International machinery for disarmament

Working document: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Federal Republic of, New Zealand, Norway and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

I. Introduction

A large number of countries have expressed themselves in favour of greater involvement by the United Nations in the work on disarmament. Although the nuclear-weapon States and other militarily significant States have a special responsibility in regard to the disarmament process, all other countries also have a responsibility and a role to play. The United Nations special session on disarmament is in part a response to this sentiment, since it provides all States with an opportunity to participate in establishing guidelines, priorities and goals for further progress in the field of disarmament and arms control, including the presentation of views on the international negotiating machinery on disarmament questions.

The special session devoted to disarmament will establish a programme of action for disarmament over the next few years. International machinery will need to be strengthened to enable implementation of this programme and permit the United Nations to fulfil its role to the satisfaction of all Member States.

There is a need for a single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament questions. However, owing to the very nature of the international society and the uneven distribution of power among its members, some problems are not easily solved through multilateral negotiating processes. Some important questions can better be handled on a bilateral or regional basis.

The following guidelines are therefore proposed:
II. General Assembly machinery

1. A deliberative body comprising all United Nations Members and meeting annually is necessary to consider the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments.

2. The First Committee should in future deal exclusively with disarmament and related questions.

3. The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament should be promptly implemented.

4. To follow up the programme of action, a new item entitled "Review and implementation of the programme of action adopted at the eighth special session" should be placed on the agenda of the thirty-third and subsequent sessions of the General Assembly and, in addition, the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session should consider the question of convening a further special session devoted to disarmament.

5. Ad hoc committees of the General Assembly to consider specific disarmament proposals should continue to be established as necessary.

III. Negotiating machinery

The CCD should continue to exercise its full functions as the principal multilateral negotiating body under the auspices of and reporting to the United Nations. Its consensus procedures should remain unchanged. The CCD's structure, procedures and functions, should be improved by providing for such measures as:

1. The participation of all nuclear-weapon States;

2. Further participation of other States Members of the United Nations in its work by considering:

   (i) A limited increase in its size, bearing in mind the need for the negotiating body to remain suitably small;

   (ii) Arrangements for non-CCD member States to observe plenary meetings, and to participate fully in other meetings when their particular concerns are under discussion or when they have submitted proposals or working documents;

   (iii) Other arrangements for interested non-CCD member States to participate.

3. Strengthening of the link between CCD and the United Nations by inter alia granting the Secretary-General's representative authority to bring relevant matters to the attention of CCD;

4. Improved opportunities for the public to follow CCD's work.

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IV. Role of the United Nations Secretariat

The Disarmament Centre should be so strengthened and reorganized that it can carry out the tasks allocated to it under the programme of action.

The Disarmament Centre should also be provided with sufficient capacity to enable it to carry out, inter alia, the following tasks:

1. To prepare reports and expert studies in accordance with the programme of action;

2. To produce information and material related to continuing negotiations and topical disarmament questions;

3. To increase contacts with the member countries, non-governmental organizations and research institutions.