Twenty-sixth session

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 23 June 1971 from the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

I would request you to arrange to have the attached Statement of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the question of convening a Conference of the five nuclear-weapon Powers circulated as official documents of the Security Council and General Assembly.

(Signed) Y. MALIK
Permanent Representative of the USSR to the United Nations

* Also issued under the symbol S/10236.
STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

1. For over a quarter of a century now, mankind has been spared a world war. Yet peace remains precarious. In one part of the world after another armed conflicts arise and military tension builds up, while the danger of a military confrontation on a global scale persists.

2. The arms race is one of the factors having an especially negative effect on all aspects of international life. It is creating an increasingly serious threat to peace, apart from absorbing enormous material and intellectual resources which in other circumstances could be used to accelerate economic and social progress and further the well-being of peoples. It is clear that the greatest danger lies in the nuclear arms race. It is the primary reason for the peoples' anxiety and their worries about the future.

3. In addressing this statement to the Governments of nuclear-weapon Powers, the Government of the USSR does not consider it necessary to dwell on the great power of destruction that such weapons possess, on the devastating consequences of their use, or on the suffering and misfortune that a nuclear war, if one were to break out, would cause to all the peoples of the world. However, the Soviet Government does wish to draw the attention of the Governments of all nuclear Powers to the fact that, although the efforts to limit the nuclear arms race have led to the adoption of some positive steps, it has not yet proved possible to reverse the process of stockpiling of increasingly powerful means of mass destruction in the arsenals of nuclear Powers. Consequently, there is a need to make even more determined efforts to adopt effective measures conducive to nuclear disarmament.

4. The Government of the USSR considers that all nuclear Powers have the duty and the responsibility to make such efforts. It is precisely those Powers that can and should work out and implement a practical programme for nuclear disarmament.

5. It goes without saying that such an objective cannot be attained if efforts in that direction are made by only one or a few of the nuclear Powers. It is essential that all nuclear-weapon States act in a concerted manner to arrive at the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

6. Of course, the nuclear Powers do not at present have a common approach to the resolution of questions involved in nuclear disarmament, and their views on such
questions differ in many respects. But that should not prevent them from initiating concerted action aimed at bringing their views closer together and jointly paving the way to nuclear disarmament. Such action is demanded by the interests of all peoples and all States including the nuclear Powers themselves, since their security too will be more reliably guaranteed by the elimination of nuclear weapons than by a continuation of the nuclear arms race.

7. In view of the foregoing, the Soviet Government proposes the convening as early as possible of a conference of the five nuclear-weapon Powers: the Soviet Union, the United States, the People's Republic of China, France and the United Kingdom. Such a conference should consider questions of nuclear disarmament as a whole. The understanding that would result from the negotiations could cover both the entire range of measures relating to nuclear disarmament and the individual steps progressively leading to the achievement of that end.

8. There is no doubt that progress in the matter of nuclear disarmament would assist in settling the problem of general and complete disarmament, would have a salutary effect on the international situation generally, and would contribute to the strengthening of confidence in relations among States.

9. The Soviet Government proposes that there should be initiated, through the diplomatic channel, an exchange of views on questions relating to the date and place of the conference, the agenda and procedure.

10. So far as the Government of the USSR is concerned, it feels that the earlier a conference of the five nuclear Powers is convened, the better.

11. With regard to the site of the conference, its position remains open. It could accept any place convenient to all the participants. Should it be the general view, the Soviet Government would also not be opposed to the establishment of a preparatory committee to discuss the convening of the conference.

12. The Government of the USSR looks forward with interest to learning the views which each of the nuclear Powers may have with regard to these various matters. It hopes that this statement will be studied with all the attention that the problem of nuclear disarmament deserves and that as a result of concerted efforts by the nuclear Powers progress will be made in resolving this problem.