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

Third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 January 1988, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. AHMAD (Pakistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

STATEMENTS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND PEACE AND DISARMAMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

1. The CHAIRMAN said that statements would be heard from representatives of non-governmental organizations concerned with disarmament and representatives of peace and disarmament research institutions.

2. Mr. McCLELLAN (Special NGO Committee on Disarmament (Geneva) and NGO Committee on Disarmament (Headquarters)), speaking on behalf of the two Committees, said that non-governmental organizations and research institutions must, to be effective, have access to all plenary and committee meetings and to all bodies involved in the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Their written statements should, as at the previous special session, be circulated as General Assembly documents, and their oral statements should be heard early in the session before any working groups convened and should, if possible, be interspersed among governmental presentations. It would be desirable to give many organizations the opportunity to speak, since they represented a wide spectrum of beliefs. To ensure effective use of the time available, non-governmental organizations could be invited to address specific agenda items and put forward concrete proposals in short oral statements, and to circulate longer written statements if they wished.

3. The valuable daily briefings should again be held during the third special session, and it would be helpful for non-governmental organizations to have access to communications facilities and to be given a separate working space. The United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs should organize a consultation with non-governmental organizations under the agenda item on the World Disarmament Campaign, as a way of fostering co-operation between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations in advancing the disarmament process.

4. The Geneva Special Committee planned to convene an international preparatory forum for non-governmental organizations in April, and the Headquarters Committee was considering holding meetings before and during the special session. The involvement of delegations and Secretariat officials would be most welcome. Furthermore, the Geneva and the Headquarters Committees would be forming a liaison group that would be in close contact with the Secretariat regarding the participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session.

5. Sister Mary Beth REISSEN (NGO Committee on Disarmament (Headquarters)) said that the NGO community believed that the General Assembly at its third special session should consider the implementation of the Final Document of the first special session, giving priority to the issues of a comprehensive test-ban treaty and a chemical-weapons ban treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, conventional disarmament and the arms trade, the reduction of military budgets, the relationship between disarmament and development, zones of peace, and the United Nations role in disarmament.
6. Early completion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty should be possible on the basis of the work done on verification by the Conference on Disarmament; and efforts should be intensified in order to complete a chemical-weapons-ban treaty in 1988. Moreover, immediate steps - such as the conclusion of an anti-satellite-weapons treaty - should be taken to prevent further escalation of the arms race in outer space, which must be safeguarded as the peaceful common heritage of mankind.

7. The appalling build-up of conventional arms in various parts of the world should be combatted, first, by confidence-building measures within regions, and arms transfers should be monitored and limited. The General Assembly at its special session must encourage accurate reporting of military expenditures as a step towards reducing military budgets; there, the United Nations had a role to play in the collection and comparison of military budget data.

8. The General Assembly at its special session should also continue the good work done by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development by giving full consideration to that issue.

9. Zones of peace should be proclaimed in South-East Asia and the Indian Ocean and in other regions as well; the Antarctic must continue to be honoured as a nuclear-free zone, and nuclear-weapon-free-zone agreements must be concluded for Asia, Africa, the Middle East, parts of Europe and the Arctic, to complement the existing Treaties covering Latin America and the South Pacific, which should be fully implemented.

10. The United Nations should play a greater role in disarmament by developing approaches to conflict resolution based on the non-use of force. Member States should request the United Nations to use its available powers and should work to create machinery for the larger peace-making role envisioned in the Charter.

11. Mr. CARROLL (Center for Defense Information) observed that for the first time in eight years there was both promise and progress in nuclear disarmament. The United States and the Soviet Union had begun addressing problems more constructively and had concluded a treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range missiles, the INF Treaty, as well as achieving an agreement in principle to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals by 50 per cent. Clearly, those small measures of progress would not immediately halt the aggressive drive to expand nuclear capabilities on both sides, but at least arms control had been validated as a legitimate part of the peace process, and even the conservative United States President had been forced to acknowledge that increased security could be achieved through fewer - not more - weapons.

12. The challenge to the third special session was to build on that understanding. To do so, the United Nations must state clearly how to proceed with disarmament in real and practical terms. Governments needed a blueprint, in which each achievable step could lead logically to the next in a confidence-building process that would ultimately create a positive new relationship between the sides.
13. The Center for Defense Information proposed that the General Assembly at its special session should endorse a new arms control programme leading to true disarmament. The fact was that the INF Treaty and the strategic arms reduction talks (START) merely continued the existing pattern of arms control in which the adversaries went on testing and building new and more destructive weapons even as they discussed eliminating older ones, so that when a treaty finally emerged both sides had already deployed replacements. That sterile cycle must be broken. Instead, there was an achievable four-step programme which merited careful discussion and support at the third special session.

14. The first essential step was a comprehensive nuclear test ban: nothing would do more to curb the new technology which for 40 years had fuelled the arms race, or to inhibit the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

15. Step 2, a complement to the first, was to stop testing new nuclear delivery vehicles which, like the technology, depended on active testing for accuracy and reliability.

16. Step 3 would be to prohibit the operational deployment of new nuclear weapons and delivery systems. No military commander wanted or could use untested weapons, which were more dangerous to his own forces than they were to any enemy.

17. Step 4, the logical outcome of the first three, was to stop the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and the fabrication of new weapons from reprocessed material. There would be no reason to waste countless billions of dollars and roubles to build weapons which could not be tested or deployed.

18. After those four fully verifiable steps, talks could proceed constructively on reducing existing arsenals in an orderly, stable programme, with each side confident that the other was not preparing new means of attaining nuclear superiority. Agreed reductions would then be true reductions, slowly and surely scaling down the destructive capacity of current arsenals.

19. The four steps he had just proposed clearly echoed the six-nation initiative led by Canada at the first special session. What was new was that the Center for Defense Information was urging delegations to make the comprehensive nuclear test ban the focus of their recommendations and deliberations at the third special session. If each delegation identified the comprehensive test-ban treaty as the essential and readily achievable step in a process leading towards true disarmament, the United Nations would be speaking with a strong and clear voice which must be heard.

20. Mr. BOROVIK (Soviet Peace Committee) said that the Soviet Peace Committee had maintained contacts with the United Nations and had co-operated with various departments of the Secretariat for many years. Many of the Soviet Peace Committee's actions had been incorporated in the programme of activities of the Department of Public Information, which had been adopted by the General Assembly. The United Nations Secretariat had shown its appreciation for the Soviet Peace Committee's contribution to the International Year of Peace by awarding it the United Nations commemorative medal for the Year and a Peace Messenger Certificate.
21. Close and fruitful co-operation had been established between the Soviet Peace Committee and the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Department, in conjunction with the Soviet Peace Committee, had held two regional conferences in the Soviet Union in 1984 and 1986. In June 1987, the United Nations World Disarmament Campaign had sponsored a meeting of experts in Dagomys (USSR), which had been jointly organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Soviet Peace Committee. In April 1988, Dagomys would be the venue of a meeting of governmental and non-governmental experts on verification, to be held under the auspices of the World Disarmament Campaign.

22. For the first time in history, a step had been taken towards nuclear disarmament: the Soviet Union and the United States had signed a treaty on intermediate- and shorter-range missiles. The Soviet Peace Committee hoped that, at the time of the proposed summit meeting in Moscow, the two sides would agree to a 50 per cent reduction of strategic offensive weapons.

23. The Soviet Peace Committee believed that the forthcoming special session should contribute to humanity's progress towards real disarmament. The objectives of the special session could be furthered by the general public, which showed a keen interest in that important intergovernmental forum and was preparing to take an active part in it.

24. Mr. FISCHER (Bread for Brethren) said that his organization, the development aid agency of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, had since 1981 made peace and disarmament a focal point of its educational campaign.

25. It was argued that no effort should be spared to preserve national security. Yet many types of destabilizing weapons, such as multiple-warhead missiles or the weapons in space envisaged under the United States Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), actually invited destruction by a potential adversary because of their total vulnerability and the extreme threat that they posed, in effect fostering a first-strike mentality. To eliminate them would thus be to enhance the security of the country possessing them.

26. Before it was too late, the necessary steps must be taken to use the earth's resources and the marvels of modern technology to eliminate hunger and poverty, not to transform the planet into a doomsday machine. It was not necessary to live with nuclear weapons merely because they now existed. Regardless of the arguments that it was Utopian to call for a nuclear-free world, deterrence was not the only way to relate to others.

27. Mr. HERBY (Friends World Committee for Consultation) said that significant advances in the bilateral super-Power disarmament dialogue had created an opportunity for revitalizing the multilateral disarmament process, through the achievement of substantial agreements during the third special session and the successful conclusion in 1988 or 1989 of the long negotiations on a chemical-weapons-ban treaty.
28. The Quakers, as members of a non-violent religious movement committed to the abolition of war, had given high priority to building global institutions of peace and had sought to strengthen the United Nations work for disarmament. Among the issues on which his organization would hope to see progress at the third special session was the question of threat perceptions. In recent years there had been a growing and critically important recognition in security debates of the need to consider one's own defensive forces and posture from the point of view of the threat which the other side perceived in them. In religious terms, such a recognition of the humanity and fears of an opponent was a step towards recognizing the essential relationship among all human beings and towards breaking the action-reaction cycle which had fuelled so many arms races and wars. It would be a major task at the third special session to create a consensus on new and less militarized concepts of security by promoting dialogue on the perceived threats and encouraging exploration of the possibilities for non-provocative defence.

29. Disarmament could be promoted by a series of independent or mutual unilateral initiatives to complement multilateral and bilateral negotiations. As progress was made towards reducing nuclear stockpiles, the creation of a climate conducive to reductions in conventional military forces would be essential for further progress. The third special session could make an important contribution by calling for an expert study on unilateral initiatives in the field of non-nuclear forces.

30. States must commit themselves to stopping the immoral - and often illegal - trade in arms. As a first step, the General Assembly at the third special session could decide to establish a United Nations register of arms transfers, call for immediate limits on the transfer of the most sophisticated arms and commission an expert study aimed at proposing international guidelines for the transfer of arms.

31. The human cost of armaments and war was high. It was often the poor who paid most dearly for the cost of armaments and consequent inflation. At the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development States had agreed to carry out analyses of the economic and social consequences of their military spending and to inform their public and the United Nations about them. The General Assembly could set a target date for the completion of such studies and their integration into an updated report on that subject.

32. Never before had the major Powers been in such close agreement on the principles and practice of verification for arms control and disarmament measures. The third special session could make an important contribution to the emerging consensus in that field by underlining the principle of openness and codifying the gains made, for use as starting-points in future disarmament negotiations.

33. Ms. MISCHER (Global Education Associates) said that Global Education Associates wished to make three recommendations for possible inclusion in the agenda of the third special session.

34. The first recommendation dealt with the relationship between economic security and disarmament. Increasing military expenditure had adverse effects on national budgets and the fulfilment of basic human needs. The trade deficits and debt of
many countries were causing them to step up arms production and export arms as a way of rectifying their balance-of-payments problems and earning foreign currency. It was not enough to ask countries to reduce military expenditure and allocate the resources thus saved for development. A sustainable and positive peace required international co-operation in development and debt relief along with reductions in military expenditure. A restructuring of national and international economic relationships and systems was critical for international peace, security and disarmament.

35. The second recommendation dealt with nuclear power and international security. In paragraph 70, the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament called for the "promotion of the transfer and utilization of nuclear technology for economic and social development". That statement should be reconsidered in the light of the tragedy at Chernobyl and many other developments relating to the dangers and economic and environmental costs of nuclear power. Nuclear power had negative effects on human health and posed grave economic and ecological problems. Although some international safeguards existed, there was no fool-proof way of preventing nuclear power plants from becoming the first step towards nuclear-weapons development, thus increasing the threat of nuclear-weapons proliferation. Such proliferation undermined nuclear disarmament efforts and increased global insecurity.

36. The last recommendation dealt with the need for an international satellite monitoring agency or a world space organization. International structures should be developed not only to prevent a new and uncontrollable arms race in outer space but also to enhance international security against existing military threats. In 1978, the General Assembly had approved a French proposal for a feasibility study on the establishment of an international satellite monitoring agency to help monitor and provide verification for peace-keeping and common security agreements between nations. In 1984, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute had convened a meeting of experts to consider technical, political and other aspects of the international and regional use of satellites for arms control and crisis-monitoring. While there appeared to be some readiness for regional co-operation, the political will to act at the international level did not yet exist. In 1985, the Soviet Union had proposed the establishment of a world space organization to foster co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, arms control verification, development assistance and other goals. The United Nations had yet to give serious consideration to the importance of such proposals for international peace and security.

37. Ms. HORVATH (Hungarian Peace Council) said that the Hungarian peace movement was certain that all peace-loving people and their representative organizations shared its own sense of responsibility for promoting world disarmament, and primarily nuclear disarmament. It particularly welcomed the signing of the INF Treaty as a first step in that direction. Looking to the future, the Hungarian peace movement was working to create a climate of trust between peoples everywhere so as to create an atmosphere conducive to disarmament in conventional weapons, the dissolution of opposing military blocs and the withdrawal of foreign armed forces from the territories of other countries. The Hungarian peace movement wanted...
military doctrine to be revamped into a purely defensive one that would promote security at every level. It felt that the United Nations could and must contribute to solving the problems of disarmament and was encouraged by what had already been accomplished. It particularly welcomed the forthcoming third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as another important step and felt that non-governmental organizations must play an active role in it because they could and must influence world public opinion. Joint efforts could ensure a world free of conventional and non-conventional weapons and the Hungarian peace movement would help to promote that goal.

38. Ms. LAKHDIR (Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies) said that the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies engaged in research and education on the risks of nuclear and conventional war and explored policies aimed at reducing the size, and limiting the use, of military forces. At a recent symposium, the Institute's Director had referred to the argument that, before the risk of nuclear war could be reduced and nuclear weapons abolished, a more stable non-nuclear peace must be established and that, since only the danger of nuclear war was keeping the expectation of non-nuclear war very low, a policy of nuclear deterrence was necessary, and had argued that the best way to reverse that situation was to end super-Power intervention in the third world. The Director of the Harriman Institute at Columbia University had seen signs that the Soviet Union might be prepared to refashion the non-nuclear balance in Europe in a way that would fundamentally alter the contest between East and West. She suggested that non-governmental organizations might usefully sponsor a forum on the possibility of making military doctrine less offence-oriented, on excluding the possibility of surprise attack and on reductions of armed forces to equal levels, to be held at the forthcoming special session.

39. She was encouraged by signs that her own country was showing greater interest in the use of multilateral forums to promote arms control and hoped that creative use would be made of existing United Nations instruments to deal with crisis situations. She also hoped that at the special session the Assembly would give more serious consideration to the possibilities inherent in General Assembly resolution 42/92 and that the non-aligned movement would explore more vigorously ways of using and creating United Nations machinery to help solve regional conflicts, many of which were not the creation of the super-Powers. Consideration must be given to the capabilities the United Nations might need to play a more effective role in crisis monitoring and conflict resolution, and the Institute would be prepared to hold a forum on that subject as well. The United Nations should avail itself more extensively of the findings of research organizations such as the Institute and the testimony of experts not picked by Governments.

40. Mr. HEINRICH (Parliamentarians Global Action) said that Parliamentarians Global Action was an international network of national legislators from 37 countries working for disarmament and the development and strengthening of world institutions.

41. After half a century of discussing disarmament, the nations of the world continued to spend upwards of $1 trillion a year on arms. Some of the reasons for
that had been suggested in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (A/S-10/4), and he drew attention to paragraphs 110, 34, 93 and 54 consecutively. Unless nations felt secure from the threat of aggression and felt that their legitimate rights could be protected under international law, they would continue to resist disarmament. The United Nations had been created precisely to provide that kind of security and protection but had still not proved able to do so. Nations therefore continued to place their faith in national military force. At the forthcoming special session efforts should therefore be made to demilitarize international relations, find peaceful ways to protect the legitimate interests and rights of countries, eliminate the threat or use of military force among nations and end the practice of war itself.

42. His own organization had launched a global security initiative aimed at developing reliable international security institutions and was calling for world-wide demilitarization, an international agency to monitor disarmament measures, a permanent peace-keeping force, new international agreements for the peaceful settlement of disputes, independent funding of United Nations security institutions and global high-level negotiations on a new global security system for the year 2000. At the forthcoming special session attention should focus on establishing such a system and promoting global high-level negotiations for that purpose. The final document of the special session should include a clear statement calling for the transformation of the United Nations into a global security system, a governmental conference on global security to negotiate treaties for a global security system and the start of work on an international verification agency as part of a future global security system, as the first instalment of the international control that must accompany general and complete disarmament. He hoped that at the special session there would be support for the initiative already been put forward for just such an agency by Argentina, Mexico, Sweden, Greece, the United Republic of Tanzania and India.

43. Sister Mary Beth REISSEN (Pax Christi) noted that there had been two encouraging developments recently – the conclusion of a treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces and the affirmation, by 26 States in the Commission on Human Rights, of the right of people to be conscientious objectors and their recommendation that States in which military service was compulsory should provide an alternative form of service for conscientious objectors.

44. She expressed the hope that at the special session the Assembly would work out new approaches that would provide a viable base for security and peace and move towards the adoption of a policy of common security.

45. Pax Christi would continue to take practical measures to demonstrate the links between disarmament and development. She urged a halt to the arms trade as a means of generating income and to the export of weapons.

46. Mr. SUZUKI (Rissho Kosei-Kai) said that it was important to take advantage of the momentum generated by recent favourable developments on the international scene. He expressed the hope that at the special session the Assembly would take into account the concerns expressed by the non-governmental organizations and that
the Committee would include in the agenda of the third special session an item entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development, in the light of the action programme adopted at the International Conference", pursuant to the request contained in resolution 42/45.

47. The recent International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development had heightened public awareness of the interaction between disarmament and development and of their impact on security. The Final Document of that Conference had presented all the issues involved in the relationship between disarmament and development, paying careful attention to both the non-military and the military threats to security, and had emphasized the need for international co-operation to overcome the non-military threats. It had also acknowledged the importance of informed public opinion in promoting disarmament, development and security.

48. His organization was ready to contribute in any way it could to the success of the special session.

49. Mr. ALPERT (United Towns Organization) said that the outlook for the special session was relatively promising because of the recent Treaty eliminating an entire category of nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union's acceptance of all forms of verification, including on-site verification.

50. Bilateral agreements must, however, be supplemented by multilateral agreements. In recent decades numerous regional conflicts had broken out and in many cases the two super-Powers had been unable to put an end to them. The conclusion of multilateral treaties was particularly important in Europe, since a conflict in that region would present particular dangers.

51. At the special session the Assembly should not concentrate only on nuclear weapons but should deal also with conventional weapons, those used in regional conflicts. Likewise, it should not confine itself to formulating general principles but should endeavour to conclude agreements on concrete issues on which agreement seemed possible, such as the banning of chemical weapons. It should also underscore the importance of confidence-building measures, including measures to ensure respect for human rights. The non-governmental organizations could contribute to the success of the session by mobilizing public opinion in support of disarmament.

52. Finally, he suggested that specific meetings at the special session be set aside for hearings of representatives of non-governmental organizations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.