1. General remarks

1.1. The Austrian Government has on many occasions voiced its deep concern over the lack of substantial progress in international disarmament negotiations. A permanently neutral country in the geopolitical position of Austria has a vital interest in effective steps towards arms reduction and disarmament. Indeed, the very existence of such a country could depend on progress in this field. When evaluating the disarmament efforts since the Second World War, both inside and outside the United Nations, it becomes obvious that most of the very limited achievements that have been obtained were in the field of arms limitation rather than effective disarmament. The international community has so far not been able to achieve a substantial break-through in this field of utmost and vital importance to mankind. The Austrian Government has therefore consistently lent its active support to all genuine efforts to overcome what begins to appear as a dangerous stalemate. In this connexion it may be recalled that Austria has always supported the convening of a World Disarmament Conference and will continue to do so.

1.2. During the thirty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations the Austrian delegation as one of the co-sponsors of resolution 31/189 B welcomed the proposal made by the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries to convene a special session of the General Assembly in 1978.

In the opinion of the Austrian Government the special session, which should mark the starting point for the gradual solution of both general and specific problems of disarmament, will constitute a very important element in promoting the goal of general and complete disarmament.

1.3. To underline the political significance of the special session and of its final documents, the special session might - in the view of the Austrian Government - be held at a higher political level.
2. The main goals of the special session

2.1. There appears to evolve a common understanding as to the main features of the special session. Accordingly the special session should provide for:

2.1.1. A general exchange of views about the problems of disarmament on a high political level; this exchange of views in form of a general debate should form and direct the opinions of Governments and of the public towards universally acceptable solutions to the pending problems of disarmament. It will also give an opportunity for an examination of the causes underlying the stagnation of disarmament negotiations. General awareness of these causes should pave the way for action oriented and realistic recommendations in order to facilitate future progress. The result of this exchange of views should be embodied in a political declaration.

2.1.2. A discussion of the possibilities for a new and comprehensive approach to disarmament negotiations leading to the adoption of a well balanced programme of action.

2.1.3. Concrete measures aimed at enhancing the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

3. The preparation of the special session

3.1. Adequate and careful preparatory work is essential to ensure the success of the special session. Austria is prepared to take an active part in the deliberations of the preparatory committee.

3.2. The United Nations Secretariat and especially the newly established United Nations Centre on Disarmament will have to play an important role in the preparatory stage of the special session and should, inter alia, be requested to provide adequate background information. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations as well as recognized international research institutes could be called upon to contribute to the preparation for the special session.

3.3. It seems to be advisable for the preparatory committee to take an early decision as to the format and character of the final documents to be adopted by the special session and to direct its work in accordance with this decision.

4. Political declaration

4.1. The political declaration to be adopted by the special session should reflect an appraisal of the current situation regarding disarmament problems and set out in generally acceptable terms the guiding principles for the efforts to be carried out by all States in the field of disarmament.

4.2. In defining these principles which should enjoy the widest possible political support a thorough study of already existing pertinent documents, as for instance
the 1961 Joint Statement by the Governments of the Soviet Union and the United States of Agreed Principles for Disarmament Negotiations as well as the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament submitted by the delegations of Ireland, Mexico, Pakistan, Sweden and Yugoslavia to the twenty-fifth General Assembly (document A/8191) can serve as a point of departure.

4.3. On the other hand, such a declaration will also have to take into account that disarmament can only be conceived of in a wider political framework and in particular in relation to international security.

Thus for instance, disarmament must be related to the existing balance of power, defined not only in military terms but comprising all aspects of relations between States.

The predominant position of two of the world's major military powers, and the privileges enjoyed by all five nuclear-weapon States, will have to find their counterpart in the underlining of the special responsibilities of these States for progress in the field of disarmament.

4.4. Apart from such general principles which could be reflected in the political declaration, more specific guidelines to future disarmament negotiations could be incorporated.

