General Assembly

Thirty-eighth session
Agenda item 62 (j)

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Institutional arrangements relating to the process
of disarmament

Report of the Secretary-General

1. On 13 December 1982, the General Assembly adopted resolution 37/99 K, in section V of which it requested the Secretary-General (a) to transform the Centre for Disarmament of the Secretariat, appropriately strengthened with the existing overall resources of the United Nations, into a Department for Disarmament Affairs, headed by an Under-Secretary-General and so organized as to reflect fully the principle of equitable geographical distribution; and (b) to report to the Assembly at its thirty-eighth session on the practical implementation of the resolution.

2. In implementation of the resolution, the Secretary-General issued a bulletin (ST/SGEB/199) on 17 December 1982 transforming the Centre for Disarmament, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, into the Department for Disarmament Affairs as of 1 January 1983, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General reporting to the Secretary-General. At the same time, the head of the Centre for Disarmament, Mr. Jan Martenson, who had had the rank of Assistant Secretary-General was appointed to head the new Department with the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

3. The functions of the Department were defined as follows:

(a) Assists and advises the Secretary-General in the discharge of his responsibilities under the Charter and resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and other legislative organs of the United Nations on disarmament matters, and represents him as required;
(b) Provides secretariat, administrative and substantive services to the
First Committee and the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly dealing with
disarmament matters, the Committee on Disarmament and its subsidiary bodies, ad hoc
disarmament bodies as may be set up by the General Assembly and the Committee on
Disarmament, conferences of parties to multilateral agreements on disarmament and
related matters, and expert groups assisting the Secretary-General in making
disarmament studies;

(c) Maintains liaison with permanent missions, intergovernmental
organizations, specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency,
non-governmental organizations, research institutes and individuals active in the
field of disarmament to promote support for the objectives of the United Nations in
the field of arms limitation and disarmament;

(d) Facilitates co-ordination and promotes co-operation in
disarmament-related activities among the organizations of the United Nations
system, including the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research;

(e) Provides guidance for and co-ordinates the activities of the World
Disarmament Campaign and Disarmament Week within the United Nations system and
maintains liaison with governmental and non-governmental organizations and research
institutes participating in the implementation of those activities;

(f) Administers the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament;

(g) Carries out any other task, as assigned by the Secretary-General, in the
field of disarmament.

4. To discharge its responsibilities and perform the indicated functions, the
Department's structure consists of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, the
Committee and Conference Services Branch, the Information and Studies Branch, and
the Geneva Branch. The latter represents the upgrading and strengthening from
internal resources of the previous Geneva Unit of the Centre for Disarmament,
taking into account the continuously expanding activities in Geneva with regard to
the work of the Committee on Disarmament, the World Disarmament Campaign, the
Disarmament Fellowship Programme, specialized conferences, etc. A detailed
description of the functions and organization of the Department is found in the
Organization Manual of the Secretariat (ST/SGB/Organization, section AA of
1 June 1983).

5. In staffing the various units of the Department, both at the senior and the
Professional levels, the application of the principle of equitable geographical
representation has been reflected fully within the existing resources of the
Department. At the date of its establishment, the Department had at its disposal
the 26 established Professional posts of its predecessor, the Centre for
Disarmament of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs. These
posts are occupied by staff members representing 23 nationalities from all
geographical regions. In 1981, the General Assembly appropriated, in connection
with the preparatory process and the holding of the second special session devoted
to disarmament during the summer of 1982, temporary assistance funds to cover the
expenses of two Professional posts.
6. In complying with the Assembly's request in section V of resolution 37/99 K to appropriately strengthen the newly established Department within the existing overall resources of the United Nations, resources available to the Secretary-General enabled the provision of temporary assistance funds for three Professional posts, to meet the minimum immediate needs of the Department during 1983. This included funds covering the continuation of the services of the two temporary Professional staff members engaged in activities related to the second special session and referred to in paragraph 5 above.

7. For the biennium 1984-1985, in the proposed programme budget for the Department, it was proposed that five new Professional posts be established and the temporary assistance resources that were made available in the biennium 1982-1983 for the three Professional posts be relinquished, resulting in a net growth of two established Professional posts.

8. In view of the high priority attached to disarmament and taking into account the considerable increase in scope and volume in the activities of the Secretariat in this field, the Secretary-General considers that the above proposal is a first step in the process of strengthening the Department in line with the above-mentioned resolution.