Dissemination of information on the question of
the armaments race and disarmament

Elements to be included in the Preamble, the Declaration
and the Programme of Action

Venezuela: working paper

It can be readily noted that at the present time a large part of world public
opinion has insufficient knowledge of the unusual destructive dimensions which
nuclear weapons have achieved and of the impressive quantity of diverse resources
devoted to the armaments race in general. This is due, inter alia, to the
extraordinarily rapid progress and sophistication of nuclear weapons which have
taken place in recent years and to the fact that the parallel efforts made to
disseminate information on this matter have lagged or have been silenced.

In the urgent search for solutions which will help to achieve practical
results in the matter of disarmament, emphasis has been placed on the need to
inform the public openly of the adverse effects of the armaments race on the
economic and social development of peoples, in particular, and on the security
and well-being of mankind in general. If these matters were presented to the
public in a direct and realistic manner it would dissipate once and for all the
illusion that the world can live in security while the armaments race continues.

It is a well-known fact that properly informed public opinion can play an
important restraining and persuasive role. It is even more essential for public
opinion to act in this way when it is a question of matters relating to the very
survival of mankind. Venezuela supports the view that, through a systematic
information campaign, it is possible to develop an international conscience, at
all levels, which would condemn and repudiate the armaments race. An effective
campaign implies a continuous supply of information describing the constant
refinement and improvement of increasingly complex systems and mechanisms of
destruction.

The United Nations has done commendable work in disseminating information on
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the armaments race, but further efforts are needed to enable world public opinion
to play its proper role effectively in the arduous task of combating that
phenomenon. It is clear that it could not do this effectively without the open
and resolute co-operation and determination of States Members of the United Nations.

Accordingly, one of the primary objectives of the special session of the
General Assembly devoted to disarmament must be the adoption of specific measures
directed towards expanding the dissemination of information about the armaments
race and the efforts being made by the United Nations to contain it. In this
connexion, the following measures, among others, should be considered:

(1) Governmental and non-governmental information organs and those of the United
Nations and its specialized agencies should give priority, first, to the
preparation and distribution of material relating to the danger represented by
nuclear weapons and, second, to the disarmament negotiations which are progressing
within the framework of the United Nations.

(2) The United Nations Information Centres should be more active in the
dissemination of the above-mentioned material.

(3) Encouragement should be given to the preparation by the United Nations of
studies and reports which would state in a succinct and clear manner the various
problems and implications of the armaments race in its many facets.

(4) Encouragement should also be given to the preparation and wide distribution
of audio-visual material.

(5) The United Nations Centre for Disarmament should intensify its activities in
the presentation of substantive information concerning the armaments race and
disarmament, directed principally towards government officials, academic circles
and other sectors.

(6) Throughout this process of disseminating information, there should be
increased participation by non-governmental organizations concerned with the
matter, through closer co-ordination between them and the United Nations Centre
for Disarmament.