76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly - First Committee

Statement by Canada – Thematic Debate (1-4)

Delivered by Ms. Catherine Nadeau
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations
Chair,

The continued existence of nuclear weapons threatens not only our planet, but the very existence of humanity.

Canada believes that addressing this challenge should be a persistent and urgent undertaking for all member states represented at First Committee. Our common and steadfast goal should remain the same, that is, take a step-by-step approach to reduce the number of these weapons and eventually and irreversibly eliminate them.

The disturbing trends of States diversifying and increasing their nuclear arsenals must be stopped through genuine commitments by nuclear possessing States.

Essential for any significant progress on nuclear disarmament is ensuring that we maintain and strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture that was painstakingly built by those before us. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the NPT, is at the heart of this architecture.

Canada is working with partners to develop concrete proposals and ideas to strengthen the implementation of the NPT as we prepare for the Review Conference in January. We do this primarily through our participation in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament.

These two cross-regional groupings comprise non-nuclear weapon States with diverse backgrounds that come together to agree on ways to advance nuclear disarmament. Their work is a testament to the urgency we attach to our common goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. We believe these contributions will set in motion the positive momentum needed for a meaningful NPT Review Conference.

We should also seize upon opportunities created by recent developments, such as the five-year extension of New START, the beginning of a strategic dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States, and the
reaffirmation by some nuclear-weapon States that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. These positive drivers open up new possibilities that steer us along the road to disarmament. Decision-makers must fully comprehend the risks associated with nuclear weapons, and recognize that arms control enhances security and predictability.

When faced with the threat of nuclear weapons, we should focus our efforts on achieving individual steps, many of which are already well-established and widely agreed upon. These steps will lead us to our nuclear disarmament goal, building trust and confidence along the way. We should endeavour to advance disarmament and non-proliferation, and reinforce the global architecture, in the sincere hope of leaving a safer and more secure world in the hands of the next generation.

Long-standing objectives that Canada has advocated for such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty and starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty are achievable steps, but they require political will from all States. Expanding our expertise and knowledge on nuclear disarmament verification, such as through the Group of Governmental Experts, is another step that contributes to a more conducive and trusting environment for disarmament. Further efforts on nuclear risk reduction are urgently required to secure our path forward.

While the steps to nuclear disarmament are largely before us, it is the implementation of these steps that we stumble on. Canada truly believes that some of the most intractable issues of our times can be dislodged by increasing inclusivity and diversity in the field of nuclear disarmament. Having a diversity of perspectives will lead to more ideas, creativity and ultimately lasting progress on disarmament initiatives.

For this reason, Canada is committed to empowering youth to become the next generation of disarmament and non-proliferation leaders. Canada also believes that the equal, full and meaningful participation of women in all disarmament discussions and decision-making processes is critical in achieving sustainable outcomes and finding solutions that work for everyone.
Chair,

Let me conclude by stating that we live in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. This reality comes with great challenges, but also great opportunities. Opportunities of cooperation. Let us seize upon them.