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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 May 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina)

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

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SCHLATCH (Federal Republic of Germany) recalled that his country had co-sponsored the draft resolution whereby it had been decided to hold the special session devoted to disarmament, because it considered that what had so far been achieved in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament was only a beginning. The multilateral negotiations concerning disarmament and arms control on a world-wide basis were concentrated in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. That organ was responsible for negotiating draft treaties on the subject, and it was to be hoped that progress would be achieved in Geneva in important areas before the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The objectives of the special session should be viewed against the background of those ongoing efforts. His delegation believed that the special session devoted to disarmament should be held in an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual trust, in order to demonstrate the credibility of world-wide endeavours towards disarmament and arms control. Starting from those premises, the special session should assess the results achieved so far with regard to disarmament and arms control and provide an effective impetus for further discussion, particularly where development tended to be stagnant. The Federal Republic of Germany would therefore be pleased if a consensus could be reached at the special session on the basic elements of the disarmament question and if some guidelines could be given concerning future priorities.

2. With regard to the issues to be discussed, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany believed that the problems of nuclear and conventional disarmament should receive equal treatment. In addition to the priority subjects of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, the discussion might also centre on the whole range of issues connected with a non-proliferation policy, the reduction of armament burdens, regional aspects of disarmament and problems arising from the interrelation between disarmament and economic and social development in the world.

3. It was important that the special session should help to make international disarmament negotiations more effective, particularly in order to achieve the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. In that connexion, the special session could provide a positive impetus for the achievement of international stability and security through balanced measures of disarmament and arms control.

4. With regard to the immediate purpose of the Preparatory Committee's meetings, efforts should be concentrated on reaching a consensus on the agenda for the special session devoted to disarmament. The proposal submitted at the preceding meeting (A/AC.187/43) provided an excellent basis for discussion. His delegation would prefer a committee of the whole to be established in order to draft a final political declaration reflecting the consensus of the international community on the future course of international disarmament efforts and negotiations. In its
view, that committee of the whole would also be the most appropriate body of the special session to discuss possible improvements in the structure of disarmament institutions and their mechanisms, taking into consideration the need to maintain the negotiating capacity of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. If necessary, the committee of the whole could establish ad hoc groups to consider special problems.

5. In connexion with the suggestions made concerning the organization of the special session, it should be borne in mind that the problems of disarmament were so closely interrelated, and even the consideration of structural problems was so closely linked with the task of defining priorities, that it was difficult to see how co-ordinated work could be done in several committees which lacked the cohesion of one single body.

6. The United Nations Disarmament Centre should be used as rationally as possible to prepare the necessary background material for the next round of meetings of the Committee. That would also assist the preparation of the report which the Committee was to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. No priority areas had yet been developed on which the Secretariat should concentrate, apart from a general assessment of the results so far achieved in disarmament and arms control, and efforts currently being made in that regard. It might also be useful to take into account the references to the relevant subjects made in the replies of States to the Secretary-General and in the statements of delegations in the Preparatory Committee.

7. Mr. TROYANOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union supported the idea of a special session devoted to disarmament because it believed that, if suitably prepared, the session could contribute substantially to the solution of disarmament problems. It was necessary to end the absurd competition regarding armaments, and the Soviet Union for its part was prepared to take all necessary measures to that end, provided that the other parties to the negotiations were also prepared to make their contribution.

8. Disarmament problems had been discussed at various multilateral and bilateral meetings. In a number of important areas, notable success had been achieved in the reduction of the arms race and effective agreements had been concluded. In general, however, there was no slowing down in the arms race, involving increasingly sophisticated weapons, and the number of States participating in that process was still growing. The special session of the General Assembly should provide a useful international forum for consideration of the existing situation with regard to disarmament. Views could be exchanged and the principal trends could be outlined, and the session could conclude with the adoption of a final political declaration setting out agreed views on the question of disarmament. The adoption of such a document would undoubtedly be an important contribution to the task of disarmament.

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9. In their replies, many States proposed that the special session should formulate broad basic principles to guide disarmament negotiations. His delegation would not be opposed to seeing the special session discuss and perhaps draft a number of declarations of principles. In particular, it would be useful to reaffirm that the main purpose of all disarmament efforts should be the achievement of general and complete disarmament and to emphasize the need for participation in negotiations by all States, particularly the nuclear Powers, and for the enunciation of basic principles such as the principle that no one should seek to obtain unilateral advantage or threaten the security of any State.

10. At the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, the Soviet Union had submitted a memorandum on questions of ending the arms race and disarmament in which it had made specific proposals calling, inter alia, for nuclear disarmament, the prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests, consolidation of the régime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the destruction of chemical weapons, prohibition of the development of new types of weapons of mass destruction and the reduction of military budgets. His delegation was pleased to note that most of the replies from States drew attention to the need for a prompt solution to all those problems. However, it would be unrealistic to expect complex, deep-seated problems like the ending of the arms race and the achievement of general and complete disarmament to be solved overnight. Experience had shown that the road to disarmament was difficult and complicated and that it called for painstaking negotiations through various channels and in various forums. The existing channels had demonstrated their effectiveness. Complex negotiating machinery had been created in which practical measures for bringing about disarmament and curbing the arms race were discussed and adopted. However, those were complex, many-sided problems; in some cases they called for a bilateral approach, while in others a regional, multilateral approach was required. The main work of containing the arms race must be done within the framework of bilateral Soviet-United States negotiations. Regional negotiations aimed at the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe were being conducted at Vienna, and fruitful negotiations were taking place at Geneva in the Committee on Disarmament. Disarmament problems were discussed every year in the First Committee of the General Assembly. All those different approaches complemented each other and contributed to the over-all work being done in the field of disarmament.

11. Effective solutions to disarmament problems could be worked out only in a universal forum with the necessary machinery for adopting practical viable decisions that took the interests of all States into account. That could be accomplished within the framework of a world disarmament conference. At every session since 1971, the General Assembly had called for the convening of such a conference, and the idea had won active support at various meetings of the non-aligned countries. In August 1976, the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries in Colombo had proposed that the agenda of the special session devoted to disarmament should include an item on the convening of a world disarmament conference. His delegation was pleased to note that the convening of such a conference was receiving support in the replies submitted by States to the Secretary-General. Among the countries which had taken that position were Algeria, Poland, Venezuela, Spain, the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Syria, Finland and
Mexico. The question of convening a world disarmament conference had thus become universal in nature, and one of the main tasks of the special session was to decide on measures for preparing and holding the conference, which should be the next, decisive stage in the solution of disarmament problems.

12. His delegation wished to draw attention to the question of the composition of the Preparatory Committee which should reflect the specific tasks to be performed by the Committee and the role played by various States in disarmament negotiations. Unfortunately, the socialist countries, whose efforts and experience in disarmament talks were well known, had been discriminated against in setting up the Preparatory Committee. The system used in distributing seats was that known as the "Economic and Social Council formula", which was not appropriate when it was a question of discussing disarmament problems. The effective efforts made by the Group of Socialist States in dealing with those problems was reflected in the structure of other bodies concerned with disarmament questions. His delegation had therefore reserved the right to propose that at its thirty-second session the General Assembly should assign additional seats to the Socialist group. The Committee should include that recommendation in its report to the thirty-second session of the Assembly.

13. His delegation was prepared to play a constructive part in the work of the Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

14. Mr. ELLIOT (Belgium) expressed appreciation to the delegation of Sri Lanka for submitting at the previous meeting a draft agenda for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (A/AC.187/43) which would enable the Committee to initiate a more concrete phase of its work. He was also grateful to the delegation of Sri Lanka for having been willing to hold consultations with a number of representatives of other regional groups.

15. His delegation supported the draft agenda, and that support should be viewed in the light of the oral explanations provided at the previous meeting by Ambassador Amerasinghe. It should be noted that the draft set out only the main topics. It should be regarded for the moment as merely a rough outline and might well be amended in the course of the Committee's work. Formal proposals would probably be made with a view to improving the draft agenda so as to facilitate a consensus, which seemed essential to the success of the special session devoted to disarmament.

16. His delegation felt that the draft agenda could also provide the basis for the preparation of an annotated agenda which would set out in detail the various aspects of each item in the present draft. The draft could also serve as the basis for establishing several working groups, which should be limited in number so that all delegations could participate in them. His delegation would be able to support, when the matter arose, the proposal by the Federal Republic of Germany that the Preparatory Committee should hold informal meetings.
17. Mr. BJORNERTEDT (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Disarmament), replying to a question by the representative of Mexico concerning documentation, said that it would be possible to proceed at once with the task of analysing the replies submitted by Member States pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/189 B and arranging their contents under various headings; however, communications were still being received and, if 11 or 12 May was set as the deadline, addenda to the document would have to be issued. The list of 8 or 10 main headings, probably with subheadings, could be submitted at the next meeting of the Committee, in which case the document would be ready by the beginning of the following week and the necessary addenda would be issued later.

18. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) said that the preparation of the document should begin that same day so that it could be circulated the following Monday at the latest. The list of headings did not need to be exhaustive, but, if there was no time for a more detailed analysis, the replies from Governments should at least be classified under the following subject headings:

1. The objectives of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament;

2. The main documents which the General Assembly should adopt at its special session devoted to disarmament and their content:
   (a) Declaration of Principles on Disarmament;
   (b) Programme of Action on Disarmament;

3. The agenda of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament;

4. The role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to the suggestion made by the representative of Mexico.

20. It was so decided.

21. Mr. BJORNERTEDT (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Disarmament), replying to a question by the representative of Iran concerning the possibility of including in the document the contents of the statements made by various delegations at the present session regarding the topics referred to, which would be classified according to the same criteria as the replies from Member States, said that, although that procedure had been followed on past occasions, it would be necessary for practical reasons to issue the document in question after the present session ended.

22. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, if there was no objection, the meeting should rise and the Committee should continue its proceedings informally in order to facilitate communications between delegations.

23. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.