Letter dated 11 May 1981 from the Acting Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a working paper concerning the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

I would request you kindly to have the document circulated as a working paper of the Preparatory Committee of that session.

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The introduction of special sessions of the General Assembly on disarmament has given a new dimension to the disarmament process. In the current situation, which is marked by a virtual standstill of disarmament negotiations, the role of the special session has assumed added significance. The second special session will provide a forum for a review of the existing situation as well as for strengthening and broadening the foundation of an international disarmament strategy for future years. For its part, the Government of Finland has undertaken careful preparations for the special session. It has expressed its views in its reply to the Secretary-General concerning the agenda of the session and other relevant questions.

Preparations for the second special session should be based on a realistic evaluation of the state of the arms race and of disarmament efforts. With a view to contributing to the preparations of the special session within a defined framework, the present working paper contains an assessment of the main negotiation processes, both bilateral and multilateral and a survey of regional disarmament efforts. In addition, sectoral work related to the further definition of concepts and goals and the adoption of new approaches is reviewed. Finally, problems with regard to the relationship between disarmament and social and economic development, currently under intensive study within the United Nations, are briefly dealt with.

1. General assessment of the implementation of the Final Document of the first special session

While some limited progress has been achieved in the implementation of the substantive goals of disarmament as laid down in the Programme of Action of the Final Document, efforts to halt and reverse the arms race have not succeeded. On the contrary, the arms race is accelerating and assuming new dimensions geographically, technologically and conceptually. In particular, scarce resources that should be available for economic and social development continue to be diverted to military ends on a massive scale. Besides being linked with economic and social development, disarmament is imperative for international security: the continuation of the arms race undermines, in the final analysis, the security of all States.

Despite failure to achieve tangible progress in disarmament, efforts related to implementing the Final Document have continued, both within and outside the United Nations disarmament machinery. To a large extent, the priorities set forth for disarmament negotiations have been reflected in those efforts. In particular, the Committee on Disarmament, while not producing negotiated results, has concentrated on areas identified by the General Assembly as the most urgent.

Irrespective of the type of approach and extent of measures envisaged, i.e., whether comprehensive or sectoral, regional or universal, bilateral or global,
the fundamental principles for negotiations incorporated and elaborated in the Final Document of the first special session retain their validity. They include, _inter alia_, the following:

- All States have the obligation to contribute to efforts in the field of disarmament, and all States should benefit from them;

- They have the right to participate on an equal footing in the multilateral negotiations which have a direct bearing on their security;

- Disarmament measures should ensure, in an equitable and balanced manner, the right of all States to security; all States and groups of States should obtain equal advantage at every stage;

- Success of disarmament efforts presupposes a balance and a strict observance of mutual obligations;

- Adequate measures for verification satisfactory to all parties should be provided for in order to attain the confidence of all parties in the implementation of agreements.

Continued sophistication of military technology renders the comparability of different weapons and weapons systems increasingly difficult. Therefore, such new approaches to arms limitation negotiations are needed that would give more weight to the role and function of a particular weapon or a weapons system with regard to an over-all military posture, as distinguished from its mere technical qualities.

2. **Current negotiating processes**

2.1. The strategic dialogue

The nuclear-weapon States, in particular those possessing the most important nuclear arsenals, bear a special responsibility for achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament. So far, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks have served an important purpose by restraining the nuclear-arms race between the leading nuclear Powers. Their dialogue aimed at limiting strategic nuclear weapons is crucial to the control of nuclear arms, and it is pivotal to relations between them. That process concerns the security of all States. Strategic stability should be sought at as low a level of armaments as possible. It is vital that the framework already achieved for limiting nuclear arms - the SALT agreements - be preserved and succeeded by further, not only quantitative but also qualitative limitations.

2.2. Other priority negotiations

In keeping with agreed priorities, the Committee on Disarmament, the main multilateral body for disarmament negotiations, has had the cessation of nuclear testing on its agenda, although actual negotiations on the subject have been conducted between three nuclear-weapon States. Failure of these negotiations to produce a draft treaty has been widely regretted. A comprehensive prohibition of
nuclear testing would imply effective constraints on the qualitative development of nuclear weapons. It would also have wide-range significance for disarmament in general. In particular, it is intrinsically linked with the SALT process and efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Progress achieved in developing seismic detection methodology has, for all practical purposes, satisfied verification requirements of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. All efforts should now be exerted at its early conclusion.

The prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and their destruction has been identified as one of the most urgent measures of disarmament. Military developments have increased its urgency. Bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States have been conducted for a number of years on this question. Reports on the status of these talks have been submitted to the Committee on Disarmament; many problems remain unsolved. The Committee on Disarmament has so far not been in a position to start negotiations on the questions. The ongoing efforts should be accelerated for an early conclusion of an international convention to this end.

3. Regional processes

3.1. General

A significant part of the arms buildup is conceived in the regional context. Regional arms races, involving even nuclear weapons, are in evidence. The continuation of rounds of arms buildup serves to exacerbate already existing local political tensions. While the arms race in general is a global concern, regional, political and geographical conditions may call for a more limited approach. As the report of the recent United Nations study on all aspects of regional disarmament states, there is a vast and, to a large extent, unexplored potential for progress in disarmament if the global approach is supplemented by efforts at the regional level.

The possibilities for outlining broad-based efforts for regional measures in each region should be examined, on the basis of the initiative and co-operation of the States in the region and taking into account conditions prevailing there. The Finnish initiative for a disarmament programme in Europe, for example, calls for the examination of the possibilities for outlining such a broad-based effort.

Among the initiatives and proposals for regional measures, the following belong to the most important current processes.

3.2. Europe

Disarmament in Europe, which of all continents has the greatest concentration of weapons on its territory, has been dealt with in two fora: the talks on mutual reductions of forces and armaments and associated measures in Central Europe and Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. So far the achievements in peaceful co-operation in Europe have not been translated into tangible measures of arms limitation and disarmament; on the contrary, the arms race, particularly the nuclear-arms race, has gained new momentum in the continent.
Developments in the nuclear field are the single most disturbing phenomenon in the European context. In this situation, negotiations are obviously needed. Steps towards negotiations on theatre nuclear weapons in Europe are clearly in the interest of all parties and the whole continent. Recent indications of preparedness for such steps are encouraging.

It is also encouraging to note the determined efforts presently being made in the follow-up meeting in Madrid of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on a substantive and balanced document which would assure the continuation of the process of the Conference, including a mandate for a conference on disarmament in Europe. Such a result could be an important contribution towards preserving and strengthening détente and towards conditions necessary for continued negotiations on disarmament.

It is the view of the Government of Finland that special arrangements for arms control in the Nordic region of Europe would be both useful and conceivable. The goal of these arrangements, in conjunction with other measures concerning the whole of Europe, and in accordance with the security needs of all Governments concerned, would be to assure that the region would continue to remain outside the dangers of nuclear weapons and new nuclear-weapon technology.

Finland has endeavoured to contribute to the continued stability in northern Europe and has, for example, suggested a Nordic arms control arrangement. A major element of stability in the region is the absence of nuclear weapons in the Nordic countries, the value of which has been repeatedly stressed by all Nordic Governments.

3.3. Latin America

As one of the ongoing regional processes, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco) is the only treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon free zone in an inhabited region. As regional disarmament measures in general, the Treaty was conceived as a measure to strengthen the security of the States in the region while also strengthening international security in general and, in particular, contributing towards preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. The Treaty, although still short of full implementation, has proved an undeniable success.

3.4. Indian Ocean

The concept of a zone of peace has been proposed in several regional contexts. Most recently, the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean region has been intensively discussed within the United Nations. Such an arrangement, freely arrived at by the States concerned, could contribute to the security of the zonal States as well as international peace and security as a whole. Several crucial issues, including the demilitarization of a zone, remain to be solved. The increased military presence of the leading nuclear Powers in the region, while obviously running counter to the very goal of a zone of peace, testifies to the urgency of this effort.

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3.5. Other zonal approaches

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones has already proved its viability, as discussed above, in the context of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. They should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned and should involve commitments by the nuclear-weapon States not to use nuclear weapons against the States of the zone and to respect the status of the zone. Recent discussion is proof of the continued topicality of the zonal approach as well as the proposals made for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in northern Europe and elsewhere. The consideration of the establishment of such zones should continue to benefit from the "Comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects", the United Nations study completed in 1975.

The General Assembly has discussed, inter alia, the proposals for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and in the South Asia and for the denuclearization of Africa. Recent developments serve as a daily reminder of the dangers inherent in the possibility of the emergence of new nuclear-weapon States and underline the urgency of implementing those proposals.

4. Sectoral programmes

4.1. Nuclear disarmament

Efforts to halt and reverse the nuclear-arms race have yielded but marginal results. They should be intensified and further aspects of nuclear arms buildup should be brought within the scope of negotiations. All nuclear-weapon States, in particular those possessing the greatest nuclear arsenals, bear a responsibility for achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament. In addition to the limitation of strategic weapons, the conclusion of a comprehensive prohibition of nuclear testing and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the following aspects of nuclear disarmament should be given particular attention:

(a) A great variety of nuclear weapons are at present not subject to negotiations. Arms technology is rapidly advancing in this category and producing arms of increased sophistication and destructive power, thus creating new problems for regional stability and global security. It is important, therefore, to bring these weapons within the reach of active efforts of arms control and disarmament. Also, measures should be sought aimed at refraining from placing nuclear weapons or systems of such weapons on territories where there are no such weapons at present.

