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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 May 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ORTIZ DE ROJAS (Argentina)

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.
The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria) recalled that, in the introduction to his report on the work of the Organization in 1975, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had deplored the fact that it had not proved possible to halt or limit the arms race in a world increasingly preoccupied with the problems of social justice, hunger, poverty, development and an equitable sharing of resources. Today, that assessment was even more valid. The policy of détente, of which the Austrian Government was a firm advocate, would have credibility only if it produced tangible results in the field of disarmament. It was with those considerations in mind that the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, had expressed Austria's full support for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

2. The Austrian Government was aware that genuine disarmament could be achieved only through the political will of States, which in turn depended on the existence of a climate of mutual confidence and understanding between States and on the active concern of world public opinion. It hoped that the special session would make a real contribution to building up such confidence and would ensure that the problems of disarmament were seen in the proper perspective of the over-all political, social and economic situation. The problems of development and disarmament were closely related, and the two tasks must therefore succeed together or fail together.

3. The difficulties impeding progress in disarmament, which stemmed from the intricate problems involved, would not disappear by themselves. Accordingly, a thorough and sincere examination of the causes underlying the current stagnation of disarmament negotiations was as necessary as was discussion of the possibility of a new and comprehensive approach to disarmament negotiations leading to the adoption of a balanced programme of action which would ensure the co-ordination of activities carried out on different levels and in different forums in order to obtain an accelerated solution of priority problems. Another topic of the discussions should be the institutional and organizational measures which would allow the United Nations to carry out more effectively its predominant role in the field of disarmament.

4. The Austrian Government attached special importance to a speedy solution of the various problems posed by the arms race in both the nuclear and the conventional fields. Nuclear disarmament continued to be the most urgent of those problems, and the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, besides being of vital importance to mankind, would facilitate disarmament in other fields. The credibility of measures to prevent the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons hinged in particular upon the willingness of the two leading nuclear-weapon States to agree on effective measures of nuclear disarmament. In that context, the fragile basis of the non-proliferation régime, as demonstrated by the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, could not be overlooked. National and international actions
prior to the second Conference would be a determining factor for the future of non-proliferation treaties. A related problem was that posed by the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and especially by the peaceful use of nuclear explosive devices. The special session should elaborate recommendations on the subject, and the resources of the International Atomic Energy Agency should also be strengthened.

5. The increasing build-up of arsenals of so-called conventional weapons in many parts of the world in recent years was also a cause of great concern to the international community, particularly because it accounted for the greatest proportion of world military expenditures. The solution to that problem called for an exhaustive examination of the political, social and economic reasons underlying it.

6. The problem of the demilitarization of outer space, which had not yet been completely solved, was a third dimension of disarmament. Although it did not completely eliminate the use of outer space for military purposes, the 1967 Treaty provided that States Parties to the Treaty would use the Moon and other celestial bodies only for peaceful purposes. It was to be hoped that in the future it would be possible to reach agreement on the total demilitarization of outer space. In that connexion, mention must be made of proposals such as that concerning an agreement prohibiting weapons which could destroy the other side's observation satellites and thereby prevent the verification of compliance with arms limits.

7. All States should adopt co-operative measures to put an end to the arms race and to redirect the resources currently being used for it towards social and economic development activities. That also applied to the large percentage of the world's intellectual resources which was diverted to military purposes. That aspect should be a topic for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development scheduled for 1979.

8. As to the further conduct of the preparatory work for the special session, his delegation considered that the Committee should adopt an agenda which ought to be defined in broad terms in order to be generally acceptable. In that connexion, it was prepared to support the draft agenda submitted by the delegation of Sri Lanka. Agreement on the agenda would make it possible to reach an understanding on the format and character of the final documents of the special session. As its next step, the Committee should try to agree on the broad outlines of the contents of the final documents, perhaps in the form of an annotated agenda, which could then be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. During that work, the Committee should make optimum use of the services of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament and should request the Secretariat to provide it with the background information it would need to carry out its task. The expertise of non-governmental organizations and internationally recognized research organizations could also contribute to an understanding of the problems facing the Committee.

9. His delegation also supported the establishment of an intersessional working group to prepare the work to be done at the September session of the Committee.
It would, however, be necessary carefully to define the terms of reference of the group, which should be open-ended, and to agree on a generally acceptable structure for its work, including the period of time for which it would be convened.

10. The Marqués de VILLAFRANCA DE EBRO (Spain) said all countries were agreed that the agenda should include a general debate, during which the progress made in disarmament would be assessed, the adoption of a declaration of principles on disarmament, the adoption of a programme of action on the subject, and a study of the machinery that could be used in the context of the United Nations in order to achieve progress in all aspects of disarmament. His delegation, like many others, considered that the work of the special session must not be allowed to become merely a repetition of the work of the First Committee; attention should therefore be concentrated on general and complete disarmament under effective international control. In that respect, it must be acknowledged that the progress made by the United Nations in the field of disarmament related almost exclusively to side issues.

11. Obviously, the first point the Committee must settle was the content of the agenda of the special session. In that connexion, the document submitted by the delegation of Sri Lanka on behalf of the group of non-aligned countries constituted an excellent basis for negotiation, since it reflected the views of a large number of Member States. The list of items should not, however, be exhaustive, since Member States were probably interested in dealing with other aspects of disarmament. As his delegation had indicated in document A/AC.187/9, it might be important to have an agenda item providing an opportunity for careful consideration and possible recommendation of drafts prepared by United Nations negotiating bodies which were ready for adoption.

12. His delegation felt that the adoption of a general political declaration would be very useful and that, among the principles which should be reflected in such a document, stress should be placed on the relationship between disarmament and international security at the global and regional levels. The declaration should also take into account a just apportionment of obligations among countries in matters of nuclear and conventional disarmament. There was no doubt that greater obligations devolved upon those States which possessed nuclear arms and whose enormous arsenals constituted a major threat to world peace. Another basic principle which should be reflected was the effects of the immense costs of an unrestrained armaments race on the economic development of the entire international community.

13. The principle of equality of States and the right of all to participate in the measures which would be adopted for the eventual achievement of general and complete disarmament should also be taken into account. The agenda should also give priority to the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear arms and to effective measures to deal with the problem, without, however, affecting the access of non-nuclear-weapon countries to the technology and raw materials needed for peaceful nuclear activities under an effective system of international safeguards. The establishment of zones of peace and demilitarized zones should
also be studied, as well as the possibility of extending such zones to other geographical regions.

14. The special session was an excellent opportunity to study the United Nations negotiating machinery on disarmament and to consider possibilities for restructuring it. The United Nations had a guiding role to play in that field. The links should therefore be strengthened between the United Nations and certain organs such as CCD, whose work was extremely useful but which was not in a position adequately to bring together the views of all the members of the international community. Finally, consideration should be given to the possibility of the General Assembly's holding further special sessions so as to continue to serve as an effective instrument in the cause of disarmament.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that, in accordance with the arrangements allowing States Members of the United Nations which were not members of the Preparatory Committee to participate without the right to vote in the work of the Committee, he would give the floor to the representative of Finland.

16. Mr. BLOMBERG (Finland) said that two simple principles should be kept constantly in mind. Firstly, as an essential element of détente, arms control and disarmament were imperative for the security of nations. Secondly, disarmament was imperative for the realization of the goals of a new international economic order. The Members of the United Nations had pledged themselves to the creation of that new international economic order. A number of causes of underdevelopment had been identified and agreement had been reached on the structuring of a more equitable world. However, the continued diversion of scarce human and material resources to military ends was seriously threatening the attainment of the goals of development. The special session should reflect an awareness of the organic link between disarmament and security and the necessity of disarmament for development.

17. The question of convening a World Disarmament Conference had been raised in most considerations related to the special session on disarmament. His Government thought that there was ample reason for it; both would aim at focusing the attention of the world community on the problem of disarmament in its entirety. The Finnish Government, like the majority of the Members of the United Nations, was committed to the idea of a world conference on disarmament. Therefore, it was logical to expect that that would be reflected in the proceedings of the special session.

18. In the view of his delegation, the preparatory work for the special session should be seen in the context of the ongoing process of negotiations towards arms control and disarmament agreements. The atmosphere and the possibilities of a successful outcome of the session would be greatly enhanced if progress in the negotiations could be achieved before the special session. On the other hand, the agenda should be flexible enough that the work of the special session could be accommodated to results achieved in those negotiations.

19. His delegation found it self-evident that the special session would discuss...
all crucial arms control and disarmament issues. Thus, it should deal with the serious and urgent problem posed by nuclear weapons, including the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests and the reduction of the existing nuclear-weapon arsenals. The risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons was perhaps the most serious facet of the problem; the session should consider action for the strengthening of the non-proliferation régime. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones was another viable approach to check the spread of those weapons. The limitation and elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons and new types of weapons, should also be included in the work of the session. It was also important that the session should tackle other major issues, such as the trade in and transfer of conventional arms. His delegation welcomed the Swedish Government's proposal for a study of the interrelationships between disarmament efforts and economic and social progress, and offered its full co-operation in that undertaking.

20. The relatively slow progress in disarmament negotiations was mainly due to the inherent complexity of the problem rather than to the lack of adequate machinery and procedures either within the framework of the United Nations or outside it. At the same time, improvements should be made in the existing mechanisms and procedures so as to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

21. Mr. HOLLAI (Hungary) said that Hungary's support for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was not a matter of subjective decision, but followed from its social system. In every international forum, Hungary had supported attempts aimed at enhancing the cause of disarmament.

22. Hungary was convinced that the elimination of the arms race required the common effort of all States, and considered that the best framework for that was a World Disarmament Conference. Although some maintained that the holding of that Conference would not be a realistic solution because of the opposition of certain Powers, it should be pointed out that the political climate in Europe had improved considerably in recent times and that any progress achieved in the field of disarmament would surely accelerate the process of détente. The World Disarmament Conference would be a new approach in international disarmament negotiations, and Hungary considered it very important that the special session should devote due attention to it and include it as a separate item in the agenda.

23. With respect to the agenda of the special session, it was evident that a general debate on disarmament was needed, as well as a realistic appraisal of the present situation, so as to draw correct conclusions for the future. While reviewing the role of the United Nations and that of the existing machinery in the field of disarmament, one should keep in mind the proven usefulness and the so far unused capacities of that machinery.

24. In that connexion, it should be stressed that the main task of the special session should be not to replace the existing machinery or forums but to exert a favourable influence on them, since the slow progress in the field of disarmament was not due to "imperfect" machinery but rather to the lack of adequate political...
will. His delegation hoped that the special session would contribute to the improvement of the political climate, which would in turn be reflected in greater progress in the existing disarmament forums.

25. The need for achieving concrete results in the field of disarmament was unquestionable, but they could be achieved only if the basic document respected certain principles, such as the need for States to take into account each other's security interests, the exclusion of unilateral military advantages for any State or group of States, and the universality of disarmament both in the geographical sense and in the sense of types of weapons.

26. The sequence of items on the agenda should be formulated in a logical way, which meant that the adoption of the final document or documents must be the outcome of the whole work of the session.

27. Finally, his delegation considered the preparations for the special session a continuous process and was certain that the General Assembly would renew the mandate of the Preparatory Committee. It trusted that at that time it would be possible to enlarge the Committee in order to accommodate those socialist countries which played an important role in disarmament questions as members of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. He requested that the observations of his delegation and the delegations of other socialist countries on that point should be reflected in the report of the Preparatory Committee to the thirty-second session of the General Assembly.

28. Mr. ZBA (Colombia) said it must be remembered that the forthcoming special session devoted to disarmament had been the solution found by the General Assembly to try to remedy the resounding failure of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and the failure of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, which had not yet produced any positive results that might benefit mankind. His delegation was concerned that too much emphasis might be placed on declarations or appraisals of the world disarmament situation and that the participants in the special session might become involved in philosophical discussions that would use up the short time available to them without offering the world any panaceas.

29. With regard to the draft agenda submitted by the delegation of Sri Lanka on behalf of the non-aligned group in the Preparatory Committee, while it might be useful to carry out a review and appraisal of the present international disarmament situation and to adopt a declaration of principles on disarmament - something which the General Assembly had already done on countless occasions - his delegation felt that item 3 of the draft agenda, namely the adoption of a programme of action on disarmament, was most important and should be the core of the work of the special session. Nothing could be gained from a rhetorical declaration of principles if it was not accompanied by a programme of well-conceived measures for arms limitation. Such measures should be aimed at ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons, limiting conventional weapons, and eliminating incendiary and chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, a mere announcement of such measures would not be sufficient; it would be necessary to prepare background documents on each one and to formulate practical suggestions on them.

