Italy: Working paper on international mechanisms for disarmament

The special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament provides an important opportunity to consider and to evaluate existing multilateral mechanisms and to make suggestions and recommendations for their improvement.

In a review of the adequacy of international disarmament machinery, the following elements should be considered:

(1) The vital interest of all nations in the outcome of disarmament negotiations and the need for a more conscious and direct participation of all States in disarmament endeavours;

(2) The special responsibility incumbent upon nuclear-weapon Powers and other militarily significant States and their primary role in effective progress toward disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament;

(3) The desirability of a better co-ordination among bilateral, regional and multilateral efforts, with a view to over-all achievements toward the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament;

(4) The necessity for a parallel strengthening of the international security system and of the establishment of adequate verification mechanisms in order to assure the effective implementation and the strict fulfilment of agreed disarmament measures.

Against this background, Italy believes that the special session should focus its attention on the following main components of the international disarmament machinery:
A. United Nations General Assembly

The General Assembly provides the natural and most appropriate forum for the consideration, on a universal basis and with the participation of all Member States, of the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments.

In view of rationalizing debates and rendering decision-making more effective, all disarmament items should be allocated to the First Committee, which should mainly concentrate its activity on disarmament and international security matters.

To this end, any other suitable revision of the procedures should be readily envisaged, bearing in mind the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament.

Ad Hoc committees of the General Assembly could be set up to deal with issues deserving special consideration.

While the General Assembly should remain the regular forum for the annual review of disarmament problems, it might be appropriate to convene, in due course, a further special session for the specific purpose of:

(a) appraising the implementation of the programme of action;

(b) identifying guidelines for the next sequence of negotiations;

(c) considering and possibly adopting a comprehensive programme of disarmament.

B. Security Council

Consideration should be given to the specific contribution which the Security Council could make to disarmament progress.

To this effect, it is suggested that the Security Council should review the implementation of its responsibilities in the field of the regulation of armaments under Article 26 of the Charter.

Furthermore, the Security Council might consider the advisability of establishing, under Article 29 of the Charter, subsidiary organs for specific disarmament purposes, beginning with a Committee, divided into regional Sub-Committees, to control the international transfer of conventional weapons.

C. Machinery of negotiation: the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD)

Because of their very complex nature, effective disarmament negotiations at the multilateral level can be undertaken only within a body of limited dimensions, operating by consensus.

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The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) has proved to be the most qualified forum for the achievement of substantive disarmament measures intended to have universal application.

The CCD should continue to function as the main multilateral negotiating body in the field of arms control and to carry out all of its responsibilities in the pursuit of effective agreements relating to the cessation of the arms race and to disarmament. The CCD should, inter alia, intensify its efforts in view of the elaboration of a comprehensive programme for disarmament negotiations.

It is widely recognized that the role of the CCD would be consistently enhanced by the association of those nuclear-weapon States which do not yet participate in its deliberations.

In addition, the CCD might be recommended to review its structures and methods of work in view of:

(a) Envisaging a limited increase in its membership which would ensure a greater geographical and political balance in its composition;

(b) Opening its meetings, under appropriate circumstances, to all interested United Nations Member States. Such States could participate as observers in plenary meetings, being allowed to submit written proposals and to take part in their discussion before the Committee. The same proposals would be circulated as official documents of the CCD.

While the present degree of autonomy and flexibility of the CCD should be maintained as an essential condition of the effectiveness of the negotiation process, a closer liaison between the CCD and the United Nations might be secured by requesting the CCD to address to the General Assembly a progress report following the spring session and periodic special reports on particular topics, as appropriate.

It could also be suggested that the Committee, at the beginning of its activities every year, should seek to reach a broad agreement on the work to be accomplished during its two sessions and to establish a methodical schedule of negotiations to be conducted within the period considered.

The work of the CCD could be further improved by the establishment - as soon as it is deemed appropriate by a sufficient convergence of views among the members - of functional working groups which would negotiate draft treaties or accord consideration, informally and in depth, to specific items, with the assistance of experts.

Finally, the CCD might be invited to consider the possibility of opening its plenary meetings to the public.
D. Machinery for verification

While strengthening the world security system, on a parallel with progress made in the field of disarmament, the United Nations should consider the establishment of a permanent international organ for verification of multilateral disarmament measures.

Such a body, to be instituted by international agreement following appropriate studies and consultations, would operate in the framework of the United Nations. It would be designed to supervise, from both the technical and legal viewpoints, the implementation of treaties in force, so as to ensure full compliance with their provisions.

To this effect, the organ of verification should employ whatever technological and scientific means - such as sensing, sampling, recording, communicating and interpreting devices - might be usefully applied toward an effective verification of disarmament measures.

E. United Nations Centre for Disarmament

The organization and functioning of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament should be carefully assessed with the aim of improving its effectiveness and capability, in order that it may:

(a) Carry out, with the necessary expertise, studies and research as needed for the clarification of specific disarmament issues; and

(b) Provide broader information and stimulate a greater awareness on the part of international public opinion regarding disarmament problems.