The Soviet delegation would like to make some observations now that the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament is about to enter a new and important stage, that of drafting the final documents of the special session. The success of the special session itself will depend on the results to be achieved at this stage.

We believe that there are good reasons to expect a successful completion of our work. A constructive and business-like atmosphere has developed in the Committee which, incidentally, was noted by many delegations at the recently concluded thirty-second session of the General Assembly.

The Preparatory Committee has before it a number of working papers concerning the future decisions of the special session. They comprise drafts submitted by socialist States, non-aligned countries, a number of States belonging to the Western European regional group as well as papers submitted by individual countries. They provide a wealth of material on the basis of which to draft mutually acceptable decisions that could not only give a powerful positive impulse to the ongoing disarmament negotiations but could also make it possible to move from negotiations to genuine action signifying the beginning of disarmament.

The working papers prepared in September 1977 by socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, contain formulations of specific proposals regarding the contents of the decisions of the special session, namely, the declaration and programme of action for disarmament. These documents have been circulated in the Committee and there is no need to go into detail again regarding their substance.

I would only recall some general observations which, in our opinion, could be taken into consideration in the work that lies ahead. The declaration on disarmament, in our view, would have to include an objective evaluation of the current situation in the disarmament area and take stock of the results already achieved, but, most importantly, it should also contain formulations of fundamental provisions or principles which could form a basis for negotiations and decisions on matters relating to curbing the arms race and to disarmament. The purpose here is,
apparently, to make those principles as universal as possible so that they maintain lasting value. They could then play a positive role in elaborating and implementing concrete disarmament measures.

In the working papers prepared both by socialist countries and by other members of the Committee, it is proposed to define the general orientation of efforts to halt the arms race as well as specific priority tasks which could be embodied in the programme of action for disarmament. The majority of them are interpreted in an identical way and this is an encouraging sign. It permits the hope that in the final analysis a programme will be drafted which will be a realistic and practical one acceptable to all States. Priorities lacking objectivity and fixing rigid time-limits for implementing certain specific tasks would hardly contribute to a successful implementation of this programme or assist the ongoing negotiations on complex disarmament issues.

Proposals are also being put forward to the effect that decisions should be taken regarding the machinery of disarmament negotiations. It seems to us that a considerable degree of care and caution should be shown here. This question should be considered closely only after general and specific tasks in the disarmament field, that is to say, substantive issues, have been determined. We see no need for abandoning or radically restructuring the existing channels for negotiations. What is needed is that existing bodies should continue to function with greater efficiency, and it is our task to make full use of their capacities.

Long experience in disarmament negotiations leaves no room for doubt that the main obstacles to the solution of disarmament problems are not the negotiating machinery but rather the powerful forces in a number of countries which seek to perpetuate the arms race and international tension.

The United Nations, as the most representative international forum, undoubtedly has an important role to play in the disarmament field, and we are entirely in favour of the United Nations becoming an even more effective instrument in the struggle for peace, security and disarmament.

The agenda for the special session also includes discussion of the World Disarmament Conference, the convening of which the Soviet Union and a number of other countries consider to be of outstanding importance. The Conference should become such a forum that will make it possible to proceed from the declarations and recommendations adopted by the General Assembly to practical action leading to agreed disarmament measures and meaningful decisions. The Conference will be able to achieve in the best possible way the goals set by the special session.

The forthcoming special session devoted to disarmament is no doubt called upon to play an important role of its own in progress towards the complete elimination of the material basis for war. It is the Soviet delegation's intention to do everything possible for its successful outcome.

It is these considerations - a desire to make the special session a constructive one end to secure the adoption of positive and mutually acceptable
decisions - that have guided the socialist countries in the preparation of the working papers submitted to the Preparatory Committee in September 1977.

However, life does not stand still. The task of limiting the arms race requires continuing pressure and initiatives aimed at clearing the paths leading to disarmament.

Guided by these considerations, the Soviet Union has recently taken a number of new steps that would facilitate the solution of urgent issues facing the world community. Some of these initiatives have already been put to practical use: they have been or are being discussed in various forums, including the United Nations.

In the year of its sixtieth anniversary, the Soviet State issued an appeal for agreement on the simultaneous cessation by all States of the production of nuclear weapons, whether atomic, hydrogen or neutron bombs or missiles. At the same time the nuclear Powers could undertake to begin gradually reducing their accumulated stocks of weapons, moving ahead to the point where they had been completely liquidated. This proposal was reflected in a resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. We expect this specific proposal to be taken into account in the drafting of the final documents. We are convinced that the question of nuclear disarmament occupies a prominent place in the drafts being prepared.

In drafting the documents for the session, the Preparatory Committee cannot lose sight of such a crucial problem as prevention of the threat of nuclear war. The importance of practical steps in this regard hardly needs any detailed clarification. At the Soviet Union's initiative, this subject was discussed in connexion with the Declaration on the Deepening and Consolidation of International Détente adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. In the discussions during that session many delegations spoke in favour of continuing the consideration of the item in the Preparatory Committee.

An important step forward was recently taken in the critical and urgent issue of halting nuclear weapon tests. The Soviet Union, as one of the participants in the current tripartite talks at Geneva, expressed its readiness to agree that a moratorium on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes should be declared together with a ban for a limited period on all nuclear weapon tests. This proposal, in effect, opens the way to the speedy elaboration of a treaty imposing a complete and general ban on nuclear weapon tests.

Unfortunately, in recent months we have witnessed developments which may lead to the start of a new and dangerous spiral in the arms race, and here I have in mind the plans to develop and deploy neutron nuclear weapons. It appears to us that the documents which we shall prepare should impress upon States the need to avert this danger. It may be recalled that on 24 December, Comrade L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and President of the USSR Supreme Soviet, proposed on behalf of the USSR, to the Western States to agree on a mutual renunciation of the
production of the neutron bomb in order to rid the world of this new, inhuman weapon of mass murder.

Among efforts to avert a new war, especially a nuclear war, the supplementing of political détente in Europe by military détente is of special importance. In recent years there have been some changes for the better on this continent. The Soviet Union considers itself in duty bound to protect, consolidate and follow up these achievements.

In October 1977, in an effort to strengthen security on the European continent, the Soviet Union submitted constructive proposals forming a programme of action for consolidating military détente in Europe. These proposals were officially submitted by the Soviet delegation at the Belgrade meeting of representatives of the States participating in the European Conference.

They envisage the conclusion by the participants in the European Conference of a treaty renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons against each other; the reaching of agreement at least not to expand the opposing military and political groupings and alliances in Europe by admitting new members, consistent implementation of the confidence-building measures provided for in the Final Act; and the reaching of agreement not to conduct military exercises involving more than, say, 50,000-60,000 men.

These are some additional observations which the Soviet delegation deems it necessary to make now that the Committee is about to enter an important stage in its work, that of drafting the final documents.