PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEVOTED TO DISARMAMENT

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 May 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ORTIZ DE ROZAS (Argentina)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. HARRY (Australia) said that the special session of the General Assembly on disarmament provided a unique opportunity to secure progress in arms control and disarmament. It should not be regarded merely as a stepping-stone for the establishment of new disarmament machinery, but should be used as a vehicle for appraising developments to date. It was important that delegations, when identifying the factors which had obstructed disarmament, should be less concerned about apportioning blame to any State or group of States than about making a concerted effort to overcome those obstacles.

2. One of the principal goals of the special session should be the elaboration of a framework within which arms control and disarmament issues could be examined and negotiations conducted. To that end, it was necessary to set out fundamental normative principles. However, those principles should be founded on political reality. For example, States would not be prepared to negotiate disarmament measures unless they felt militarily secure. Another major goal would be the identification of a consensus on the priority measures of arms control and disarmament and the issues of contention within those priority areas.

3. His Government did not believe that the special session would be an appropriate forum for the negotiation of any totally new arms control or arms limitation convention. However completion, by the time the special session convened, of agreements currently under discussion would demonstrate international determination to generate a new momentum in disarmament. More particularly, the Australian Government, whose position on the desirability of an immediate suspension of nuclear testing and the early negotiation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty was well known, had warmly welcomed recent developments which demonstrated a new preparedness to reverse the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. In that respect it hoped that, by the time the special session commenced, a comprehensive test-ban treaty would either be negotiated, or at least, that agreement would have been reached on the basic elements for such a treaty.

4. Arms control and disarmament proposals touched directly the first responsibility of all Governments to provide for national security. All States sacrificed resources for military purposes which might otherwise be utilized to enhance the welfare of their citizens. Without ceasing to respect the sincerity of their position, it was essential to stop the endless international spending on more sophisticated weapons in a process which did not result in enhanced security.

5. Nevertheless, it was not enough for the super-Powers to take the step of achieving a more peaceful world. As they took steps to reverse the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons (and the other nuclear-weapons States had a similar responsibility, even if different quantitatively), other States should demonstrate their own preparedness to take complementary measures to guarantee that nuclear weapons did not become part of their own armouries. If the super-Powers were prepared to show the way by negotiating a comprehensive test-ban treaty, those
States which had still not ratified the non-proliferation treaty should be encouraged to do so.

6. The task of the current session of the Preparatory Committee was to establish the framework within which the General Assembly could approach its tasks at the special session and to take initial steps which would facilitate the efficient and timely completion of the necessary preparatory work. His delegation was ready to co-operate fully in the discussions and in the drafting of the essential documents.

7. Mr. CONSALVI (Venezuela) said that the arms race endangered not only the competing Powers but the whole of mankind. Suffice it to say, as Dr. Alva Myrdal warned, that the plutonium deposits in the hands of the Powers had become a source of insecurity to the very countries which possessed them. The arms race affected the entire international community, not only because more than $300 billion were spent on it annually, while most people were denied the opportunity to enjoy the advances of science and technology, but also because of the crisis in ideals and constructive proposals which it revealed.

8. Venezuela had participated actively in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference and supported the Conference so long as all the nuclear Powers took part in it. However, while believing that the subject of its convening could be discussed at the special session, his delegation felt that the session should not be a mere milestone on the road to the World Disarmament Conference. Instead, it hoped that at the special session the General Assembly would duly study the various aspects of the arms race and its economic and social consequences and achieve positive results, such as the adoption of a set of principles and a programme of action which would constitute progress towards the goal of general and complete disarmament under international control. It should also reaffirm the right of all States and, in particular, non-nuclear-weapon States, to access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes because, in view of the energy problems confronting the world, the possibility of using atomic energy could not easily be discredited.

9. His delegation was pleased that a consensus had been reached on inviting non-governmental organizations and institutions involved in the field of disarmament to participate in the Committee's deliberations, in view of both the importance of their contributions and the appreciation which that measure implied.

10. He reaffirmed the need for the United Nations, through the Centre for Disarmament, to launch a wide-ranging public information campaign concerning the grave dangers of the arms race and its economic and social consequences. Furthermore, his country felt that the proposal by certain delegations that the First Committee of the General Assembly should deal solely with questions relating to disarmament and international security was a positive one.