(b) The increasing danger of the spread of nuclear weapons to more countries poses a threat to the security of the international community and runs counter to the security interests of all States, nuclear and non-nuclear alike. In that context, the non-proliferation Treaty was a far-sighted instrument. It is widely considered the most important arms limitation measure so far achieved, and it remains the best tool to constrain that danger. Effective non-proliferation measures would also be a contribution to the elimination of impediments to a wider
international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. International consensus to this effect should be sought around the non-proliferation Treaty, inter alia, by adopting measures designed to further strengthen the Treaty.

(c) Another measure that could contribute towards the efforts to limit further production of nuclear weapons, facilitate nuclear disarmament and promote non-proliferation would be the cessation of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes.

(d) Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons should be undertaken. If a State commits itself not to acquire or station on its territories nuclear weapons it clearly has the right to receive assurances that those weapons are not used against it. Such assurances should be as comprehensive as possible. The unilateral statements recently made by the five nuclear-weapon States contribute to the further consideration of this question, but they obviously fall short of the goal of effective international arrangements. Pending the achievement of tangible measures of nuclear-arms limitation and disarmament, work towards effective international arrangements on security assurances should be continued within the Committee on Disarmament.

(e) Bilateral agreements have been concluded for the prevention of nuclear war. In addition, a more generalized approach in this question should be taken into consideration.

4.2. Other weapons of mass destruction

The elimination of radiological weapons and warfare has been discussed within the Committee on Disarmament. A draft convention, now under debate, should be concluded at an early date.

The possibility of the emergence and development of new types of weapons of mass destruction based on new scientific principles and achievements has given rise to serious concern. That possibility should be eliminated by seeking appropriate arrangements to avoid that danger.

4.3. Conventional weapons

Although nuclear disarmament should be the most urgent over-all target, the qualitative and quantitative arms race in the field of conventional weapons - which constitute the bulk of military expenditure in the world and a major burden to national economies - is at the regional level a most immediate threat to security. The question is under consideration, inter alia, in the Disarmament Commission. A variety of approaches may have to be applied. Arrangements for mutual restraints and limitation in the transfer of arms to specific regions should be actively considered and pursued. Also, regional arrangements to limit and reduce conventional arms and armaments would be in the interest of the States of the region concerned by strengthening the security of the region at a lower level of armaments.
The Convention, recently opened for signature, on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, marks a major, if limited achievement in the field of the limitation of conventional arms. The Convention should be given the widest possible adherence.

4.4. Collateral measures

Agreed reduction of military expenditure is one approach that should be carefully considered with a view to promoting disarmament. Currently, the question is under consideration within the United Nations both as regards principles that should govern the actual reduction of military budgets as well as methodology related to information about military expenditure. The urgent need to carry out reductions applies, in particular, to nuclear-weapon States and other States with high military budgets. Resources thus released should be reallocated to social and economic development, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries.

The practical application of the concept of confidence-building measures was first introduced in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The subject is currently under active consideration within that forum. In a wider context, the question is being studied by a United Nations group of experts. States should consider, on a regional basis, arrangements for specific confidence-building measures as first steps to diminish the danger of armed conflicts resulting from misunderstandings or misinterpretations of military activities. Such measures could include, inter alia, prior notification of military manoeuvres and movements and the exchange of military observers.

5. Disarmament and development

There is an increasing awareness about the relationship between disarmament and economic and social development. The use of resources to military ends should be seen as a diversion from productive purposes of economic and social development and, ultimately, as an impediment to the fulfilment of basic human needs.

The complex interrelationships between disarmament and development are presently being studied by a United Nations group of experts. As the main areas of investigation the study covers (1) the present-day utilization of resources for military purposes; (2) economic and social consequences of a continuing arms race and the implementation of disarmament; and (3) conversion and redeployment of resources released from military purposes through disarmament measures to economic and social development.

In view of the terms of reference of the Group and the extent and diversity of the research projects commissioned by the Group, it is to be expected that the report of the Group, due to be submitted at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, will be exceptionally comprehensive. It is to be hoped that, by virtue of being forward-looking and policy-oriented, the study will facilitate concrete decision-making to release resources from military purposes to development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries.