Fortieth session
Agenda item 68 (e)

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Study on conventional disarmament

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

CONTENTS

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS ............................................. 2

Finland ................................................................. 2
INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

FINLAND

[Original: English]

[3 October 1985]

1. The Government of Finland notes that the study on all aspects of the conventional arms race and on disarmament relating to conventional weapons and armed forces (A/39/348) is the first attempt in a United Nations context to discuss in general terms the nature, causes and effects of the conventional arms build-up. The study also reviews in its conclusions some of the subject areas that could be the object of consultations and negotiations for conventional arms limitations and disarmament.

2. The study presents a useful overview of a subject area that has traditionally been overshadowed by an interest in the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons. However, conventional arms limitations are important as a means both to lessen the destructive effects of armed conflicts and to reduce the possibilities that the nuclear-weapons States could be drawn into local conflicts that might escalate into a nuclear war.

3. Several points of importance are made in the study. The study points to the urgent need to halt the consumption of the world's resources for conventional weaponry, especially in view of the requirements for social and economic development. The point is particularly well taken since a great majority of the resources that are spent on arms are earmarked for conventional types of armament.

4. The study also rightly points out that the accumulation of conventional arms, which has taken place in geographically widely varied areas, has tended to decrease regional security. Furthermore, the study reminds us that the overwhelming proportion of armed forces and weapons are maintained by a small number of countries of military significance. Most of the resources spent on arms are consumed by the Soviet Union and the United States and members of the two main military alliances. Also, nearly all technological innovation in weaponry takes place in a small number of countries and, again, most of it in those countries belonging to the two main military alliances. Therefore, the States with the largest military arsenals, devoting the highest share of the resources for the research, development and accumulation of military arsenals, have a special responsibility in the process of conventional arms limitations and reductions.

5. The study concludes with a useful compilation of subject areas that could become targets for negotiations. While the study recognizes that the subject of concrete steps to be taken is "very broad and politically sensitive", the suggested subject areas provide a good starting point for efforts to determine what concrete steps should be taken in order to design restraints on the conventional arms build-up.

/...
6. The study presents, by its nature, only a general overview of the subject area. Therefore, in view of the significance of the issues involved, it might be useful to carry out additional studies on some of the most important facets of the subject. The following are some of the issue areas that could be worthy of further attention.

7. One such area might be the question of new or "emerging" weapons technologies. The examination of the impact of those technologies on the build-up of conventional arms would necessarily be a broad one, since the new technologies involved are part of a wider series of associated developments that include, e.g., changes in military strategies and in doctrines of fighting conventional wars. It seems that the emerging new weapons technologies likely to be deployed in the next two decades will have two separate dimensions. First, the new technologies will permit the development of extremely lethal conventional weapons, with the combination of "smart" submunitions and delivery vehicles having long operating ranges. Secondly, the new technologies will facilitate more effective centralized control of military engagements over a large geographic area. The impact of those developments on the conventional arms balance, military doctrines and military tactics seems to be an understudied and poorly understood subject area and, therefore, a detailed examination of the questions would throw light on the implications of the emerging technologies for conventional arms limitation and reduction.

8. Another fruitful area of further study might be the question of confidence- and security-building measures. These measures play an important role in that they have a potential of creating a climate of trust and international co-operation, which in turn might pave the way for the limitation and reduction of conventional armaments. The confidence- and security-building measures are now the subject of negotiation at the Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, convening in Stockholm. An examination of those measures in a broader context could be a subject of a separate study.

9. A further area of study might consist of an examination of verification, compliance and crisis management measures applicable to the area of conventional arms. It is being recognized that progress in the limitation or reduction of arms might be facilitated by standardized procedures of verification and compliance measures agreed upon by all parties concerned and correlated with the scale and nature of the assumed obligations to reduce or limit military forces and activities. Likewise, various types of arrangements are seen to be useful in enhancing the means of communication between States in conflict situations in order to provide for quick and direct contact for the expeditious handling of the flow of information.

10. The areas for study briefly outlined above by no means exhaust the agenda for analyses needed for a deeper understanding of different facets of the continuing conventional arms build-up. In order to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the area of disarmament, such studies should be carried out within the existing organs of the United Nations.