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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 15 May 1981, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ADEMIFI (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE OBSERVER FOR THE HOLY SEE

1. Monsignor LE BEAUPIN (Observer for the Holy See) thanked the Chairman for his statement made at the 16th meeting, following the tragic attempt on the life of His Holiness John Paul II on 13 May 1981. He also thanked the Committee as a whole, in particular those delegations which had expressed to the Holy See either publicly or in private their condemnation of the attempt and their support for the Holy See in its moment of sorrow. Pope John Paul II had always striven to ensure that mankind expressed itself by dialogue and by a willingness to advance towards a more just world where love replaced hatred, justice replaced injustice, understanding replaced incomprehension, and joy replaced sorrow. The Pope offered his sufferings of today for all the people of the world.

CONSIDERATION OF VIEWS CONCERNING THE AGENDA OF THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEVOTED TO DISARMAMENT (continued)

2. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico), introducing the working paper prepared by his delegation (A/AC.206/13, which contained an annotated preliminary draft of the provisional agenda for the 1982 special session, recalled that, at the Committee's 7th meeting, he had outlined the kind of draft provisional agenda which his delegation thought would be most appropriate for the coming special session and most likely to ensure that that session proved constructive and fruitful. He had expanded on his earlier statement at the informal meeting held on 13 May; however, while he was grateful to the many delegations which had supported Mexico's position, it had been clear from the statements made at the informal meetings of 13 and 14 May that delegations had not grasped the full significance and scope of the Mexican proposal. His delegation had therefore decided to set forth its proposal in a working paper, which had just been submitted to the Secretariat but would not be available to delegations before the end of the session.

3. In essence, the introduction to that working paper explained that the experience of the 1978 special session had shown that when dealing with a very broad topic whose various elements were closely interrelated, every attempt must be made to concentrate and co-ordinate efforts instead of dispersing them. That experience was vital to the success of the 1982 special session, especially when one considered that the main item on the agenda of that session would be the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, the structure and content of which closely reflected those of the Final Document of the 1978 special session. The 1982 special session should therefore avoid a proliferation of agenda items, and the Comprehensive Programme should be given all the attention it warranted, so that it could be adopted by consensus. Consideration of the Programme would, in any case, permit consideration of many related disarmament items. The annotations to item 9 proposed by his delegation made that point very clear.

4. The annotated preliminary draft provisional agenda proposed by his delegation comprised 12 items, the first seven of which were items common to all such meetings. Item 8 was entitled "general debate", and the annotations to that item
indicated that, while the Preparatory Committee was not presuming to tell sovereign states what they should or should not discuss in the general debate, it did wish to give them an idea of what it had discussed under that heading. That item might include a list of descriptive summaries of the various items proposed and discussed by delegations at the informal meetings as possible elements of a general debate.

5. Proposed item 9 was entitled "Consideration and adoption of the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament". The annotations to that item made it clear that the special session could discuss any disarmament-related questions it chose under that item, rather than adding separate agenda items.

6. Proposed item 10 was entitled "Consideration, adoption and opening for signature of draft disarmament treaties or conventions received from the Committee on Disarmament". The annotations to that item showed that most delegations in the Preparatory Committee believed that top priority should be given to concluding a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and a convention prohibiting chemical weapons. The adoption of those instruments might prove most beneficial for the work of the session.

7. Proposed item 11 was entitled "Solemn launching of the World Disarmament Campaign and holding of the first pledging conference for that campaign". The annotations to that item indicated that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/152 I, the study by the Secretary-General on the organization and financing of a World Disarmament Campaign would probably be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session and that the Assembly would take the necessary decisions in order that the Campaign might be launched and the first pledging conference held in the course of the special session.

8. Proposed item 12 was entitled "Adoption of the Final Act of the session". The annotations to that item indicated that, to avoid confusion with the Final Document of the 1978 special session, the corresponding document of the 1982 special session should be given a different title, such as "Final Act".

9. His delegation agreed with the Chairman that it would be premature to try to arrive at any conclusions on the draft agenda at the current session. He hoped, however, that in the time remaining until the Committee's next session, delegations would reflect fully on his delegation's proposal and on the views expressed in the course of the informal meetings.

10. In conclusion, he pointed out that it was because the agenda of the 1978 special session had been satisfactory that the results of that session had proved fruitful. The example of that session should therefore be followed, and the agenda of the 1982 special session restricted to items relating to the adoption of the various documents which should emanate from that session.

11. Mr. HULINSKÝ (Czechoslovakia), introducing the working paper submitted by his delegation (A/AC.206/11), said that the purpose of the working paper was to deal with the problem of strengthening co-operation among Governments in the process of
disarmament negotiations and in creating the conditions for the successful implementation of disarmament. Although his delegation was fully convinced that there should be a discussion of the principal objectives of international co-operation aimed at speedier practical progress in disarmament negotiations under current conditions, it was not looking for an answer in the form of a new declaration of principles. The Czechoslovak working paper sought rather to lay the groundwork for the preparation of the final document of the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and was therefore concerned with the practical aspects of such matters as the initiatives to be taken by States to reduce the threat of war and halt the arms race, possible ways of stimulating disarmament negotiations and preventing interruptions in their progress, strengthening efforts to make the means now spent on military purposes available for economic and social needs, the development of contacts between States and their representatives with a view to solving disarmament problems, and ways of ensuring a constructive approach on the part of States to the proposals and initiatives of the other side and the consideration of those proposals. The political will of States should focus on such problems in order to achieve a breakthrough in disarmament negotiations. It was his delegation's hope that the preparation of the final document of the 1982 special session would lead to the formulation of an agreed position of Member States on disarmament problems.

12. Mr. WAGEMAKERS (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Communities, observed that the Committee had devoted most of its time to identifying and discussing elements for the draft agenda of the 1982 special session. The delegations of the European Communities were encouraged by the constructive atmosphere and realistic approach that had characterized those deliberations. A large number of delegations appeared to share their view of the obstacles that had been placed in the way of meaningful arms control and disarmament by certain unfortunate developments since 1978.

13. Since his statement at the 13th meeting, a positive discussion on the content of the draft agenda had taken place under the able guidance of the Chairman, providing a solid basis for the formulation of the draft agenda at the Committee's next session.

14. The member countries of the European Communities had followed the Committee's debates with great attention and had made repeated efforts to promote a harmonization of views, consistently advocating a manageable draft agenda for the 1982 special session, so that the latter did not dissipate its efforts by dealing with numerous items and sub-items while overlooking their true nature and their interrelationship. The 1982 special session should be devoted to promoting disarmament in all its aspects, on the basis provided by the Final Document of the 1979 special session. The 1982 special session should not be a purely theoretical exercise but should adopt a practical approach aimed at achieving concrete disarmament measures, taking into account the present international situation.

15. Those ideas were reflected in the written and oral proposals made by States members of the European Communities with regard to the agenda and other relevant organizational questions. Their proposals remained valid today, and he hoped that
delegations would give them further consideration in the months remaining until the Committee's next session.

16. Mr. SHI Jinkun (China) said that his delegation greatly appreciated the Chairman's summary of discussions on possible elements of a draft of the provisional agenda of the second special session devoted to disarmament (A/AC.206/CRP.6) and wished to make some comments on the document.

17. The CHAIRMAN said that the document had really no status other than that of a personal submission by himself, and he requested delegations not to open a discussion on it until the October session of the Committee.

18. Mr. SHI Jinkun (China) said that his delegation wished to propose the following wording of the annotation to agenda item 6 of the informal paper of 12 May 1981 entitled "Possible elements of a draft of the provisional agenda of the second special session devoted to disarmament":

"Review and appraisal of the current international situation, giving full consideration to the close link between international peace and security and disarmament, as well as the relationship between disarmament and development, and finding the basic causes for the intensification of the arms race and the lack of substantive progress in disarmament."

It also favoured omitting agenda item 14 (g) on the possible convening of a World Disarmament Conference. In his delegation's view, the lack of progress in disarmament was not due to any lack of high-level meetings and conferences on the subject.

ORGANIZATION OF FUTURE WORK OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

19. The CHAIRMAN said that there had been a final meeting of members of the Bureau to deal with several outstanding matters. In connexion with item 6 of the Committee's agenda and the question of oral statements by non-governmental organizations at sessions of the Preparatory Committee, the Bureau's recommendation was that non-governmental organizations should be allowed to make oral statements at one meeting during the October session of the Preparatory Committee. With regard to the representation of the non-governmental organizations, the Bureau felt that the matter would be decided by the non-governmental organizations themselves and their decision would be conveyed to the Chairman of the Committee. With regard to the request by certain non-governmental organizations that they should be authorized to circulate documents under a United Nations masthead, the Bureau had consulted with the Secretariat, which had indicated that it would be possible to circulate documents submitted by non-governmental organizations, provided that the United Nations was not required to give such documents a symbol or a number. The Bureau recommended that the Secretariat's position should be adopted by the Committee. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the Bureau's recommendations.

20. It was so decided.
21. The CHAIRMAN said that with regard to the date and duration of the second special session devoted to disarmament, the Bureau had noted that there was a wide variety of views, and it would perhaps be better to wait until the October session before making a recommendation on the subject. The Bureau had requested the Secretariat to make available the time period from 10 May to 9 July 1982 for the second special session devoted to disarmament. That would provide enough flexibility to accommodate the session but should not be interpreted to mean that the session would last eight weeks. It was the view of the Bureau that the coming special session might last up to five weeks. With regard to the organization of future work of the Preparatory Committee, the Bureau recommended that a decision on the subject should be postponed until the October session, when the picture would no doubt be clearer. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee accepted that recommendation.

22. It was so decided.

23. With regard to public information activities, he drew attention to the Secretariat's note on the subject (A/AC.206/CRP.5). The Bureau recommended that the Committee should take note of the various proposals on Secretariat activities and that, after the Committee had taken further decisions in October with regard to the agenda and other matters, it would be possible to recommend further activities by the Secretariat, including the possible preparation and circulation of a handbook. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee accepted the Bureau's recommendation.

24. It was so decided.

25. With regard to the agenda of the 1982 special session, he drew attention to his own summary of the discussion on the subject contained in document A/AC.206/CRP.6. The paper had been prepared partly out of a desire not to lose track of the progress that had been made in recent discussions and partly in order to assist delegations in their follow-up preparations for the October session. The summary was without prejudice to the position that any delegation might hold and would be discussed, if appropriate, at the October session.

26. Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus) said that there were certain terms in the paper that needed further clarification and discussion in the interest of precision, but he took it that the Chairman wished to postpone discussion of the paper until the October session.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had completed its work for the current session. 

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.