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

Fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 April 1978, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina)

CONTENTS

Principal document(s) of the special session (continued)

Final report of the Preparatory Committee to the special session of the General Assembly (continued)

Statement by the representative of the Office of Public Information

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

PRINCIPAL DOCUMENT(S) OF THE SPECIAL SESSION (continued)

1. Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden), referring to the working paper submitted by the Netherlands (A/AC.187/106), welcomed the initiative to revive the idea of a considerable strengthening of resources for international disarmament efforts. When, in 1973, the Dutch Government and the Swedish Government had presented suggestions to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament concerning the possible establishment of an international disarmament organization, they had recognized the need for adequate base resources, as well as for co-ordination of follow-up measures accompanying disarmament treaties. It was to be hoped that the Dutch initiative would lead to more long-term fundamental consideration of the need for effective machinery to achieve the objectives of disarmament.

2. Although no glaring successes had been experienced in the field of disarmament since 1973, some new approaches had been tried to the problem of effective follow-ups of present and future treaties, including verification of compliance, consultative committees and review conferences. Those and other possible measures had become an integral part of international disarmament control arrangements.

3. New emphasis was being placed on truly multilateral disarmament negotiations, the widening interest in disarmament among States Members of the United Nations and, consequently, on the importance of the role of the United Nations in that field and the need to strengthen the resources of the United Nations Secretariat. In that respect, certain measures had been acted upon and proposed. The Swedish Government considered those measures of urgent importance and would contribute to promoting their approval.

4. In its working paper, the Netherlands recommended the initial setting up of an organization for the implementation of a particular disarmament treaty. Recalling what had already been said to the effect that both consultative committees and review conferences were considered as ingredient parts of disarmament treaties, she said that any future international disarmament organization had to be considered as the machinery for organizing and administering all relevant implementation measures, including verification, complaint and review arrangements.

5. The question of the relationship between any future international disarmament organization and the United Nations would present a problem of duplication of effort at both the intergovernmental and Secretariat levels, if the proposed organ was not completely integrated with the United Nations. As in 1973, the Swedish Government considered that that organ should certainly be placed within the framework of the United Nations, but should not be politically loaded with any veto rights.

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6. As early as 1973, the Swedish delegation had envisaged the possibility of a reporting system within the framework of the United Nations similar to the body currently being proposed by the delegation of India, for which various models could be considered. In that connexion, and with reference to the working paper submitted by France (A/AC.187/105) on future international disarmament machinery, her delegation proposed the establishment of an observation satellite agency, in accordance with the established Swedish view on the need to internationalize satellite information and communication systems. It would be advisable for such an agency to be closely integrated with the United Nations in order to establish effective disarmament verification activities within the framework of the United Nations.

7. In conclusion, emphasis should be placed on the need not to allow any longer-term aspects of the international disarmament machinery to stand in the way of immediate measures necessary to give the international community the resources to implement effectively decisions presumably to be taken at the special session devoted to disarmament.

8. In working paper A/AC.187/95, her delegation had proposed an increase in the resources of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament corresponding to suggested increased responsibilities, and continued to attach considerable importance to the approval of that proposal.

FINAL REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE TO THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (continued)

9. Mr. MISTRAL (France), speaking on behalf of the group of Western European and other States, said that, in his view, the Bureau of the Committee of the Whole of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should consist of 10 members, namely, a Chairman, eight Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. He reserved the right to submit nominations for those offices later, with due regard to the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that the opinion of the group of Western European and other States, as stated by the representative of France gave an over-all view of the question, so that a decision could be taken on the matter. If there was no objection, he would take it that, in its final report the Committee would recommend to the General Assembly at its special session devoted to disarmament that the Bureau of the Committee of the Whole should consist of 10 members, namely, a Chairman, eight Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

11. It was so decided.

PRINCIPAL DOCUMENT(S) OF THE SPECIAL SESSION (continued)

12. The CHAIRMAN pointed out the necessity of confirming the decision taken in principle by the Committee meeting as the Working Group held on Monday, 10 April. If he heard no objection, he would take it that there was a consensus regarding
the preparation of a single principal document of the special session consisting of four sections (preamble, declaration, programme of action and machinery). In its final report, the Preparatory Committee would include a recommendation on the matter and the draft principal document would follow the guidelines indicated.

13. **It was so decided.**

**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

14. The **CHAIRMAN** drew the attention of the Committee to the note by the Secretariat dated 23 February 1978 showing certain items for which the Office of Public Information had requested additional funds, and invited the representative of OPI to address the Committee on the question.

15. Mr. GRIBKOV (Office of Public Information) said that the programme of public information activities in connexion with the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was still as described in document A/AC.187/83. However, in that document were described certain expenditures which could not be absorbed by the regular budget of OPI. The pre-session information activities included the translation and publication of a brochure in a number of unofficial languages, for which the over-all cost of $15,000 could be reduced if the Committee felt that one of those versions could be dispensed with. Work had already begun on the special display on disarmament and, as anticipated, the cost of external services amounted to $2,000. With regard to the production of a poster in two to three colours, printed in several languages, the Office of Public Information would be prepared to undertake the project with a budget of $6,000 if some languages were eliminated and if, as was expected, use was made of one of the posters offered without charge by one delegation. Although, for technical reasons, it would not be possible to have the poster ready in time for the special session, it could be used not only immediately following the special session, but over a number of years, since the Decade for Disarmament was as yet only half over.

16. Referring to the post-session information activities, he said that the funds needed for the publication of the relevant brochure in the unofficial languages would amount to $26,000, twice as much as for the brochure to be published prior to the session. For the reproduction of copies of photographs and other display materials, for the provision of captions in various languages and for the shipment of the materials to United Nations Information Centres in various countries, additional funding of $US 5,000 was now being sought, instead of the anticipated $10,000, since it was hoped to make use of technical equipment which would enable costs to be reduced.

17. With regard to the dissemination of information relating to the special session devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly, at its thirty-second session, had approved an amount of $54,800 to cover the additional needs of OPI. In the event of more than two meetings being held simultaneously, or of night meetings,
OPI would require additional resources of some $11,000, and he understood that the Committee would have the relevant recommendations to proceed accordingly.

18. Mr. HARRY (Australia) emphasized the importance of the work being done by the Office of Public Information (OPI) in connexion with the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and expressed agreement with the changes in the programme of information activities suggested at the current meeting. In the interest of reflecting the progress made, it was proper and balanced to spend on the post-session brochure double the money which would be spent on the pre-session brochure. Likewise, it was important that the brochures should be prepared in various non-official languages.

19. He had no objection either to the suggestion to restrict the poster production project, since that method of attracting public attention was more ephemeral that the brochures. He was therefore in favour of reducing to $6,000 the funds allocated to the production of a poster.

20. His delegation considered that the activities which OPI planned to carry out were appropriate and would therefore support the recommendation that the funds required should be granted.

21. Mr. SOKALSKI (Poland) said that there was no need to discuss one by one the information activities suggested by OPI. Having examined them separately, he found that they were all acceptable, provided that the funds for their implementation were available. If that was not the case, it was necessary to determine which was the most rational and economic way of using the funds at OPI’s disposal. The Office had three sources of funds: its regular budget, the amount of $54,800 approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, and the possibility, referred to in the Secretariat note dated 23 February 1978, of redeploying or reallocating the resources at its disposal. OPI should make the fullest possible use of those three sources. However, the aforementioned amount of $54,800 had not been assigned to information activities but, as was stated in the Secretariat note of 23 February 1978, to the recruitment of additional personnel. He had grave doubts as to whether that was a proper use of the funds. At least half of the amount should be spent on genuine information activities. Since the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) was currently meeting in New York, its opinion on the subject should be sought.

22. It should be borne in mind also that a large part of the public information related to the special session should be the responsibility of the different Governments and the mass information media. The latter should emphasize the positive aspects of United Nations activity instead of merely criticizing its negative aspects.

23. Mr. VINCI (Italy) endorsed the opinion expressed by the representative of Australia on the value of publishing a brochure in several unofficial languages and asked which languages it was thought necessary to eliminate. He also drew attention to the questions put by the representative of Poland.
24. Mr. FOTINE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had already stated on other occasions its desire that the information relating to the special session and the subject of disarmament in general should be disseminated as widely as possible. On the other hand, the questions raised by the representative of Poland were extremely important, since it was a matter not simply of eliminating or expanding programmes but of determining the proper administrative course and the correct way of financing the activities, bearing in mind that the special session had as its aim the strengthening of the economic base of United Nations activities in the field of disarmament.

25. In that connexion, it would be recalled that the General Assembly, in resolution 32/201, of 21 December 1977, which had been adopted unanimously, had urged the Secretary-General to draw attention to activities that were obsolete, of marginal usefulness or ineffective, indicating the resources which could be released. Activities corresponding to that description were indeed to be found, and the work to be undertaken by OPI in pursuance of the aforementioned General Assembly resolution would permit resources in the current regular budget to be released for information activities related to the special session. That point must be emphasized because of the serious situation whereby, at the thirty-second session of the General Assembly, the United Nations budget had failed to secure the support of the States which bore 57 per cent of its cost.

26. His delegation reiterated its support for the information programmes, but, at the same time, it opposed the easy solution of requesting additional funds instead of seeking available resources within the regular budget. It therefore supported the suggestion made by the representative of Poland that ACABQ should be asked to submit to the Preparatory Committee its view, or at least its comments, on the subject.

27. Mr. GRIBOV (Office of Public Information) said that he would endeavour to reply to all the questions put by the representative of Poland, to the extent that the information available at the current session permitted. It should be emphasized, above all, that the OPI activities in connexion with the special session went beyond those described in the Secretariat note of 23 February 1978. That note merely covered the activities which could not be financed from the United Nations regular budget. As to the suggestion that the existing allocation of resources should be changed, that was an important question which would have to be carefully considered by all the divisions of OPI. OPI had already made a preliminary attempt to absorb all the planned activities within the regular budget and had been unsuccessful. It would be necessary to redouble efforts to find new resources or to eliminate or prune some activities. The fact that, for the current year, the United Nations had planned new activities which required information support should not be overlooked.

28. The additional funds approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session should be used solely for the information coverage of the meetings of committees and of the General Assembly itself at the special session. OPI had therefore assigned those funds to the three categories of activities described in paragraph 2 of the Secretariat note of 23 February 1978 (Press and publications,
audio and visual services, and communications engineers). OPI did not consider itself empowered to reassign those funds approved by the General Assembly to activities which did not pertain to the information coverage of the special session.

29. There could be no doubt that it was necessary to rely on the additional efforts of Governments and the national mass information media. OPI was not a mass communication agency and, in order to attain its goals, it depended on its relations with those media and the support of the Governments of Member States.

30. With respect to the question put by the representative of Italy concerning the languages in which it was intended to publish the brochure on the progress made at the special session, he drew attention to the enumeration in paragraph A.1 (b) of document A/AC.187/83.

31. Mr. Sokalski (Poland) welcomed the statement by the representative of OPI that new efforts would be made to redepoly or reassign existing resources. With respect to the additional funds allocated by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, the Preparatory Committee could request ACABQ to advise it regarding the possibility of their use for activities other than the information coverage of the special session, instead of requesting additional funds for those activities. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the possibility that OPI officials normally assigned to other functions should concentrate on the tasks which it had been intended to assign to additional staff to be recruited for that purpose.

32. Mr. Simard (Canada) suggested that the Controller, not ACABQ, should be consulted regarding the financial implications of the proposals made by OPI.

33. The Chairman, referring to the request for additional funds submitted by OPI, said that the Committee was faced with three alternatives: it could approve the additional funds requested, which appeared to amount to $65,000, or $59,000 if the figure for the special poster was halved; it could recommend that no additional funds be approved and request OPI to use the funds in its regular budget; or it could approve the recommendation with the proviso that the fullest possible use should be made of the funds in the regular budget and that the additional funds should be assigned to information activities and not to the recruitment of additional staff.

34. Mr. Congdon (United States) requested that the decision should be deferred until he was able to receive instructions from his Government and that, in the meantime, more information on the implications of the decision should be obtained.

35. Mr. Simard (Canada) asked whether the decision involved immediate expenditures or was merely a recommendation to the General Assembly, and whether the expenditures would be made before or after the special session, since the latter case raised a procedural question regarding the Committee's competence to adopt a decision which would seem to rest with the General Assembly.

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36. The CHAIRMAN said that the decision would merely be a recommendation which would then have to be approved by the relevant bodies. Regarding the timing of the expenditures, he said that the request submitted by OPI clearly referred to expenditures prior to and following the special session.

37. Mr. VINCI (Italy), referring to the question of the publication of the OPI brochure in non-official languages, endorsed the view that the advice of the competent Secretariat officials should be sought before a decision was taken.

38. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the decision regarding OPI's request for additional funds should be postponed and that, in the meantime, more information clarifying the implications of the decision should be obtained.

39. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.