Letter dated 31 March 1977 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic addressed to the Secretary-General

In connexion with resolution 31/189 B concerning the convening of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the Ukrainian SSR presents the following observations on matters relating to the conduct of the special session.

In recent years, as a result of the conclusion of a number of international treaties and agreements, some progress has been noted in limiting the arms race in certain areas. The developing process of international détente makes it urgently necessary to achieve further success in halting the rampant arms race.

However, although some progress has been made in lessening the danger of the outbreak of a new world war, the arms race goes on. The forces which are seeking to take the world back to the dismal era of the "cold war" and of nuclear brinkmanship are continuing to intensify the arms race, which places a heavy burden on the working people of all countries and adversely affects the economy of all States without exception. Huge sums of money are being spent to perfect existing weapons and create increasingly devastating instruments of mass destruction. More and more States are being drawn into the arms race.

Halting the arms race is becoming the most urgent task of the present day. The memorandum of the Soviet Union on questions of ending the arms race, which met with a favourable response from many delegations at the thirty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, has become an important document which greatly facilitates the search for a solution to the unsolved problems of disarmament. The memorandum constitutes a comprehensive programme of disarmament measures. It reflects all the positive experience gained by numerous countries during long years of negotiation on this matter. At the same time, it contains new and specific observations which take account of the views of the States participating in those negotiations.
The Soviet memorandum indicates the main areas for co-ordinated disarmament measures by States, the implementation of which would represent a significant advance towards disarmament. These are: cessation of the nuclear arms race, reduction and subsequent elimination of nuclear weapons and prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests, consolidation of the régime governing the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, prohibition of the development of new types and new systems of weapons of mass destruction, reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments, the establishment of zones of peace in the Indian Ocean and other regions, and the reduction of military budgets.

The Ukrainian SSR believes that it would be possible to achieve effective solutions to all aspects of the disarmament problem, including those mentioned above, in the widest and most authoritative international forum, which could be provided by a world disarmament conference. The Soviet Union's proposal for the convening of such a conference with the participation of all States has won broad support from the international community. A number of recent sessions of the General Assembly have adopted resolutions in favour of holding the conference. It is obvious that only a conference which is properly prepared and organized, which has the necessary machinery for adopting decisions and which takes account of the security interest of all States in the world can formulate effective measures for halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament. The holding of a conference with due regard for these factors could prove to be a turning point in solving the whole complex of disarmament problems.

The special session of the General Assembly devoted to these questions, which should make comprehensive preparations for their consideration in the genuinely universal forum of a world disarmament conference, should constitute an important intermediate stage on the path towards convening such a conference. Identifying and co-ordinating the steps which States must take in connexion with the practical preparation and early holding of a world disarmament conference represent one of the most important tasks of the special session devoted to disarmament.

In our opinion, the special session should not replace proven forms of disarmament negotiations. On the contrary, the decisions taken at the session should help to increase the effectiveness of existing disarmament machinery.

Inasmuch as the ultimate goal of all disarmament negotiations is the achievement of general and complete disarmament, the agenda for the special session could provide for a general exchange of views with regard not only to over-all approaches to the problem of disarmament but also to specific directions for co-ordinated action by States in this field at the present stage. In particular, the special session could discuss the problems connected with partial measures as well as measures taken on a regional basis for the purpose of limiting the arms race and bringing about disarmament.

The Ukrainian SSR believes that the special session could culminate in the adoption of a final political declaration.
Provision should be made to ensure that the special session is prepared and conducted with due regard for the specific nature and significance of disarmament problems for the cause of peace and of maintaining the security of States. Decisions at the session should be taken in such a way as to obviate completely any possibility of damaging the security interests of States. The preparation and holding of the session should fully reflect the lofty responsibility of all States in the world, particularly those which are militarily most important.

The special session should be carefully prepared with due regard for the views of all the parties concerned. Both the organization of the session itself and the organization of work and composition of the preparatory committee should take into account the specific nature of disarmament problems. The structure of the preparatory committee should bear a proportional relationship to the role which States play in the field of disarmament.

The Ukrainian SSR, whose people are this year observing the sixtieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution together with all the peoples of the multinational Soviet Union, has actively supported, throughout the entire history of disarmament negotiations, all proposals aimed at achieving peace between peoples, halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament. The Ukrainian SSR believes that the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament should make a positive contribution to the solution of the most crucial problem of the present day, that of halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament.