STUDY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL DISARMAMENT ORGANIZATION

The Netherlands: working paper

Proposal

In the opinion of the Netherlands, a number of recent developments in the field of disarmament as well as the international situation warrant a reconsideration of the idea of an international disarmament organization. With more and possibly more complicated multilateral disarmament treaties, a need seems to arise for a permanent organization to streamline the consultations and the implementation measures.

Therefore, the Netherlands proposes that an international disarmament organization be established.

To that effect the Netherlands suggests that in the final document of the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on disarmament an invitation should be included to seek the views of all member States on such an international disarmament organization.

Introduction

In the past, several suggestions and proposals have been made to establish a standing disarmament organ or an international disarmament organization, e.g. in 1973 both Sweden 1/ and the Netherlands 2/ expressed detailed views on this subject in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. The standing disarmament organ, as proposed by the Netherlands, would firstly be entrusted with the verification of a treaty banning chemical weapons. However, it was envisaged from the beginning that such an organ could take upon itself other tasks, such as the verification of other arms-control and disarmament treaties as well as

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the organization of review conferences provided for such treaties. In the absence of prospects, at that time, for substantial multilateral disarmament agreements as well as for other reasons, the ideas put forward by Sweden and the Netherlands were not pursued to any further degree. At present, the international situation seems to be more responsive to a reconsideration of these ideas. Indeed, several countries suggested the establishment of such an organ during the preparations of the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on disarmament or made proposals which are relevant for a discussion on this subject.

Possible functions of an international disarmament organization

In this working paper an international disarmament organization is envisaged as the operational framework for the implementation of international arms control and disarmament treaties, with functions mainly in the field of verification. In addition it is thought that such an organization could be instrumental to the preparation and organization of review conferences already provided for in several disarmament treaties and could serve as a clearing house for information on disarmament.

The idea takes into account the following considerations and ongoing developments:

(a) A convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction seems within reach in the foreseeable future. It seems probable that such a convention will provide for rather extensive consultations between parties, in particular technical discussions on the precise agents to be banned or restricted and on implementation measures. The treaty would probably provide for rather extensive notification and verification procedures. Besides regular political and technical discussions between parties, a permanent staff seems necessary for the implementation of the convention;

(b) A treaty banning nuclear tests seems also within reach. An international seismic system will in all probability be established to exchange and process seismic data. A consultative organ of parties to the treaty seems necessary, both with respect to solving technical and organizational problems of the seismic system — including the administration of international seismic data centre — as to discuss other matters with respect to the implementation of the treaty, such as working out procedures for on-site inspections and the actual carrying out of such inspections;

(c) Also for other existing and future multilateral disarmament agreements there may be a need for consultations between interested countries, in particular by the parties to these treaties, as well as for implementation measures. With more and more complicated multilateral disarmament treaties, a need seems to arise for a permanent organization to streamline the consultations and the implementation measures. Otherwise, a substantial number of consultative commissions, some of them with permanent staffs, seems required, all perhaps differently organized;

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(d) The proposal by France to establish an international agency for satellite observation commands particular attention. The Netherlands shares the view of France that the present situation that information which can be obtained by satellite is in the hands of only a few countries is undesirable, in particular in cases where such information is a prerequisite for the verification of multilateral treaties. The Netherlands recognizes, however, the practical problems to establish an international satellite agency. It is also of the view that observation by satellite cannot provide all information necessary to verify present and future arms control treaties. For example satellites cannot provide most or all verification functions with respect to a ban on underground nuclear tests or chemical disarmament. It would therefore be necessary not to concentrate on satellite observation only but to combine different verification tasks and methods in one agency, which would be the international disarmament organization:

(e) Several disarmament treaties now provide for more or less regular review conferences. An international disarmament organization as proposed could provide the operational framework for the organization of review conferences. Preparations and proceedings of review conferences could thus be streamlined. The existence of permanent consultative machinery could also facilitate the organization of review conferences, thereby rendering them more efficient;

(f) Relevant information with respect to the implementation of arms control and disarmament agreements could be combined in one organization. Data on various disarmament measures, such as for instance stockpile-destruction, seismic data, results of inspections and fact-finding missions could be stored with one organization which would act as a clearing house for information on all implementation efforts in the field of disarmament.

A possible approach

In the view of the Netherlands the international disarmament organization could be set up initially for the implementation of a particular disarmament treaty, and could then gradually be given more functions dependent on emerging needs and taking into account experience gained. The existence of a permanent disarmament organization would make it possible during negotiations on other disarmament measures to allow certain functions to the organization and thus avoid creating new bodies. The agency would, of course, only perform functions which are specifically given to it by the parties to particular arms control and disarmament treaties. A link with the United Nations seems also desirable.

Structure of the organization

The organization could be constructed along the familiar pattern of many international organizations, such as a plenary conference, a board and a secretariat. Membership of the conference would pose no problem if the organization would function in the context of one arms control or disarmament treaty only since the members of the conference would be the parties to the treaty. As a nucleus for a disarmament organization having more functions, the conference would have to be open-ended. Rights and duties of individual members would then have to be determined by their adherence to the treaties under consideration.

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While the conference, as a rule, would only meet at certain intervals, the board would have to be so organized as to be able to function continuously. Members of the Board would be elected by the conference. Its main functions could be envisaged as providing practical guidance to the work of the organization on the basis of guidelines to be given by the conference.

The secretariat, headed by an administrator, would consist of a permanent staff and such additional panels of experts as may be required for the performance of ad hoc or highly specialized activities, such as special investigations or technical studies.

Summary and conclusion

Above some preliminary views are given by the Netherlands. It is recognized, of course, that careful study and consideration is necessary before the international community can decide on the establishment of a new international organ. Also, results of ongoing disarmament negotiations, in particular with respect to chemical weapons and the comprehensive test ban, would have an influence on the subject. The Netherlands proposes therefore a number of steps which could ultimately lead to the establishment of an international disarmament organization if and when the world community considers it opportune.

As a first step, the Secretary-General of the United Nations would seek the views of Governments on this question, in particular on the functions to be given to an international disarmament organization, its structure and its link with the United Nations. Answers could be expected by Governments before the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General could make an analysis of the different ideas and opinions expressed by Member States. A next step could be that the General Assembly, if the answers warrant such a step, decides to establish a committee which would further negotiate on the structure and functions of a possible disarmament organization. The last step could be the actual establishment of such an organization, for example at a second special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

Consequently, the Netherlands proposes the following wording to be included in the final document of the special session:

"The Secretary-General is requested to seek the views of member States with respect to the functions and organization of a possible international disarmament organization and to submit these views and an analysis thereof to the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly."