Statement by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in connexion with the completion of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament

In connexion with the completion of the final stage of the work of the Preparatory Committee, the Soviet delegation would like first of all to express its appreciation to you, to the members of the Bureau and to the Rapporteur of the Preparatory Committee for your efforts in organizing and guiding the complex work of the Committee in the preparation of the draft final document of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in seeking solutions on the whole range of questions connected with the organization of the special session. The delegation of the USSR notes that both you and the other members of the Bureau have in full measure shown a spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding and have endeavoured to take all views into account in this extremely complex sphere of international relations. The Soviet delegation also expresses its appreciation to the staff of the United Nations Secretariat which has ensured the efficient progress of the work of the Preparatory Committee.

Since the adoption by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session of the decision to convene a special session devoted to disarmament, one and a half years have elapsed and the Preparatory Committee has held five sessions. Each of those sessions has testified to a serious and responsible attitude towards the question of convening the special session on the part of Member States. This is reflected in the many documents and proposals submitted by States which have been considered in detail and in a comprehensive manner by the Preparatory Committee and the working groups. These documents and proposals have served to provide an initial indication of the various approaches to the question of what should form the basis of the final document of the session.

The Soviet delegation is convinced that the search for mutually acceptable solutions both on the Declaration and on the Programme of Action, based on

* Circulated at the request of the Chairman.
consideration of the political realities of the present day, will not only make a positive contribution to the current disarmament talks but will also help the international community to progress from disarmament talks to real achievements in the field of disarmament.

The draft final document establishes the positions of States on a whole range of disarmament problems and on the machinery for talks. It has not yet been possible to reach agreement on formulations for various sections of the final document; there are still passages in square brackets which sometimes conceal substantial differences of position. During the drafting of the document, the Soviet delegation repeatedly emphasized the need for the formulation of universal fundamental provisions which could in the future be used as a basis for concrete measures to curb the armaments race and bring about disarmament. This approach would make it possible to preserve the value of the principles which have been worked out over an extended period of time. This important aim can, in our view, be achieved only if the greatest realism is shown in the search for specific formulations for the final document.

Such a sober and practical approach would be in the interests of all States. Unfortunately, it has not always been adopted and not on all matters. There has not always and on all matters appeared to be a clear awareness of the fact that the problem of limiting the armaments race and achieving disarmament involves extremely complex questions regarding the security of States and the alignment of forces in the world – questions which call for a delicate and patient approach. Disarmament depends on the goodwill and efforts of all States; not only all nuclear-weapon States, but also all militarily important States, without exception, are called upon to participate in it. Proposals which do not take this fact into account will only impede progress towards the elimination of the material basis of war.

The goal of limiting the armaments race demands continuous drive and initiative directed towards clearing the way for disarmament. At the same time, the international instruments in force – treaties, conventions and agreements on various aspects of the limitation of the armaments race – cannot be ignored. It is impossible to agree with the proposition which is developed at times that everything that has been achieved in the field of the limitation of the armaments race, on which there is agreement among the overwhelming majority of States in the world, is of no value. Such a negative and nihilistic approach cannot serve as a starting point for disarmament talks. It is not the cancelling out of what has been achieved, but the reinforcement by all possible means and the recognition of the universal character of existing international treaties which will help to bring about progress in the sphere of disarmament, strengthen the climate of trust, and enable the experience accumulated in the drafting of new international treaties and agreements to be utilized.

In the course of the work of the Preparatory Committee, there has also appeared to be a desire, if not to demolish, at least to carry out a reform of the machinery for disarmament talks which is not called for by considerations of substance. It should not be forgotten that agreement in the field of the limitation of the armaments race and of disarmament depends above all on the political will of States, on their determination to participate in achieving
agreement. It would hardly be correct, in the field of disarmament, too, to follow the practice which is widespread in the United Nations, whereby efforts to solve complex problems are replaced by the creation of new organs which make no progress towards the solution of problems of substance but only give the appearance of activity.

The delegation of the USSR supports the views expressed in the Committee that the work of the special session of the General Assembly will be constructive and the special session will adopt mutually acceptable and genuinely important decisions only if there is general agreement among the participants in the session. The principle of consensus must remain the basic principle in the drafting and adoption of the final document.

In order to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, there are complex tasks to be solved. In the first place, agreement must be reached on the negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures. Such measures include the simultaneous cessation by all States of the production of nuclear weapons and the obligation of the nuclear Powers to proceed with the gradual reduction of their stockpiles until they have been completely eliminated. The development and production of nuclear weapons, including the so-called neutron bomb, must cease. The session cannot ignore such a crucial problem as the prevention of the danger of a nuclear war; that would make a real contribution to the limitation of the armaments race and the achievement of disarmament, the strengthening of trust among peoples, the strengthening of political détente, and the achievement also of military détente.

The attitude of the Soviet Union towards the special session of the General Assembly was expressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Mr. Gromyko, on 4 April 1978 at the solemn meeting held in Helsinki to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance. Mr. Gromyko stated: "The Soviet Union will go to that session with concrete proposals and with a desire to achieve concrete results. We hope that the special session will mark an important stage towards the convening of the World Disarmament Conference, the need for which has been agreed upon among States and decided upon by the United Nations."

The Soviet delegation reaffirms that the Soviet Union will make the maximum effort to ensure that the special session achieves the aims for which it has been convened and arrives at positive and practical results which will facilitate the solution of disarmament problems.