11. Mr. VINCEN (Italy) said that disarmament depended primarily on the capacity of the international community gradually to eradicate the suspicion, mistrust and lack of understanding which undermined relations between countries. His Government had always done its utmost to improve its relations with the rest of the world and /...
intended to continue that policy and, if possible, to expand it in the field of disarmament. In that spirit, it had from the outset supported the initiative to convene a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and had co-sponsored the resolution on the subject.

12. At the special session the Assembly should first of all undertake a comprehensive review of the numerous problems which the United Nations was prepared to face in the field of disarmament. It would be necessary in that regard to reach a decision on the nature of the role to be played by the United Nations and on the instruments required to strengthen that role. Secondly, the Assembly should concentrate on the priority issues selected by the Committee. In that connexion, the special session should not indulge in generalized rhetoric or detailed technical negotiations. Above all, it should avoid duplicating the activities of existing fora, such as the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, which the Government still viewed as a highly useful negotiating forum, although it was prepared to consider constructive proposals designed to improve its structure, procedures and organization.

13. Considering the diversity of the proposals on the objectives of the special session, it was essential to identify those proposals on which agreement was possible and concentrate on the search for a common basic position on those issues. At the same time, while identifying priority objectives for immediate action, the General Assembly should not ignore the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament or the general principles already established by the United Nations in the sphere of disarmament. Bearing that in mind, the Italian Government had repeatedly stressed the need for a coherent and comprehensive programme of complete disarmament, and considered that the special session should endeavour to elaborate a far-reaching plan for gradually achieving the total elimination of arms in order to create a world based on détente, understanding, co-operation and on an international security system.

14. To begin with, nuclear disarmament measures should be pursued with the greatest urgency, going ahead with the negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear test ban (CTB) and with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Arms reduction must follow a balanced pattern in both the nuclear and conventional weapons sectors. In the case of conventional weapons, the geographical factor should not be overlooked. In that connexion he recalled that Italy had proposed that the Security Council, under Article 29 of the Charter of the United Nations, should set up a committee, divided into regional sub-committees with the participation of major arms suppliers and purchasing Powers from each region, with the task of maintaining conventional weaponry at the lowest possible level. Furthermore, in order to lay the groundwork for the establishment of those subsidiary bodies, one should envisage the possibility of setting up parallel but separate regional committees or groups comprising the recipient countries. An agreement on the elimination of chemical weapons should also be actively pursued as a matter of the greatest urgency. A successful conclusion to the current negotiations in Geneva, in time for the special session, would be a major contribution to progress in the field of disarmament.

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15. One should not lose sight of the final goal, namely, the establishment of a new collective international security system within the framework of the United Nations, which was a prerequisite for a more just and equitable political and economic order. What the world community needed for its development was economic and social reform, as well as a better distribution of those human and material resources which currently were absorbed to a disproportionate extent by the arms race.

16. The CHAIRMAN, acting in accordance with the Committee's decision to allow Member States which were not members of the Committee to participate in its work, without a vote, gave the floor to the representative of Denmark.

17. Mr. SVANE (Denmark) said that the special session represented a valuable means of directing international attention to the arms race and making public opinion aware of the opportunities which existed for disarmament as well as the difficulties involved. Moreover the session should serve as a catalyst for arms control and disarmament negotiations and encourage further negotiations at the global, regional or bilateral level.

18. At the same time the special session would inevitably focus public attention on the adverse effects which massive arms expenditure had on the economic and social development of nations. Substantial progress in the field of disarmament could lead to the release, for more constructive uses, of vast material and human resources which were currently being devoured for military purposes. The Danish Government included a minister without portfolio, who would devote much of her attention to disarmament while at the same time having the responsibility for development aid.

19. As regards the organization of the work of the special session, his Government had emphasized, in its reply to the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution A/RES/31/189 B, that the general debate should leave sufficient time for thorough consideration of specific proposals. In any case such main committees as were established should be able to begin their work without waiting for the conclusion of the general debate.

20. Besides formulating a declaration on disarmament, it should be the main purpose of the session to identify the fields in which action should be taken and to establish priorities. He wished to draw particular attention to the problem of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and also to the conclusion of a treaty for a comprehensive nuclear test ban. It was clear that progress in the SALT negotiations would create a climate which would facilitate the finding of solutions for the nuclear issues he had mentioned. Those problems should not, however, be given exclusive attention to the detriment of efforts for curbing the conventional arms race. Recipient countries within a given region might help to further conventional arms control.

21. It was difficult to achieve disarmament without a climate of trust in the world; in that respect the progress registered in disarmament was a barometer indicating the level of mutual international confidence, which would be enhanced if States permitted international control and effective verification when undertaking commitments for disarmament. The world had to become a place where the force of argument replaced the argument of force.

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22. Mr. TÜRKMEN (Turkey) said that his delegation fully shared the views of those Governments which considered that the goal of the special session devoted to disarmament was not to negotiate arms control agreements or to resolve outstanding questions immediately, but rather to produce guidelines for future bilateral, multilateral and regional negotiations. His delegation believed that the special session would give significant impetus to those negotiations and would promote and accelerate efforts towards the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. It could also generate greater support for disarmament efforts through a better understanding of the questions relating to disarmament. His Government had therefore welcomed the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee relating to the participation of non-governmental organizations in its work.

23. The Preparatory Committee had an urgent responsibility for the preparations required for the special session, but he would like to stress the important role that the United Nations Centre for Disarmament could play in doing everything possible to produce the necessary background material in time.

24. As measures relating to disarmament must enjoy the support of the great majority of States, the agenda for the special session, as well as the final document, should reflect the broadest possible agreement. His delegation hoped that the ongoing consultations regarding the draft agenda submitted by the non-aligned members would shortly result in a compromise text.

25. The next step in the preparatory work would undoubtedly be the elaboration of principles that would constitute the basis for a final political declaration. As the success of the preparatory work would depend on working out, in advance, a text reflecting a consensus on the basic content of such a final document, the Turkish delegation supported the suggestion that a committee of the whole should be established and entrusted with the drafting of that final document. He also supported the idea that the appropriate arrangements should be made for the intersessional work of the Preparatory Committee.

26. As to the content of the final document, a set of guiding principles should be agreed upon taking into account the concepts so far developed in the course of past negotiations on disarmament. In that context, stress should be laid on the principle of balance in disarmament measures and on the absolute need to prevent situations which would enable any State or group of States to gain military advantage.

27. As to the establishment of priorities in the field of disarmament, his delegation considered that, although prime importance should be attached to nuclear disarmament, the fact that measures relating to conventional weapons were just as important and urgent should not be overlooked.

28. Another item of high priority was the strengthening of the non-proliferation régime. It was to be hoped that while further measures to prevent the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons were being considered the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy without restrictions would be assured. The importance of security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States should also be
stressed. His Government shared the concern expressed with respect to the current state of trade in, and the transfer of, conventional weapons and hoped that the question would be considered at the special session.

29. Another field that merited special attention was the connexion between disarmament and economic and social development. In that respect, his delegation supported the proposal by the Swedish delegation calling for a new United Nations study on the relationship between disarmament efforts and economic and social progress.

30. It was generally recognized that a prerequisite for the success of disarmament efforts was a global perspective and the universality of agreements. That required the direct participation of all nuclear States, as well as other militarily important Powers, in all negotiating forums. In the opinion of his Government, the chances for success would be greater if the negotiations were undertaken in bodies set up for specific purposes, such as the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. The special session would, however, provide an opportunity to review existing international disarmament machinery and to make the necessary improvements.

31. Mr. AKHUND (Pakistan) said that it was of crucial importance that the special session should achieve its objectives. Those objectives must be defined with clarity and realism. The success of the session would, of course, depend on the will and resolve of all States in general, and the great Powers and other militarily significant States in particular, to overcome their differences so that meaningful results could be achieved.

32. Consideration of the record of the past 30 years led to the inescapable conclusion that, although a number of noteworthy measures had been taken in the field of disarmament, they had failed to bring the world anywhere near the goal of an international order based on collective security as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations. Indeed, 17 years after the General Assembly had formally declared general and complete disarmament as the goal of the United Nations, military expenditures continued to grow, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

33. Weapons of extreme precision had been added to weapons of mass destruction. Technological developments had given the arms race, particularly between the super-Powers, a self-perpetuating character. The spiral could only be broken by simultaneous endeavours aimed at bringing about a relaxation of tension and disarmament. The real danger facing mankind stemmed from the existence of huge nuclear arsenals and the possibility of their use. The complete prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and the eventual destruction of stockpiles should be the primary goal of action in the field of disarmament. In the opinion of his delegation, pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, urgent action should be taken in three areas: first, agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on a substantial reduction in the size of their nuclear arsenals and strategic delivery systems; second, agreement to refrain from further sophistication of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems; and, third, an undertaking by the nuclear-weapon Powers to refrain from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. /...
34. Pakistan agreed that nuclear disarmament measures could not be considered in isolation from the problem of the high level of conventional armaments. There was thus an urgent need for the conclusion of specific agreements aimed at the reduction of conventional weapons, particularly those at the disposal of the two power alliances. In the opinion of his delegation, such reductions would not endanger, but would rather enhance, their security and would, furthermore, release vast resources which could be used for the betterment of the peoples of the countries concerned. In that context, he favoured the Swedish proposal that a new study should be made on the connexion between disarmament and economic development in all its aspects.

35. The special session must, of course, examine the problem of ensuring the security of non-nuclear-weapon States against nuclear attack or the threat of such attack. The ultimate aim must be the establishment of a system of positive guarantees, in other words, the system of collective security envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations. Pakistan considered that the special session could make progress on that issue on the basis of paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 31/189 C. Moreover, the non-nuclear-weapon States, which constituted the vast majority of the Members of the United Nations, should take the opportunity provided by the special session to show that they were prepared to take regional security measures against the nuclear danger. In that context, Pakistan supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace and reiterated its support for the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

36. Referring to the question of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, he said that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the IAEA system of safeguards proved that States were willing to accept certain restrictions on their freedom of action in the interest of eliminating nuclear weapons from the world. A viable system could not be based on the assumption that there could be a monopoly in the field of knowledge and technology or by making arbitrary distinctions. The most effective measure to restrain both vertical and horizontal proliferation would be a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests. His delegation considered that a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests should not be made conditional on its acceptance by all nuclear-weapon States.

37. Pakistan accepted the broad list of items contained in the draft agenda submitted by the group of non-aligned countries, but suggested that consideration should be given to another item or subitem entitled "Adoption of agreements on disarmament" since, by the time of the special session, a comprehensive test ban treaty and a treaty banning chemical weapons might be ready.

38. As the special session was unlikely to complete its work in less than four to five weeks, and as very thorough preparations must be made in regard to the proposed declaration of principles and programme of action, it would be useful to arrange for the Preparatory Committee or a working group of the whole to meet between sessions. It would also be appropriate for the Centre for Disarmament, with the assistance of outside experts, to prepare background papers on important issues, a list of which could be drawn up after consultations.

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39. Mr. ELLIOT (Belgium) said that the special session should provide the opportunity to implement a comprehensive disarmament programme under which all States, without distinction, would agree to participate in the implementation of recommended measures. The arms race, with its risks of destabilization and its impact on the economic development of States, was currently affecting all regions of the world. Disarmament was becoming an increasingly important matter of concern to all States, although some States, because of the weapons they possessed, had to assume special responsibilities.

40. The past 20 years had witnessed the growth of the role of the non-aligned world in international affairs. It was satisfactory to note in that connexion that the non-aligned countries had originated the idea of convening a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The General Assembly, in the proposed declaration, should emphasize the universality and parallelism of the activities to be undertaken, without necessarily selecting one field of action for absolute priority in relation to the others. In disarmament matters, the method of selecting priority fields and questions had often resulted in the long neglect of entire sectors in which useful efforts and activities could have been undertaken. The scope was broad enough to permit the preparation of a comprehensive programme in which activities would be carried out side by side, without prejudice to the special responsibilities of certain States, particularly the nuclear States.

41. Belgium had always believed that one of the main reasons why international efforts had come to a standstill was the lack of communication among nuclear States, whose responsibility to the international community should motivate them to seek ways of establishing a dialogue among themselves. It was to be hoped that the special session would help to bring about the conditions – particularly the institutional conditions – which would enable such a dialogue to begin. The Preparatory Committee should bear that objective in mind and prepare documentation which would enable all States to attend and participate in the special session.

42. For its part, the General Assembly should endeavour to broaden the scope of the measures which could contribute to disarmament. In that connexion, the question of the transfer of conventional weapons should receive closer attention from all States. Similarly, the United States suggestions concerning measures designed to improve the climate of international confidence and to reduce tension should be reflected in the agenda. The Assembly might also consider new working and negotiating methods which had scarcely been tried thus far. In that connexion, his delegation had already drawn attention at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, to the possibilities afforded by a regional approach to disarmament. It was not a question of a regional approach as opposed to a global approach. All such approaches, like any potential bilateral measures, were complementary. It should be borne in mind that the prospects for agreement on certain aspects of disarmament could vary from one region to another. His delegation intended to propose at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly that a global study of the regional aspects of disarmament should be undertaken.

43. Meanwhile, the Committee should develop the topic of the regional aspects of disarmament in the documents which it was to prepare for the special session.
44. As far as the organization of work was concerned, his delegation could agree to an extension of the third session of the Committee, which should soon address itself, in a practical manner, to the substantive questions to be included in the agenda of the special session. With regard to the studies to be undertaken by the Secretariat, as referred to in particular in Mexico's reply to the Secretary-General, the Committee should, in the light of the large volume of documentation already existing on disarmament questions, draw up precise terms of reference which would meet practical considerations and not place an undue burden on the Secretariat. If the Committee carried out its preparatory work adequately, the objectives of the special session might be achieved in a shorter time than that indicated by the representative of Mexico.

45. The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of Bulgaria to speak, in accordance with the provision permitting States Members of the United Nations which were not members of the Committee to participate in the work of the Committee without the right to vote.

46. Mr. KOSSEV (Bulgaria) said that the People's Republic of Bulgaria attached great importance to efforts to curb the arms race with the ultimate aim of achieving general and complete disarmament under strict international control. In conjunction with other socialist countries, Bulgaria was doing everything in its power to overcome the obstacles to disarmament in order to achieve decisive results in that area and to bring about the same relaxation of tension in the military field as had been achieved in the political field. Bulgaria would always speak out decisively in favour of the control of the arms race and disarmament.

47. In recent years, as a result of a process of relaxation of international tension and as a result of international and bilateral agreements, a number of measures had been taken to bring the arms race within established limits. Important negotiations were currently in progress on the adoption of new measures to limit armaments and bring about disarmament. However, although progress had been made towards reducing the danger of a new world conflict, there had been no slowing down of the arms race, which continued to be an obstacle to world peace and security, consumed enormous material resources and adversely affected world economic progress. For those reasons, the limitation of the arms race was a legitimate cause for concern for all nations and peoples and one of the most urgent tasks of the contemporary world. In that connexion, he referred to the proposal of the representative of the USSR concerning the convening of a world disarmament conference. That proposal had received the support of the majority of States Members of the United Nations and also of the Fifth Conference of Non-Aligned Countries. In a forum of that size, Governments could, with some hope of success, undertake an examination of all aspects of disarmament questions and take effective measures. Unfortunately, in spite of the numerous General Assembly resolutions supporting the world disarmament conference, it had not been possible to hold the conference thus far, for reasons which were well known.

48. At the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, most delegations, including his own, had supported the resolution on the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, on the understanding that that session was not to take the place of the world disarmament conference but was to be an important stage in the preparation of such a conference.
49. His delegation's views on the special session were clearly stated in the reply of the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the Secretary-General of the United Nations contained in document A/AC.187/36. As far as the agenda of the special session was concerned, it was very important that it should include, as a separate item, the question of the convening of the world disarmament conference. His delegation believed that, in order to achieve further progress in the disarmament talks, the final documents drawn up by the special session should state clearly that the main objective of the efforts of all States in the field of disarmament should be general and complete disarmament; should indicate the need for all militarily important States, in particular the nuclear-weapons States, to participate in the negotiations; and should emphasize the importance of the principle of not seeking unilateral advantages or endangering the security of States during the negotiations at the special session and in the taking of decisions. With regard to the priority measures which must be taken in the disarmament field, his delegation considered that the memorandum submitted by the Soviet Union at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly deserved special attention. That document set out a realistic and pragmatic programme for joint action by all States on the main disarmament issues. The special session should not take the place of the existing machinery for negotiations on the question of disarmament, but should provide it with new vigour and improve its efficiency.

50. In conclusion, his delegation wished to point out that, in setting up the Preparatory Committee, the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, whose active work in the area of disarmament was well known, had not been done justice. It was to be hoped that, at the thirty-second session, the General Assembly would remedy that state of affairs and would enable the remaining socialist countries of Eastern Europe to take part in the deliberations of that important body as full members. Bulgaria had participated in the work of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva since its inception and was a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference. He expressed the hope that the Preparatory Committee would include a recommendation on that question in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session.

51. The CHAIRMAN appealed to members of the Committee to reach agreement on the agenda for the special session, so that the Committee could adopt it by consensus and proceed to subsequent phases of its work.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.