestone on the path to nuclear disarmament is a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). Other efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons will be reinforced once the production of fissile material for weapons is ended. We must build on the positive momentum demonstrated this year in the Conference on Disarmament on FMCT. In this regard, Canada will be tabling a resolution in this Committee calling for the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. There is broad support and the timing is right. The time to act is now.

Thank you.