5. Programme of action

5.1. The programme of action should be based on a comprehensive and integrated approach which would reaffirm the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control and call for an early solution of priority items. At the same time, the usefulness of collateral measures has to be clarified.

The programme of action should provide the basis for co-ordinated further action on the different levels of disarmament negotiations by listing problem areas and demonstrating their interrelation.

5.2. The Austrian Government would suggest, inter alia, the inclusion of the following elements in the programme of action:

5.2.1. The question of nuclear disarmament.

This problem continues to be the most urgent of all disarmament issues. Progress in this field and especially the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty as a first step towards effective nuclear disarmament is not only of vital importance to all mankind but will also facilitate disarmament endeavours in other fields.

The future credibility of measures to prevent the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons hinges upon the willingness of the powers possessing nuclear weapons and especially of the two leading nuclear-weapon States to agree on effective measures of nuclear disarmament.

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5.2.2. Measures to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

As already mentioned, this question can only be dealt with in connexion with the general problem of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, the special session will have to address itself to the interrelated problem posed by the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in particular by the peaceful uses of nuclear explosive devices. The programme of action should also contain recommendations regarding effective international supervision of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and should in this connexion provide for the strengthening of the resources of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

5.2.3. The prevention of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons.

5.2.4. Conventional weapons.

The increasing build-up of arsenals of so-called conventional weapons in many parts of the world during the last years has become to be a major concern to the international community. In order to find suitable solutions to this problem it seems to be essential to deal with all its aspects. Thus the special session should encourage a thorough examination of the political, economic and social reasons underlying the rapidly increasing production of conventional weapons, the accelerating international arms trade as well as of the security needs of the recipient States.

Urgent co-operative measures of all States are necessary to bring an end to this extremely costly arms race so that the human and financial resources which are currently being used for the build-up of these arsenals can be redirected towards efforts to achieve socio-economic development and progress.

5.2.5. Other measures.

Substantial disarmament efforts would be supplemented by measures designed to build confidence between States, as for instance by providing full information about the military budgets of these States. The special session should therefore promote the ongoing work in this field within the United Nations.

6. Institutional measures

The Austrian Government welcomes the adoption by the thirty-first General Assembly of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament.

However, these proposals, endorsed by General Assembly resolution 31/190, can only be regarded as the necessary first step towards more effective measures to enhance the central role of the United Nations in this field.

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6.1. The special session should therefore adopt appropriate decisions to

- further improve the organization of work of the First Committee of the
  General Assembly and

- enable the Secretariat to carry out pertinent studies and provide factual
  information on disarmament matters.

6.2. Careful consideration should also be given to the special role played by the
CCD and to its relation with the United Nations which might call for a corresponding
reorganization of certain aspects of its present structure. Various possibilities
should be studied which would allow non-members of the CCD to follow more closely the
work of this organ and to take part in its deliberations.

Thus the possibility of opening the meetings of the CCD to interested States
which are not members of this body and which could be invited as observers, might
be discussed.

6.3. At the same time it might be worth while to discuss the chances for a re-activating
of the United Nations Disarmament Commission which has not met in recent years and
which could for instance assume a very important co-ordinating function.

6.4. The special session will also have to decide on adequate follow-up mechanisms
so that its impact in the future handling of disarmament matters can be constantly
evaluated. The convening of a further special session at an appropriate time with
the main purpose of examining the progress achieved in the meantime might be given
serious consideration.

6.5. In this context, the role of a world disarmament conference as well as the
conditions necessary for convening it, could be raised.

Finally, the programme and organization of work of the United Nations Centre on
Disarmament should also be discussed.

7. The agenda of the special session

In accordance with the previous remarks the Austrian Government proposes the
following items for inclusion in the agenda of the special session:

- General debate

- Adoption of a political declaration of principles on disarmament

- Adoption of a programme of action on disarmament

- Review and strengthening of the role of the United Nations in disarmament
  including the question of convening a world disarmament conference.