PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEVOTED TO DISARMAMENT

Organizational session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 4 December 1980, at 10.30 a.m.

Acting Chairman: Mr. WALDHEIM (Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The ACTING CHAIRMAN declared open the 1st meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Second Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

2. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the arms race had become the great anachronism of the modern age. The resources that could alleviate the crushing burden of deprivation, disease and illiteracy, especially in the developing countries, were being harnessed for refining and increasing the instruments of war. Advances in technology were, in many cases, made captive to military demands, without considering that, in a world of action and reaction, the security of nations was not automatically increased by a higher level of armaments.

3. It was against that background that the significance of the decision to convene the second special session on disarmament must be viewed. Once again the community of nations was given the opportunity to focus its attention on the vital area of disarmament, to review and evaluate the accomplishments since the first special session on disarmament and to renew the determination to implement the valuable framework for disarmament which had been devised at that session.

4. The purpose of the first special session on disarmament had been not to conclude new disarmament or arms-limitation agreements but rather to address one of the most difficult problems of the time: how to disarm. The Final Document of that special session, in its comprehensiveness, provided the instrument which, given the necessary political will, could well furnish the solution to that problem. It contained the foundation of an international strategy for disarmament efforts in the coming years, reflected agreement on the need for a series of specific disarmament measures and for the preparation of a comprehensive disarmament programme, and set up international machinery designed to deal with disarmament in its various aspects.

5. Two and a half years after the adoption of the Final Document, the implementation of some of its basic provisions was well under way. In the first place, the relevant disarmament machinery, on both the deliberative and the negotiating side, had been revitalized and strengthened. The priority given to that task was reflected in the declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade. Some progress had also been achieved with respect to the elaboration of a comprehensive programme on disarmament, and it was to be hoped that the negotiations in progress on the subject would result in its early completion. The United Nations, particularly through its Centre for Disarmament, had significantly expanded the scope of its information activities by various means, including the preparation of expert studies dealing with substantive issues and contacts with non-governmental organizations and research institutes. Furthermore, a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research had been established on an interim basis within the framework of UNITAR. It was also gratifying to note that,
after arduous negotiations, the United Nations Conference on Prohibitions or Restrictions of Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects had successfully concluded its work by adopting a Convention and several protocols. That was indeed an encouraging sign.

6. After mentioning some of the positive results since the conclusion of the first special session on disarmament, it was necessary to draw attention to the more sombre realities of the present situation. It was true that the first special session on disarmament had provided a consensus on principles, priorities and machinery. But it was easier to agree on principles and priorities than to implement them. Machinery was important, but in the end it could be only as effective as national policies permitted. The Final Document adopted at the first special session on disarmament, which might have become a landmark in the quest for a reduction in the burden of arms, had not yet been translated into substantive action. Instead, the world was now seeing a further escalation of the arms race, and the figures on military expenditure indicated another upward surge, largely attributable to the deterioration in the general international situation. The quantitative and qualitative development of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, was undiminished. World military expenditure in 1980 would exceed the staggering figure of $500 billion; the impact of such expenditure on other critical basic needs of society was painfully evident, in the light of the crucial link between disarmament and development.

7. Present trends were casting ominous shadows over disarmament efforts both within and outside the framework of the Organization. In view of the scope and intensity of the efforts that had gone into the successful elaboration of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, it seemed necessary to reflect once again on the present state of affairs. It was an abiding irony that all Governments were aware of the dimensions, the significance and the dangers of the arms race and were committed in principle to disarmament, and yet little progress in that field could be noted. The magnitude of the problem had been further compounded by the tensions and crises that had recently spread to various parts of the world. Those two issues could not be separated, since the adverse effects of such tensions and crises on the negotiating process in bilateral and multilateral areas of arms limitation and disarmament had become obvious.

8. In sum, while the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament had laid down the basis for an effective approach to disarmament, the succeeding years had revealed the difficulty of translating noble objectives into concrete reality. One of the major factors that continued to militate against that objective was the perceived relationship between disarmament and security. Nations acquired arms because they distrusted each other and because they hoped to gain protection from attack. But a security based on arms was precarious, since arms perpetuated distrust and fear among nations and created a constant risk of war. Shared objectives and mutual confidence were the only means that would serve to attain the security to which every nation and all peoples were entitled.

9. The end of the arms race and the achievement of real disarmament were tasks of
primary importance. To carry them out, not only must the momentum generated by the first special session on disarmament be maintained but every effort must be made to advance towards its necessary and logical conclusion. The role and responsibility of the second special session on disarmament in that process could not be overemphasized.

10. The coming session should mark a significant step forward in the pursuit of disarmament, and a determined effort must therefore be made to create an atmosphere that would be conducive to its success. The best prelude to such an undertaking would be the meaningful results that one should expect from negotiations on substantive measures of disarmament.

11. The second special session on disarmament should be a genuine turning point in the efforts of the United Nations to implement real and substantial measures aimed at achieving the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. He had every confidence that the Committee's preparatory work would be motivated by that objective, and he assured the Committee that the United Nations Secretariat would do its utmost to contribute to the successful outcome of its efforts.

12. People everywhere aspired to an end to the arms race and the establishment of genuine peace. If mankind was to be in command of its destiny and to mold its future in a rational and humane manner, it must ensure that those hopes were not disappointed.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

13. Mr. BETHRAMINO (Argentina) nominated Mr. Olu Adeniji (Nigeria) for the post of Chairman.

14. Mr. ROSE (German Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the socialist countries, and Mr. FEIN (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Western European and other States, seconded the nomination.

15. Mr. Adeniji (Nigeria) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

16. Mr. Adeniji (Nigeria) took the Chair.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that the introductory statement by the Secretary-General in declaring open the session would no doubt inspire the deliberations of the Committee in the discharge of its task.

18. Preparations for the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were being commenced at a time when the outlook for disarmament was very disappointing. When the General Assembly had decided, at its thirty-third session in 1978, to convene in 1982 a second special session devoted to disarmament, no one had been under any illusion that the Programme of Action adopted at that time would be fully carried out in the following four years. However, it had been expected at least that the serious situation portrayed in the Final Document adopted
by consensus at the first special session on disarmament would impart a new momentum to disarmament efforts. Yet two years after that Declaration and Programme of Action, the arms race between the great Powers had escalated, and the prospects were that the 1980s might witness a great build-up of arsenals if efforts were not made to check and reverse the trend.

19. International peace and security were being threatened by the use, or threat of the use, of force, and that situation had in turn presented a justification among the major Powers for increased armaments. Three years earlier, the annual expenditure on arms had been quoted as $US 350 billion; today, that figure was $500 billion, and that increase had come at a time of great economic difficulties all over the world. The General Assembly had just adopted the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade (A/C.1/35/L.34), and it was to be hoped that the second special session devoted to disarmament would provide the opportunity for reaching decisions that would ensure sustained efforts towards disarmament. The members of the Preparatory Committee had the great responsibility of assisting the second special session on disarmament to attain its goal. The task was not easy because the international community would expect more of the Committee than the mere holding of a special session and the adoption of a series of documents.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

20. The provisional agenda (A/AC.206/1) was adopted.

ELECTION OF OTHER OFFICERS

21. The CHAIRMAN announced that it had been agreed that the Bureau of the Committee should have a total of 15 officers - the Chairman, 13 Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, with three representatives from each of the five regional groups. Since consultations were still going on with respect to the designation of the representatives of some regional groups, he suggested that the election should be deferred until a later meeting.

22. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

23. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the procedure for the adoption of decisions, recalled that the Preparatory Committee for the first special session on disarmament had been governed by the relevant parts of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on the understanding that, notwithstanding that fact, every effort should be made to ensure that decisions on matters of substance were adopted by consensus. The Chairman of the First Committee of the General Assembly had recently referred to that decision-making procedure of the Preparatory Committee, and the President of the General Assembly had referred to the matter again in plenary meeting. He assured the Committee that he would make every effort as Chairman to secure the required consensus, believing that in matters as important as those relating to disarmament, decisions adopted by consensus were much more likely to be implemented.
Nevertheless, should it prove impossible to secure a consensus, he would then duly inform the Committee, so that the relevant decisions could be adopted in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

24. With regard to the question of participation in the work of the Committee, he said that the representatives of countries not members of the Committee would be entitled to participate in its plenary meetings without the right to vote, as decided by the Preparatory Committee for the first special session on disarmament. In addition, under the provisions of the Charter and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, it was customary to invite the International Atomic Energy Agency and the specialized agencies to take part in meetings of the Assembly or its subsidiary organs by sending them a copy of the announcement convening each session. However, since resolution 35/47, by which the General Assembly had decided to convene the second special session devoted to disarmament and to establish the Preparatory Committee, made no mention of the specialized agencies, he suggested that agencies interested in disarmament should be invited to take part in the work of the Committee as observers.

25. With respect to the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations, the Committee might follow the practice of the first special session on disarmament, which had decided that such representatives should be present at meetings of the Committee and that they should provide the Secretariat with lists of communications received from non-governmental organizations that were conducting research in the field of disarmament.

26. If there was no objection, he would take it that the members of the Committee agreed with the suggestions he had made.

27. It was so decided.

28. The CHAIRMAN said that at the first special session on disarmament the Preparatory Committee had requested the Secretariat to prepare a number of background documents, which had proved extremely valuable in its work. He invited suggestions regarding background documents that might be prepared by the Secretariat for the second special session on disarmament.

29. Lastly, with regard to the question of future sessions of the Preparatory Committee, he pointed out that, in the document on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution authorizing the convening of the second special session (A/C.1/35/L.58), it was envisaged that two substantive sessions would be held in 1981. The Committee would have to decide, therefore, the dates for holding those sessions.

30. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) recalled that at the first special session devoted to disarmament, out of the 10 background documents prepared by the Secretariat, three had been prepared on the initiative of the Chairman and the Secretariat and the others on the initiative of the delegation of Mexico. With regard to the documents which would have to be prepared for the next session, his delegation believed that the Secretariat should consider the matter in the light of the...
practical usefulness which those working documents had had, determine which were still useful and should be brought up to date and make concrete suggestions on the subject at the next meeting.

31. **Mr. HAJK** (Pakistan), after supporting the statement of the representative of Mexico, stressed the importance of reaching an early decision regarding the dates for holding the two substantive sessions in 1981, so that those sessions would not clash with other meetings, and in particular with the meetings of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, those of the Disarmament Commission and those of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean.

32. With regard to the first session, he recalled that the representative of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the nine countries of the European Economic Community, had said in the First Committee that that session should be held between the spring and summer sessions of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, at the end of April or the beginning of May. With regard to the second session, he proposed that it should be held towards the end of August, in order to allow for the timely submission of the Committee's report to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

33. The **CHAIRMAN** agreed with the representative of Pakistan that the sessions of the Preparatory Committee should not be allowed to clash with those of the Committee on Disarmament at Geneva, the Disarmament Commission in New York or the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. It was also necessary to recall that the deadline for the submission of the report to the General Assembly was 1 September.

34. **Mr. ISSRAELYAN** (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported the Pakistani proposal but said that, at its last two sessions, the Committee on Disarmament had not completed its work until the last days of April. Since many delegations wished to observe the celebration of Easter, it would perhaps be more convenient to hold the first session of the Preparatory Committee after the completion of the work of the Disarmament Commission.

35. **Mr. RAHALI** (Morocco) said that the session of the Preparatory Committee in New York would be shorter than that of the Disarmament Commission and that the Preparatory Committee could meet during the two weeks preceding the session of the Disarmament Commission in New York.

36. **Mr. SOUZA E. SILVA** (Brazil) said that the suggestion of the Pakistani representative was useful, since it sought to avoid a clash of meetings and successive travel of representatives between New York and Geneva. With regard to the convening of the second session of the Preparatory Committee in September, the problem arose of the timely submission of the report to the General Assembly, and his delegation therefore suggested that that session should be held at the beginning of October or during the last days of September and thus co-ordinated with the work of the First Committee.
37. Mr. Flowerer (United States of America) said that the report would most probably be prepared by the Preparatory Committee for later transmittal to the Secretariat. Consequently, for the majority of Members, the most convenient arrangement would be for the Preparatory Committee to meet just before the start of the First Committee's work.

38. Mr. Kaganda wa Kaganda (Zaire) supported the suggestion made with regard to documentation. With regard to the time-table of meetings, he pointed out that many representatives were members of both the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission and that therefore the Preparatory Committee should hold its first session after the sessions of the two bodies referred to. Furthermore, the Preparatory Committee could not limit the duration of the work of the Disarmament Commission to two weeks. His delegation supported the suggestion that the second session should be held before the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

39. Mr. de la Gorce (France) agreed with the representative of Brazil that the first session should be linked with that of the Disarmament Commission. Furthermore, since there were almost six weeks between the two sessions of the Committee on Disarmament, from the end of April to 15 June approximately, in that period both the Disarmament Commission and the Preparatory Committee could meet. The second session of the Preparatory Committee could be held at the beginning of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, before the First Committee began its meetings. The report could be submitted by 15 October for consideration by the First Committee.

40. Mr. Mesharrafa (Egypt) supported the proposal of Pakistan that the Preparatory Committee should meet after the completion of the work of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva and the Disarmament Commission in New York. The second session could be held from the end of August until a few days before the opening of the session of the General Assembly, which would allow the Secretariat time for the preparation of the report.

41. The Chairman asked the Secretariat to inform the Committee about the times during which the two sessions could be held.

42. Mr. Csillag (Secretary of the Preparatory Committee) said that there were six weeks, from 20 April to the end of May, for the meetings of the Preparatory Committee and the Disarmament Commission, in that or the reverse order. In connexion with the second session, the rule adopted by the General Assembly that all the reports should be submitted by 1 September at the latest must be borne in mind, and also the express wish of the Assembly that only subsidiary organs should meet during General Assembly sessions. Provision had accordingly been made for the second session of the Preparatory Committee to be held from 17 to 28 August 1981.

43. Mr. Summerhayes (United Kingdom) said that if the Preparatory Committee worked hard in April and May it might be able to complete the report in one session and avoid the need for a second session.

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44. Mr. OKAWA (Japan) supported the suggestion of the United Kingdom representative. He also thought that there should be at least a week between the end of the session of the Committee on Disarmament and the start of the sessions of the Disarmament Commission and the Preparatory Committee in New York. If it were decided to hold both sessions of the Preparatory Committee, it would be advisable for the second session to be held in the middle of September rather than the end of August. It would also be necessary to bear in mind the timetable for the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean and possibly of the actual Conference on the Indian Ocean if it were to be held in 1981.

45. Mr. ISSRAEELYAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed that it was desirable though not essential for the different organs concerned with disarmament not to meet simultaneously. He stressed, however, that what was most important was for the work of those organs to be performed efficiently and not to be held up for the convenience of a few people. His delegation supported the idea of holding a second session in September but pointed out that the number of people attending the Preparatory Committee was more than twice the number of those attending the Committee on Disarmament, and the arrangements made should suit the majority. If there were no other alternative, the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission would have to work simultaneously.

46. Mr. KANDA wa KANDA (Zaire) said that the General Assembly had already clearly decided that the Preparatory Committee should hold two sessions and there was no justification now for questioning something that the General Assembly had already settled.

47. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) said that it was encouraging to know that six weeks were available for the sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the Disarmament Commission. Obviously priority should be given in 1981 to the work of the Preparatory Committee over that of the Disarmament Commission, so that if the six weeks were not to be shared equally, four should be allocated to the work of the Preparatory Committee and two to the Disarmament Commission.

48. Regarding the date for the second session, he agreed with the majority of delegations that it should be held in September rather than in August. The only difficulty was that the General Assembly had decided that the reports should be submitted by 1 September at the latest and that only subsidiary organs of the General Assembly should meet during Assembly sessions. However, that difficulty was not insuperable, since the General Assembly could modify its own rules and change its own decisions. Moreover, in the case of a special session, methods of work need not necessarily conform with normal practice. He therefore proposed that the Preparatory Committee should meet from 14 to 28 September.

49. Mr. TINCA (Romania) supported the delegations which were in favour of arranging the substantive sessions so as to avoid overlapping with other organs concerned with disarmament. He agreed with the representative of Mexico that priority should be given to the work of the Preparatory Committee, but considered that the other disarmament organs should also be allowed to carry out their tasks. His delegation thought it would be premature to decide now how many weeks should be allocated to the work of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. To facilitate the
work of the Preparatory Committee he requested the Secretariat to prepare a provisional time-table for the meetings of the different disarmament organs in 1981.

50. **Mr. PLOUVENÉ** (United States of America) considered that the question of holding the first session of the Preparatory Committee before or after the session of the Disarmament Commission was of no great importance. He also considered that it would be advisable to confirm whether an exception could be made on the question of meetings not being held simultaneously with General Assembly sessions. That did not seem an insuperable obstacle, since the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean and the Preparatory Committee itself had done so.

51. The CHAIRMAN said that the General Assembly had arranged for two sessions of two weeks each to be held, and it would not be possible to combine those sessions into a single session of four weeks. Nor did it seem likely that the work could be completed in a single session.

52. It seemed advisable that the regional groups should make provision for meetings of the Preparatory Committee and the Disarmament Commission between 20 April and 29 May. It would probably be more convenient for the Preparatory Committee to meet first, since the Disarmament Commission had up to four weeks for its meetings, and if the meetings of the Preparatory Committee lasted one or two days more than the time provided, the results would not be as serious as in the reverse situation. Regarding the second session, the most appropriate time from the point of view of economy would be the first two weeks of October, before the meetings of the First Committee started. However, if those considerations were not vital, the period from 29 August to the end of the first week or beginning of the second week of September might be appropriate.

53. **Mr. GARCIA ROBLES** (Mexico) said he saw no advantage in starting the session on 29 August and thought the dates of approximately 15 to 29 September more appropriate.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.