Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament

Note verbale dated 25 April 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the note of the Secretary-General of 28 January 1977 concerning the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to be held in New York in May/June 1978. In reply to operative paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 31/189B, I have the honour to communicate the following views and suggestions on behalf of the Swedish Government.

Introductory remarks

The Swedish Government welcomes the decision to convene a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It can be recalled that Sweden at an early time gave its support to the idea of a special session, endorsed by the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries in Colombo in August 1976, and it was a co-sponsor of General Assembly resolution 31/189B.

The results achieved so far in international disarmament negotiations are wholly inadequate. The arms race continues in all regions of the world. Vast human, technological and economic resources, which are desperately needed for economic and social development, are wasted on armaments. Never in history has the capacity of man to destroy himself, his civilization and his physical environment been greater than today. It has not yet proven possible to build up the degree of confidence and trust between States, which is necessary to set in motion a process of real disarmament.

An increasing impatience felt by many States at the absence of significant results in the disarmament efforts has led to a call for new approaches. This demand has now been heeded by the international community through the unanimous decision by the General Assembly to convene a special session devoted to disarmament. An opportunity has thus been provided, at a moment in history of great significance, to reverse the disastrous arms race and to demonstrate that the United Nations is capable of taking effective action with respect to one of the

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most complex and difficult problems it has to face. This opportunity must not be lost as has been the case at several critical moments in the past.

The success of the special session can only be ensured through careful and constructive preparations and an ambitious follow-up of the decisions and recommendations of the session. The participation of all Member States in this process is essential. The Swedish Government is prepared, for its part, to make an active contribution to this endeavour.

Sweden has during several years taken part in the exploratory work on the possibility of convening a World Disarmament Conference. Regrettably, the prospects for convening such a Conference with the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council in the foreseeable future do not seem promising. In this situation the efforts of the international community should be aimed at facilitating the success of the approach now chosen, i.e. the special session of the General Assembly.

**The aim of the special session**

The special session should become a forceful expression of political will, which promotes the efforts towards disarmament. The documents adopted at the session must thus be precise and action-oriented. The session could be seen as the starting point for the gradual solution of specific problems. Decisions on an effective follow-up mechanism of the session will be of great importance in this context.

Hopefully, the special session will also be able to register substantial progress towards the solution of certain matters, e.g. a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapon Test Ban Agreement, the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and their destruction, and agreement on reductions in the strategic arms of the United States and the Soviet Union.

**The organization of the work of the Preparatory Committee and of the special session**

As has been stated above, careful preparations are a key to the success of the session. The Work of the Preparatory Committee would be greatly facilitated if one or several informal working groups of the whole were to be established at the opening of its planned session in May 1977. Provisions should also be made for intersessional work on a formal or informal basis.

The meetings of the Preparatory Committee should, if possible, be scheduled so as not to overlap with the sessions of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD).

The Preparatory Committee should at an early stage direct its attention to the format and character of the final documents of the session. Early agreement on the main direction of the documents is highly desirable in view of the short
time available. Careful consideration should be given to finding appropriate ways of making use of non-governmental organizations and generally recognized international research institutions in the preparations for the session. Many of these organizations and institutions make a valuable contribution by disseminating information on disarmament problems and have a high reputation for their competence in this field.

In the view of the Swedish Government, the special session should be held at least at the level of Foreign Ministers. States participating in the session should be given the opportunity to present general views in a general debate. The main emphasis at the session should, however, be deliberations aimed at finalizing the texts of decisions and recommendations. For this purpose Committees of the Whole should be established.

The duration of the special session should be decided upon at a later stage of the preparations. As a working hypothesis a duration of a minimum of three weeks seems reasonable.

The agenda of the special session should be drafted in broad terms indicating the type of action which the session is expected to take.

**The direction of the preparations for the special session**

In the opinion of the Swedish Government, the special session should adopt a Declaration of Principles, a Programme of Action and take necessary organizational measures in order to ensure, i.a., an effective follow-up of the session.

**Declaration of Principles**

Work should be initiated as soon as possible on the text of a Declaration of Principles, which would provide a new basis for the endeavours of the international community in the field of disarmament. A set of guiding principles should be agreed upon, aimed at strengthening the political momentum of efforts towards disarmament. As a starting point, a careful examination should be made of certain existing documents, e.g. the Joint Statement by the Governments of the United States and the Soviet Union of Agreed Principles for Disarmament Negotiations dated 20 September 1961 (document A/4879) and the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, referred to in General Assembly resolution 2661 C (XXV). An attempt should be made to give disarmament its proper place in a wide global perspective. In this connexion, the Preparatory Committee should draw on experiences from the United Nations Conference convened in the first six years of this decade as well as the sixth and seventh special sessions of the General Assembly.

**Programme of Action**

In the following, elements are suggested which could be included in the Programme of Action. It is important for the success of the special session to ensure a reasonable balance between the different components of the Programme.

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1. In the opinion of the Swedish Government, nuclear disarmament should remain the most important objective of United Nations efforts in the field of disarmament. Progress in this area would have a most beneficial effect on the climate of international relations and would facilitate the solution of other disarmament problems. Lack of progress would, on the other hand, have an opposite effect and would endanger world peace and security. This problem affects the security of all States and is thus an urgent concern of the international community as a whole.

A Comprehensive Nuclear Weapon Test Ban (CTB) would constitute an important first step towards nuclear disarmament by restricting the further technological development of nuclear weapons and weapons systems. This matter has been on the agenda of the CCD as an item of the highest priority for many years. Prospects for a CTB seem to have improved recently as a result of encouraging statements made by leading representatives of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Sweden has put forward in the CCD a draft CTB treaty with the aim of facilitating the start of negotiations. The goal of such negotiations should be to arrive at a draft treaty in time for the special session.

There is a strong need for intensified measures to halt the nuclear arms race and bring about a substantial reduction of nuclear weapons and weapons systems. It is high time that the solemn obligations undertaken by the major nuclear-weapon States, e.g. in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 1968, to strive for nuclear disarmament be fulfilled. There is a clear link between vertical and the risk for further horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The credibility of non-proliferation efforts requires that States possessing nuclear weapons, and particularly the two leading nuclear-weapon States, take serious steps towards nuclear disarmament.

The special session should formulate forceful recommendations to this end.

2. The problem of ensuring the security of non-nuclear weapon States is closely connected with the matters discussed above. Attempts to solve this problem, e.g. through Security Council resolution 255 of 1968, have so far been inadequate. The nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT should undertake to refrain from the use of or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT. The same commitment on the part of the nuclear-weapon States should be undertaken with respect to nuclear-weapon-free zones.

3. The prevention of a further proliferation of nuclear weapons remains a critical problem for the international community. The first NPT Review Conference 1975 revealed the fragile basis of the non-proliferation régime. The second Review Conference in 1980 is likely to become a decisive test for the future of the NPT.

The nuclear fuel cycle contains elements which carry with them great problems and risks from the points of view of nuclear weapons proliferation as well as health and safety. Strict guarantees are required that nuclear energy, if used, should be utilized for peaceful purposes only and in a safe manner.
The special session should promote the non-proliferation efforts by adopting recommendations concerning

- nuclear disarmament

- the need for strict international supervision and control of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, covering the entire fuel cycle

- the need to strengthen the resources of the IAEA in the fields of physical protection of nuclear materials in use, storage and transit

- support for other activities of the IAEA relevant to the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation.

4. The CCD has devoted many years' work to reach an agreement on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. These efforts should be speeded up with the aim of registering substantial progress towards an agreement at the time of the special session.

5. The conventional arms build-up in many parts of the world is a cause of considerable concern to the international community. The rapid advancement of military technology and extensive international arms transfers, involving ever more sophisticated weapons, has greatly increased the pace of this development. Apart from the increased risks for armed conflict which are inherent in this situation it is most alarming that enormous resources are drawn from the efforts for economic and social progress in the world. The time has come for a serious international discussion of these problems. All States, in particular the arms producing countries, must shoulder their responsibility to halt this dangerous trend.

Among factors to be taken into account in this connexion international and regional security as well as progress towards nuclear disarmament should be mentioned. Also, efforts to reduce the level of conventional armaments would facilitate the realization of the New International Economic Order.

6. The total world military expenditures presently estimated at $US 390 billion annually represent an unprecedented waste of the scarce resources of the world. It is particularly disturbing that half of the world's resources for research and development are devoted to military purposes. By contrast, even fractions of the sums involved could meet the basic needs of the poorest peoples of the world.

In the past, the United Nations has undertaken several valuable studies in an attempt to formulate constructive approaches for linking disarmament efforts with economic and social progress. These studies have demonstrated the complex nature of this problem. There is a need for more extensive clarification, in as concrete terms as possible, of important aspects, such as the economic consequences of the arms race. These matters are increasingly coming into the focus of interest.
It is the view of the Swedish Government that a new United Nations study on this subject is most desirable and should be initiated as soon as possible. Certain preliminary ideas on the scope and direction of such a study are given in the annex to this note.

The main objectives for the efforts of the United Nations in this area should be to promote strategies for meeting the basic needs of the peoples of the developing countries, to further their capacity for independent scientific and technological development, and contribute to a long-term restructuring of the world economy.

7. An increased confidence between States is a prerequisite for disarmament. One step to build up such a confidence would be for States to give more information on their military expenditures. The Swedish Government hopes that the special session will advance the ongoing work of the United Nations in the field of military budgets.

Organizational measures

The special session should, finally, consider which further measures could be undertaken to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. In this connexion, emphasis should be put on the following matters:

- further organizational improvements in the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly
- possibilities of increased activities of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament with regard to studies and information in the field of disarmament
- the possibilities of Member States to follow and influence the work of the CCD
- decision to convene a second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament after a period of three to five years.
Annex

Outline of possible scope and direction of a United Nations study

The economic consequences of armaments reach far beyond demands on national financial resources. To assess correctly the national economic effects of military expenditures, a comprehensive survey must be made of the real consumption of resources for military purposes. Only then will it be possible to analyse the consequences of these expenditures on economic growth, balance of trade, supply of raw materials and other basic factors of the economy.

Most economists today agree that armaments are a limiting factor with regard to economic growth. One important reason for this is the large demand on qualified R and D resources for military purposes. Also in the utilization of certain raw materials, the military consumption may be so extensive that, in the long run, a situation may develop of competition with urgent civilian needs. The international arms trade is another negative factor with regard to economic growth, balance of trade, and social development.

Disarmament measures may lead to conversion problems of various kinds when the released resources for R and D and production are to be used for alternative purposes. A study of the economic implications and consequences of such a conversion is a prerequisite for carrying out restructuring plans.

In conclusion, to release resources from military activities in order to promote the necessary economic and social progress especially in the developing countries, our knowledge must be advanced in several respects. It is of fundamental importance that future studies include economic factors as an explanation of armaments, consequences with regard to economic growth, balance of trade, and the utilization of raw materials, the economic effects of a reduction in armaments, and conditions and methods for a controlled conversion of resources now used for military development and production.

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