Letter dated 9 December 1977 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to draw attention to the views of the Government of Japan on the agenda and all other relevant questions relating to the special session as presented in the document A/AC.187/14, which states that the following issues should be given high priority at the coming special session.

(1) The cessation of the nuclear-arms race and the reduction of nuclear armaments

(2) Prohibition of all nuclear-weapon tests

(3) Banning chemical weapons

(4) International transfer of conventional arms

(5) Reduction of military budgets

In this connexion, the Government of Japan would like to expatiate its views and make some proposals concerning the fourth item set above, which are stated in the document attached herewith.

The Permanent Representative of Japan would like to request these documents to be kindly published and circulated as a working paper of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Isao ABE
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative to the United Nations
Working paper

PROPOSAL CONCERNING THE CONVENTIONAL ARMS RACE INCLUDING,
IN PARTICULAR, THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER OF CONVENTIONAL
ARMS AND MUTUAL LIMITATION OF CONVENTIONAL ARMAMENTS AND
ARMED FORCES ON THE REGIONAL LEVEL

1. Since the end of the Second World War millions of lives have been lost as
a result of military conflicts employing conventional weapons. The international
community is witnessing an increase in the arms build-up in many parts of the
world, to which the growing international transfer of conventional arms has been
one of the major contributors. This trend, if continued, could further intensify
the potential for conflicts.

2. Four fifths of the world's military expenditure is now being devoted to
conventional armaments. If the conventional arms race continues at the present
rate, the prospect of using the resources now being diverted to military purposes
towards improving the economic and social conditions in the world, in particular,
those of the developing countries, will be further narrowed.

3. It is encouraging that, after a long period of negligence, a great number of
countries now feel concern over the conventional arms race and, in particular,
the increasing international transfer of conventional arms. As a result, a wide
consensus is now emerging in favour of having these issues considered at the
special session. These sentiments have been made clear by the statements of
many States before the Preparatory Committee and at the thirty-second session of
the General Assembly, and in their views on the special session submitted to the
Secretary-General. A number of private organizations concerned with disarmament
have also supported these views.

4. It is clear beyond question that nuclear disarmament should have the highest
priority in disarmament negotiations. It is, however, also evident that the goal
of general and complete disarmament cannot be achieved without curbing the
conventional arms race.

The special session should, therefore, take up this question with a view to
initiating a comprehensive study as a preliminary step to its final solution
within the framework of general and complete disarmament.

5. The question of the conventional arms race and, in particular, the question
of the international transfer of conventional arms, is unquestionably a delicate
and difficult matter, since it is closely related to the domestic production of
weapons, global as well as regional security and the security of recipient
countries, the freezing of mutual arms levels and armed forces or their
reduction, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. These and all
other relevant aspects should be fully taken into consideration in the comprehensive
study in order to secure, above all, the just and impartial treatment of all
States.
6. It is recommended that the following principles be recognized in a declaration on disarmament in order to emphasize the relevance and importance of conventional arms control and disarmament:

   (1) Most of the world's military expenditures are being devoted to the acquisition and maintenance of conventional military power. This absorbs essential material and human resources. All States should make all possible efforts, parallel to those in the field of nuclear disarmament, to halt this diversion of resources and to bring about concrete measures for their reallocation from military to civilian purposes.

   (2) The increasing build-up of conventional arms in many parts of the world produces a potential risk of heightening military tension and endangering international peace and security. The unabated international transfer of conventional arms should be brought under control.

   (3) Conventional arms control and disarmament, with the reduction of conventional weapons and armed forces, together with control of the development and production of new systems of sophisticated weapons with increased destructive power and strategic capability - which have blurred the classical distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons - will contribute to the achievement of general and complete disarmament.

7. In order to implement the above-mentioned principles, the following measures are suggested for incorporation within the framework of the programme of action on disarmament. These measures would constitute a starting-point for negotiations, the goal of which is general and complete disarmament, as is declared in the Joint Statement of Agreed Principles between the United States and the USSR issued in 1961.

   (1) As initial and preliminary steps:

   A. Comprehensive studies of conventional arms control and disarmament from all aspects, to be undertaken by a qualified group of experts on, inter alia:

   (a) The international transfer of conventional weapons;

   (b) The possibility of mutual limitation of the level and types of conventional armaments and the number of armed forces, according to regions.

   B. Preliminary measures parallel to the comprehensive studies:

   (a) A request by the United Nations General Assembly to the major arms-supplying countries, in particular, the United States and the USSR, to start consultations on voluntary restraint measures with due regard to the security of recipient countries;

   (b) On the initiative of the States of the region, the convening of regional conferences for the prevention and limitation of armaments, provided that there exist appropriate conditions;

   /...
(c) A request to the Secretary-General or a watch-dog committee, to follow (i) the current state of affairs of the international transfer of conventional weapons and (ii) the development of the consultations of the major arms-supplying countries envisaged in (a) above or in the regional conferences, envisaged in (b) above, and to keep the United Nations General Assembly informed on these matters.

(2) As to future steps:

After a certain period of time a review of the implementation of the initial and preliminary steps should be conducted. After this review further measures should be worked out and agreed upon according to paragraph 4 of the Joint Statement of Agreed Principles during a transition period leading to the final stage of general and complete disarmament.

8. A decision on appropriate measures to implement the initial steps should be taken at the special session devoted to disarmament.