Note verbale dated 30 June 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The special session will perhaps be a culmination of efforts set in motion by non-aligned countries as far back as 1961 at their first summit conference in Belgrade. At the fifth summit conference of non-aligned countries held in Sri Lanka, heads of State or Government reiterated their call for a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is gratifying that resolution 31/189 B was sponsored by a large number of non-aligned and other countries and was adopted without recourse to vote which is indicative of the wide support for a special session among Member States of the United Nations.

The special session should undertake a frank and comprehensive evaluation of the present state of negotiations on disarmament and examine in depth the impact which the continuation of the arms race is having on international peace and security. An important objective of the special session should also be a study of the massive expenditure on arms production, research and development and an examination of ways and means of diverting such resources for the economic and social well-being of all mankind. The reallocation, of course on the basis of criteria relevant to development assistance, of even a portion of the estimated $300 billion being expended on armaments cannot fail to have a significant effect on the world economy as a whole.

Without seeking to prejudge the deliberations of the special session, the Sri Lanka Government is of the view that the existing machinery for disarmament should be supplemented if significant results are to be realized. While negotiations being conducted bilaterally, regionally and between groups of States have made some progress in limited areas, these negotiations must be expedited and extended in scope if they are to have a worthwhile impact on the dangerous and futile escalation of the arms race.

The Sri Lanka Government shares the widely held view that all Member States of the United Nations should have an active role in disarmament negotiations. While few measures in the field of disarmament can be really effective without the
participation of all nuclear Powers and the militarily significant States, smaller States are no less concerned about the present continuing military escalation, the consequences of which have a greater, more adverse economic effect on the smaller and militarily weaker States. It is of course recognized that for practical reasons it would not be feasible for all States to participate at all times in negotiations leading to disarmament, but this should not preclude opportunities for the views and interests of all States to be taken into account in reaching major decisions on questions of disarmament.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the Preparatory Committee for the special session has been able at its last session to agree on a draft agenda for the special session. It is also to be noted that the members of the Non-Aligned Group in the Preparatory Committee have circulated some preliminary observations about the special session.

Adequate preparations should be made in advance of the special session to ensure the optimum use of the limited time available next year during the session itself. Every effort should be made before the session to seek the cooperation of all Member States of the United Nations. Members of the Preparatory Committee have a special role and should be in continuous consultation with all Members of the United Nations so that the broadest possible range of views would be taken into consideration to ensure that the session would have a truly universal character.

Preparations for the special session should include discussions at a formal and informal level (not confined to members of the Preparatory Committee alone) so as to reach agreement at least on the broad substance and framework of the final document to be adopted at the session.

The work of the special session should culminate in two principal documents - one a declaration setting out principles to govern disarmament and the other a programme of action setting out practical and feasible measures within a reasonable time-frame which could lead towards general and complete disarmament.