Note verbale dated 26 April 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

The Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, in reference to note OR 421/6(3) dated 28 January 1977, has the honour to transmit herewith the views of the Government of Mexico on the agenda and other relevant questions relating to the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.
Views of the Government of Mexico on the agenda and other relevant questions relating to the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

1. At its 106th plenary meeting, on 21 December 1976, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 31/189 B, whereby it decided to convene a special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament, to be held in New York in May/June 1978.

2. The resolution included an invitation to "all Member States" to communicate to the Secretary-General not later than 15 April 1977 "their views on the agenda and all other relevant questions" relating to the special session of the General Assembly.

3. The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to the invitation of the General Assembly by outlining the views of the Government of Mexico on the agenda, on the question as a whole and on the following specific subjects: (1) main objectives; (2) preparatory work; (3) agenda; (4) organization of work; (5) final document and (6) final considerations.

1. Main objectives

4. In the light of the situation created by the unwillingness of the nuclear-weapon States to adopt genuine disarmament measures of any kind, it has become clear in the past decade that the United Nations machinery for disarmament is grossly ineffective, especially in enabling all the world's peoples - which, as the General Assembly has stated in numerous resolutions, have a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations - to make an effective contribution in this field which is of such importance to them, since, in the final analysis, it is their own survival that may be at stake.

5. The General Assembly, to be sure, meets each year. However, as has previously been pointed out, its agenda is always crowded with items relating to a wide variety of issues. Since the agenda items relating to disarmament are engulfed by more than 100 other items, their importance naturally cannot be correctly appreciated and it is impossible for them to receive the consideration which they merit within the First Committee. After four or five weeks of hurried debate, in which, in order to save time, the items are considered together and not separately, the Assembly is reduced to approving a series of somewhat routine resolutions, much like those adopted in previous years, almost every one of which, despite their tone of deep concern, justifiable alarm or serious urgency, are treated with inertia, resignation or neglect in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

6. For this reason, the non-aligned countries have, for the past five years, been seeking to bring about the convening of a World Disarmament Conference, whose main objective, as stated at the outset, would be to foster the chances of effective action by the United Nations in this most important area by supplementing the
existing international machinery with a body having universal membership which should meet every three or four years and which, without lessening the supremacy of the Assembly, to which it would be subordinate, would play a role in disarmament analogous to the role the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) plays in economic and social affairs.

7. The Government of Mexico remains convinced that the institutionalization of a World Disarmament Conference, open to participation by all States without exception and meeting for two or three months every three or four years, as indicated above, would – as the Government of Mexico stated five years ago – serve to fill an obvious void and provide inestimable assistance to the Assembly in adequately fulfilling its responsibilities. The Conference would be given responsibility, inter alia, for carefully assessing the implementation of General Assembly resolutions, evaluating objectively the progress made in the field of disarmament, comparing the development of weapons with the progress of disarmament and taking the decisions it deems necessary in the light of its work.

8. In view of the impossibility of achieving any progress in the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference, Mexico has for several years endorsed the idea of holding a special session of the General Assembly, and on 30 October 1975 it expressed the view that if in 1976 it should not be possible to make genuine progress towards the convening of a World Disarmament Conference, it would be necessary for the Assembly at its thirty-first regular session to decide to convene a special session for the purpose of considering, among other urgent disarmament questions, the question of convening the proposed World Conference.

9. In the Political Declaration adopted by the Colombo Summit Conference held in August 1976, the non-aligned countries recommended the convening of a special session "as early as possible and not later than 1976". In the same section of the Declaration they also recommended that the agenda of the special session should include "a review of the problem of disarmament", "the promotion and elaboration of a programme of priorities and recommendations in the field of disarmament" and "the question of convening a World Disarmament Conference".

10. In approving resolution 31/189 B on 21 December 1976, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the non-aligned countries.

2. Preparatory work

11. The Government of Mexico is convinced that the success of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will depend largely on the work done by its Preparatory Committee. Among other things, the Committee should request the Secretary-General to prepare as working papers a number of authoritative studies on the background and most relevant aspects of disarmament and the nuclear arms race; the studies should be ready sufficiently in advance of the last meeting of the Committee, and after considering them, the Committee should transmit them to the General Assembly itself at its special session. Such studies might deal, inter alia, with the following subjects:

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(1) A synopsis of the work done by the United Nations in the field of disarmament;

(2) A comparative study of the scope originally proposed or aimed at in draft multilateral disarmament treaties of a universal character concluded under United Nations auspices and the scope finally fixed in those treaties, including the contemplated measures for expanding that scope;

(3) A comprehensive study of official proposals or declarations made and decisions taken by the General Assembly on the procedure of unilateral or negotiated moratoria as a provisional measure for the prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests, as well as their application by any State;

(4) A synthesis of the arguments adduced for and against each of the four proposals for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones that have been included in the General Assembly's agenda (Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and the South Pacific) and for and against the proposal for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, including a subject index and a country index;

(5) A comprehensive study of the origin, development and present status of proposals for the prohibition of the first use of nuclear weapons;

(6) A list of bilateral or multilateral meetings on disarmament held outside the United Nations since 1945, with an indication of the procedures followed in each case to keep the Organization informed;

(7) An analytical summary of studies describing the effects of the possible use of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, bacteriological (biological) weapons and napalm and other incendiary weapons;

(8) Parallel lists of military expenditures since 1945 and the possible significance of such expenditures in the economic and social field;

(9) An analytical list of the agreements concluded in the bilateral talks known by the acronym SALT; and

(10) A descriptive report on the human and material resources available to the United Nations Secretariat for its work on disarmament and on the organization of that work.

12. Other tasks which it would be desirable for the Preparatory Committee to carry out would be those of preparing recommendations for submission to the General Assembly on the three subjects dealt with in the three following sections of this memorandum, namely, the agenda, the organization of work and the final document.

13. Since the work of the special session of the General Assembly and of its Preparatory Committee will be governed by the rules of procedure of the Assembly itself, the Government of Mexico is convinced that the work of the Preparatory Committee will be relatively expeditious.

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14. Lastly, it would be very important for the Preparatory Committee to endeavour to keep both non-governmental organizations and the press fully informed of the progress of its work, in order that they might help make world public opinion aware from now on of how important it is to mankind to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly.

3. Agenda

15. The agenda of the special session of the General Assembly might include, in addition to the usual items such as the election of the President and the Vice-Presidents and the appointment of the Credentials Committee, the following items:

- Report of the Preparatory Committee (which should include as annexes all the reports requested of the Secretary-General and specified in the preceding section);
- General debate;
- Approval of a Declaration and a Programme of Action, including the adoption of such provisions as may appear advisable in order to ensure that the documents are fully implemented.

4. Organization of work

16. During the special session of the General Assembly there should be established two main committees, which will be entrusted with preparing the Declaration and the Programme of Action respectively.

17. From the foregoing it will be clear that the General Committee at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will, as at regular sessions, consist of the President of the General Assembly, who will act as its Chairman, the 17 Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the two main committees.

5. Final document

18. The Declaration to be approved by the General Assembly at its special session should contain an assessment of the role played by the United Nations in disarmament and a balance-sheet of the results achieved. In that connexion, emphasis should be placed on the purposes and objectives fixed by the General Assembly in connexion with the Disarmament Decade.

19. The Declaration should enunciate the principles which are to govern disarmament negotiations, taking as a point of departure the September 1961 joint statement of agreed principles for disarmament negotiations, and taking account of the obligations undertaken in various treaties on disarmament and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, as well as any new factors that may arise from
the deliberations of the special session. It should be reaffirmed that the highest priority must be given to disarmament measures relating to nuclear weapons and that a high priority should be given to the question of eliminating chemical weapons.

20. In the Programme of Action to be adopted, it would be desirable to specify the measures aimed at halting the arms race, which could be included in a comprehensive disarmament programme.

21. The Programme of Action might include a series of practical recommendations aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field, through measures which will go beyond the very timid ones submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session by the Ad Hoc Committee which dealt with the matter.

22. As a result of the examination of the structure and procedures of disarmament organizations as a whole, the General Assembly might make a statement concerning the future role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. It might also make specific recommendations aimed at improving the organization and procedures of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

23. Because of the increased number of disarmament items on the General Assembly's agenda and the growing complexity of those items, it is advisable that:

(1) States Members of the Organization should consider the possibility of increasing their personnel, both at their permanent missions and in their respective ministries, for the careful examination required by those items;

(2) The States members of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament that have not yet established at Geneva permanent delegations to the Committee adequately staffed with suitable personnel should consider the desirability of doing so as soon as possible;

(3) Attention should be given to the possibility of assigning to the First Committee solely and exclusively those agenda items which relate to international security and disarmament, in order that they might be given more attention and more complete treatment.

6. Final considerations

24. The special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament represents an excellent opportunity for the international community to concentrate its efforts on a subject of vital interest to all peoples. It will serve as a stimulus to States Members of the United Nations to redouble their efforts in that field. It will also serve to intensify the interest of world public opinion.