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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 May 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: H.R. ORTIZ DE ROZAS (Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. MESTIHI (Tunisia) said that, since the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations, disarmament had been one if not the main concern of the international community. Every year for the past 30 years the General Assembly had reiterated its conviction that the arms race constituted a danger the consequences of which would be catastrophic for all peoples without exception. For many years that concern - it might almost be called obsession - had found expression in many statements, and many solutions to the complex problem of the arms race had been proposed, unfortunately to no great avail. In certain sectors, the negotiations conducted in recent decades had yielded some partial and limited results which fell far short of the objectives the United Nations had set itself.

2. It had long been said that it was for the nuclear Powers alone to solve the disarmament question and that the achievement of agreement on objectives and on methods of limiting or completely eliminating the danger threatening everyone depended on those Powers alone. In view of the present complexity of the problem, however, and of the interdependence of the interests of peoples, it was vitally important to involve all members of the international community in the search for an effective solution to the arms race, since all had to suffer its consequences.

3. In the opinion of his delegation, the convening of a special session devoted to disarmament would make it possible to remedy the inadequacies of the methods adopted in recent years. One of the main tasks of the special session was to secure and define a common political will, which alone would make it possible to establish a new international strategy with universal participation. That was why Tunisia supported the idea of the adoption of a declaration on disarmament. That document should not only embody the political undertaking of all Member States to take effective action for disarmament but should also establish the objectives to be achieved and the guiding principles to be followed. The endeavour would succeed only if account was taken of the interests of all, particularly those who had not had an opportunity to express their opinion on that serious matter.

4. It would also be useful to draw up a comprehensive list of the various aspects of the arms race including, for example, those directly affecting the countries of the third world. In that connexion, Tunisia endorsed the Swedish delegation's proposal that the United Nations Centre for Disarmament should make a comprehensive study of the effects of the arms race on economic and social development, particularly in the developing countries.

5. The danger that the special session would merely turn into a repetition of the debates of the First Committee of the General Assembly must be avoided. A new political consensus must be formulated which would make it possible to adopt concrete and realistic measures. In view of the difficulty of the task, the
possibility of a second special session must not be ruled out; in any case, there remained the World Disarmament Conference, the convening of which had been supported by most Member States, including Tunisia.

6. His delegation endorsed the decision to invite non-governmental organizations directly concerned to participate in the work on disarmament, since they would not only submit useful suggestions and proposals but would also help to create a new awareness in world public opinion, which would constitute the best stimulus in the disarmament process.

7. He referred to the great discrepancy between the slow progress of disarmament negotiations and the speed with which technology facilitated the manufacture of new weapons and the rapidity of the geographical spread of the problem to all continents. That meant that the arms race was a problem for which a solution was urgently required.

8. As to the organization of work, the establishment of an intersessional working group with the task of examining Governments' proposals and formulating recommendations for their consideration by the Preparatory Committee would represent a considerable contribution to the success of the work.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that, in pursuance of the decision that Member States which were not members of the Preparatory Committee should be allowed to participate in the Committee's work without the right to vote, he proposed to invite the representatives of the Netherlands, New Zealand and Czechoslovakia to make statements.

10. Mr. KAUFormatan (Netherlands) said that his Government's reply to the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 31/189 B on the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament showed that the Netherlands attached great importance to the problem of disarmament in both the nuclear and the conventional fields. In the United Nations, the Netherlands participated, in CCD and other bodies, in negotiations to bring about a limitation of the arms race, the ultimate goal being general and complete disarmament under effective international control. The special session would provide an opportunity to focus the attention of world public opinion on that question. His delegation hoped that an agenda for the special session would be drawn up and that it would reflect the political will of Governments to give new importance to United Nations efforts and other international efforts in the field of disarmament and arms control.

11. Referring to the excessive increase in conventional armaments, he said that there was no justification for the fact that both in the industrialized countries and in the developing countries scarce resources were being used to obtain arms in quantities beyond those required for national security. The special session should attach particular importance to the problem of the considerable expansion in the conventional arms trade, which absorbed means that could have contributed to the economic and social well-being of mankind.

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12. Problems related to arms control and disarmament were connected with problems in other fields, such as economics and sociology. There was a relationship between development and disarmament: although they constituted separate aims, substantial progress in disarmament would favourably affect the economic development of the developing countries and enhance prospects for a new international economic order. In that connexion, the Netherlands supported the Swedish proposal that the United Nations should undertake a study on the subject of the interrelationship between disarmament and economic and social progress. Such a study would not only be a follow-up to the excellent work previously done on that subject but would also take into account the results of the sixth and seventh special sessions. In particular, it could deal with the following issues: the effects of arms control and disarmament measures on the release of financial resources, including determination of the extent to which a system could be devised whereby resources released would be used not only for national development but also for purposes of international development; the release of human resources, including discussion of whether persons employed in the armaments industry could be easily transferred to other industries and whether there should be national or international efforts to assist companies and workers in the conversion from arms manufacture to peaceful applications; the release of technological resources, including how technological know-how in the manufacture of arms could be switched to peaceful uses; the release of material resources, including examination of the fact that, whereas the release of such resources had immediate beneficial effect, it could produce negative effects for certain developing countries as a result of the drop in demand for certain materials for which there would be no immediate use in peaceful applications. It would also be necessary to study the effects of the arms race in terms of macroeconomic phenomena, including economic growth, inflation and employment. Another very important aspect was that of security. It was obvious that any country's development reached an optimum level to the extent that it felt secure from external threats. Genuine progress in international disarmament and arms control would create a favourable climate for economic growth. Although quantification was difficult, various qualitative aspects of the relationship between security and development could be studied.

13. Mr. TEMPLETON (New Zealand) said that his country's support for the convening of a special session was a direct reflection of its concern at the lack of substantive progress on disarmament. The continued proliferation, both vertical and horizontal, of nuclear weapons jeopardized the relaxation of international tension. It was clear that the production and refinement of nuclear weapons could not be halted by bilateral negotiations between super-Powers. The problem was not simply one of maintaining a balance of terror among the leading military Powers. The economic burden of armaments at their present level could not be supported by either the developed or the developing countries.

14. In New Zealand's view, the overwhelming priority of the special session must be nuclear disarmament. A further major step towards nuclear disarmament following
the Partial Test-Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty was overdue. The next logical step was a comprehensive test-ban treaty, for which the General Assembly had been calling with increasing urgency for a number of years. If a draft comprehensive test-ban treaty were to be prepared and ready for signature at the special session, that would in itself guarantee the session's success. The acceptance of a small number of general principles would facilitate the negotiation of such a treaty. Those general considerations included the following: (i) while it was obviously desirable for all nuclear-weapon States to participate from the beginning in the drafting of a treaty, the fact that one or more nuclear-weapon States might not be ready to do so did not constitute a reason for delaying the drafting of a treaty; (ii) there should be provision for verification which permitted a reasonable degree of certainty regarding all nuclear explosions of significant size. The verification issue was important, but should not provide a pretext for putting off the political task of negotiating a treaty; (iii) a comprehensive test-ban treaty must provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of so-called peaceful nuclear explosions. It had yet to be proved that the benefits - if there were any - to be derived from such experiments were likely to outweigh the political and environmental problems they created.

15. There was no justification for delaying the negotiation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty beyond 1977. His delegation trusted that the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament would give first priority to that task, in order to allow for the completion of a draft treaty by the time the special session was held. Opening the treaty for signature at that time would generate maximum pressure for early ratification. The conclusion of that treaty would be an important step towards limiting vertical proliferation, but it was to be hoped that in the interval before the special session bilateral agreements would be concluded between the Governments possessing the most advanced nuclear-weapon systems. Such agreements should encompass actual reductions in the numbers of weapons in existing arsenals as well as prohibition of the development of new types of weapons.

16. No less important than the limitation of vertical proliferation were steps to halt horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. Further ratifications of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, especially by potential nuclear-weapon States, and more effective controls on the supply of nuclear materials and nuclear technology which could be used to produce nuclear weapons, were urgently required. New Zealand would actively support proposals designed to secure those objectives while continuing to permit access to materials and technology required for the production of electric power through nuclear fission.

17. High priority should continue to be accorded to efforts to prohibit the use of inhumane weapons. New Zealand welcomed indications that agreement on a treaty to prohibit chemical weapons was within reach and that such a treaty would be opened for signature by the time the special session was held.
18. New Zealand shared the widespread concern at the political and economic ill effects of a spreading arms race in conventional weapons. In its view, the principal arms producers should exercise restraint in responding to excessive demands and deny arms to States whose Governments engaged in the systematic violation of human rights. A United Nations study should be undertaken as soon as possible of all aspects of the problem of arms sales and his Government would continue to support initiatives to that end. Of fundamental importance in that regard was the need to release resources for social and economic development particularly in the third world countries.

19. It was apparent that one special session of the General Assembly would not be able to formulate a wide range of new disarmament measures; however, if one or more major disarmament agreements were opened for signature at the time of the special session, the possibility of ratification would be increased. In addition, the special session should adopt a general declaration on disarmament and a programme of action. Likewise, a review of the United Nations disarmament machinery was an essential part of the task of the session. New Zealand recognized the need for a relatively small negotiating body, such as the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, but at the same time it shared the dissatisfaction that had been expressed with that body's record. Nevertheless, during the current year CCD had shown signs that it was concentrating on issues of greater importance than in the past and was keeping United Nations Members better informed of the progress of its deliberations. New Zealand's approach to any proposed alteration of the existing machinery was a pragmatic one: it was disposed to judge by results. The special session would provide the opportunity to do so and if, before the convening of the special session, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament was unable to reach agreement on those important issues, New Zealand would not rule out the possibility of seeking new methods of negotiation including, if necessary, the establishment of a new negotiating forum.

20. While understanding the reasoning behind the adoption of a conservative formulation concerning the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Preparatory Committee, the New Zealand delegation reiterated its belief that such organizations had made and could make a distinctive contribution to the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. It was confident that they would be able to make a positive contribution to the work of the special session.

21. Mr. SHID (Czechoslovakia) said that his Government had been very much interested in becoming a member of an organ as important as the Preparatory Committee. He therefore regretted the fact that, as a result of the inadequate representation of the States of the socialist community, it had not been possible for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to sit on the Committee. His Government felt that the inadequate representation of the socialist countries failed to reflect the important role which those countries played in disarmament talks. He would therefore like to take the opportunity to stress his Government's continuing interest in becoming a full-fledged member of the Preparatory Committee. He hoped that that interest would be taken into consideration during the debate on the special session which would take place at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly.
22. The convening of the special session was fully in keeping with the preparations for the world disarmament conference and would represent an important stage on the road towards its realization. That position did not conflict with the views expressed regarding the possibility of holding repeated special sessions on disarmament or with the emphasis placed on the need to prepare for the world disarmament conference, which his Government regarded as the only universal platform having the necessary authority to adopt concrete, effective disarmament measures.

23. His delegation was of the opinion that a number of positive and realistic proposals had already been submitted in connexion with the preparations for the special session. He wished, for example, to draw attention to the Soviet memorandum of 20 September 1976 on questions of ending the arms race and disarmament. The special session should give proper attention to that document, which was in harmony with the goals that the international community hoped to attain through the convening of the special session.

24. His Government felt that the agenda for the special session should include items on the preparations for the world disarmament conference, on the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and on the adoption of a declaration on disarmament. The declaration should set forth basic guidelines on disarmament, the principle of the universality of negotiations, and priorities and guidelines for disarmament negotiations.

25. It was essential that the special session devoted to disarmament should not weaken or undermine the existing machinery for disarmament talks but, on the contrary, make them more effective. His delegation was in full accord with the view expressed by the representative of the German Democratic Republic (A/AC.187/SR.8) that those organs should not be held responsible for the inadequate progress of the disarmament talks, since they had proved their viability. The blame lay, rather, with a lack of will on the part of States, and that could not be dealt with by organizational measures. The special session should stimulate that will.

26. As to the question of the decisions to be adopted by the special session, his Government believed that the individual responsibility of all States Members of the United Nations - and, in particular, that of the nuclear Powers - would be expressed in the form of decisions. He therefore presumed that the principle of consensus would prevail at the special session, thus eliminating the possibility that only certain countries or groups of countries would accept its decisions.

27. His delegation was convinced that the special session would demonstrate the readiness of States to put an end to the arms race and would thus represent a concrete step towards general and complete disarmament, which was the goal of all realistic, sensible nations of the world.

28. Mr. KUBBA (Iraq) said that Iraq attached the greatest importance to the question of disarmament, believing that it should be one of the fundamental goals of the United Nations since it was linked with the problem of maintaining international peace and security and could create a suitable atmosphere for
promoting international co-operation and accelerating the process of social and economic development, particularly in the developing countries. It was deplorable that, while millions of people were suffering from malnutrition, huge sums of money and tremendous efforts were being wasted on the manufacture of nuclear and other types of destructive weapons. Those resources could and should be used for world economic and social development, especially in the developing countries where they were most needed.

29. His delegation believed that the United Nations should be at the heart of that process and had therefore joined with other non-aligned countries in sponsoring the resolution calling for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. An appeal for the convening of a special session had been made at the Colombo Summit Conference, and he felt that the proposals made at that time by the non-aligned countries could serve as a fruitful basis for a successful session. He also wished to emphasize that the convening of a special session devoted to disarmament should in no sense represent an alternative to a world disarmament conference.

30. He observed that the aspirations of the international community for peace and security could not be attained in a vacuum. The granting of independence to peoples under foreign domination, the elimination of racism and colonialism, respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs would eliminate some of the factors which had led to the resort to arms. Genuine peace and security could not be achieved unless the strategies aimed at acquiring spheres of influence and world hegemony were eradicated.

31. The CHAIRMAN said that, since the negotiations for the adoption of the agenda by consensus were proceeding in a very positive manner, the request had been made that the Committee's work should be suspended for half an hour in order to permit an exchange of views on the subject.

32. The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.40 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

33. The CHAIRMAN observed that the final phase of the negotiations had probably been reached and that, once the agenda for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was approved, the Preparatory Committee should make the best possible use of its time in considering other matters. Among the latter were the procedures to be employed in completing the preparatory work entrusted to the Committee, including the preparation of the draft Declaration on Disarmament and draft Plan of Action on Disarmament which were to be submitted to the special session. The Committee would also have to set the dates of its next session.

34. In view of the limited time and staff resources available to the Secretariat, the Committee should also draw up a list of priorities for the required documentation.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.