The Disarmament Decade solemnly declared in 1969 is coming to an end.

Unfortunately the objectives established on that occasion by the General Assembly appear to be as far away today as they were then, or even further. No "effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament" have materialized, and still less has there been any progress that might lead to the conclusion of a treaty on general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Neither has it been possible to free, for the purposes of economic development, any amount, however modest, of the enormous resources and energy, both material and human, that are squandered on the unproductive and wasteful arms race, which "places a great burden on both the developing and the developed countries".

Attainment of the objective of security has always been one of the most profound aspirations of humanity. States, like individuals, have for a long time sought to maintain their security through the possession of arms. Admittedly, their survival has, in certain cases, effectively depended on whether they could count on appropriate means of defence. Yet the accumulation of nuclear and conventional weapons today constitutes much more a threat than a protection for the future of humanity. The time has therefore come to put an end to this situation and to seek security in disarmament, that is to say, through a gradual but effective process beginning with a reduction in the present level of armaments.

The Members of the United Nations could not remain deaf to the outcry of their peoples, who for nearly 20 years have been expressing their conviction that the question of general and complete disarmament is the most important one facing the world of today; and who have repeatedly declared their conviction that peace and security and development are indivisible and have therefore recognized that the corresponding obligations and responsibilities are universal.

Thus a powerful current of opinion has formed, little by little, leading
to the convening of what will go down in the annals of the United Nations as the first special session of the General Assembly devoted entirely to disarmament.

The outcome of this special session, whose deliberations have to a large extent been facilitated by the five sessions of the Preparatory Committee which preceded it, is the present Final Document, to which this introduction serves as a preface and which also comprises, in the following three sections, a Declaration, a Programme of Action and a brief set of recommendations concerning the international machinery for disarmament negotiations.

In adopting a comprehensive approach to the whole problem of disarmament, it was necessary at least to emphasize that what is at stake is, in the final analysis, the very survival of humanity; and to state that, while the final objective of the efforts of the international community should continue to be general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the immediate goal must be that of averting all danger of a nuclear war and of reiterating emphatically both the undertaking strictly to observe the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the powers which rest with the Organization in the field of disarmament in accordance with the Charter, and the vital interest of all the peoples of the world in that question. That is the aim of the Declaration.

If - as is imperative - the purposes and principles of the Declaration are to be upheld by corresponding actions, it was essential to draw up a series of specific disarmament measures, selected by common accord as being those on which there is a consensus that their implementation in the short-term appears to be feasible. There was also a need to establish procedures for watching over the fulfilment of the obligations thus assumed, on the one hand, and, on the other, for ensuring the preparation, painstakingly negotiated, of a comprehensive disarmament programme which, passing through all the necessary stages, should culminate in general and complete disarmament under effective international control. That is the purpose of the Programme of Action.

Although the decisive factor for achieving real measures of disarmament is what it is customary to call the "political will" of States, and especially of those possessing nuclear weapons, a role that is in no way insignificant can also be played in this matter through the existence and effective functioning of an appropriate international mechanism or machinery. Consequently, the two kinds of organs required to that end, the deliberative and the negotiating organs, which the United Nations already has or could establish, should have whatever organization and procedures are most appropriate in order to obtain from them the constructive results sought. The fourth and last section of this document has been prepared with that end in view.