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30. In discussions of practical measures, the need to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to eliminate nuclear stockpiles was constantly stressed. But there were other more urgent matters, since the horrible consequences of such weapons made it very unlikely that they would ever be used. On the other hand, the existing traffic and trade in conventional weapons kindled conflicts for profit. Nearly $20 billion were currently being invested in that trade. For example, on the Latin American continent, where large masses of the population were afflicted by the tragedy of underdevelopment, $570 million had been spent on arms in 1975.

31. No matter how hard the General Assembly tried to achieve positive results in the field of disarmament, its efforts would be futile unless the countries responsible for the tragedy of the arms race throughout the world showed a will to co-operate.

32. In its letter addressed to the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/189 B, the Government of Colombia stated that disarmament was in no way dependent on the will of the Organization as such, or even on that of the vast majority of its Members; it depended solely on the will of the countries that manufactured weapons, that had been stockpiling them, that traded in them and that derived both military and political power and enormous financial profit from that lethal industry. So long as those countries were unwilling to disarm, to reduce the rate of weapons production or to place the interests of mankind in general above their own interests and hunger for power, nothing would be gained, no matter how many special sessions of the General Assembly or how many world conferences on disarmament were held.

33. The CHAIRMAN reminded members that at the previous meeting (A/AC.187/SR.6) the Mexican representative had suggested that the Secretariat should prepare a document comparing the replies sent to the Secretary-General by Member States pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/189 B. He had also suggested some headings for the relevant subdivisions. In line with that suggestion, the Secretariat had prepared a draft list of eight headings, namely: (1) General remarks; (2) Objectives of the special session; (3) Preparatory work for the special session; (4) Agenda; (5) Organization of work of the special session; (6) Principal document or documents of the special session; (7) Role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament; and (8) Other matters.

34. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) said he had no objection to the headings suggested, but believed that one important subject was missing: the World Conference on Disarmament. Many of the Governments' replies had placed special emphasis on that matter. It had also been mentioned during the general debate at the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee and even in the statements at the current meeting. Several delegations, including the Polish delegation, had suggested that preparations for the World Disarmament Conference should be included as a separate item. It would seem logical to include it among the headings just read out by the Chairman. He would not officially press the matter, if it was understood that the question of the World Disarmament Conference would be included at an appropriate place and would be the subject of one of the working
papers to be prepared under one of the headings, such as the one relating to the agenda.

35. The CHAIRMAN said that the Preparatory Committee would of course decide what headings should be included in the Secretariat document. The question of the World Disarmament Conference was obviously extremely important, as had been acknowledged by most States Members of the United Nations.

36. It should be pointed out that the list submitted by the Secretariat had been very carefully worded in order to avoid mentioning specific subjects. Several questions, such as the declaration on disarmament or the programme of action on disarmament, had been mentioned in some replies but had not been included in the list of headings. The list was of a general nature and did not exclude any subject. A place could be found for the question of the World Disarmament Conference because, for example, in speaking of the objectives of the special session, the Secretariat would have to quote from the replies of Member States which had considered the World Disarmament Conference to be one of the main objectives of the special session.

37. Likewise, with regard to the heading "Agenda", once a consensus was reached on what items should be included, if it was felt that the World Disarmament Conference should be on the agenda, it would be mentioned under that heading.

38. Since the representative of Poland, in a spirit of co-operation, had said that he would not press his point, if the Chairman's explanation was understood to mean that the World Disarmament Conference would be somewhere on the list, he asked the Polish representative not to press his request; the eight headings submitted by the Secretariat could then be approved by consensus.

39. Mr. MIRZA (Pakistan) said that the Chairman had satisfactorily explained what subjects would be included on the list, but he had some difficulty understanding how it would contribute to a logical and systematic organization of work. In the proposal of the non-aligned group (A/AC.187/43), item 4 was entitled "Review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament and of the international machinery for negotiations on disarmament, including the question of convening a world disarmament conference". Since that item was on the agenda, he wondered whether it was necessary to include heading 7, "Role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament", of the Secretariat list. It seemed to him that the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament could be included under item 4 of the draft agenda.

40. He had no difficulty in accepting the list of headings and would not press his position, although he felt that his suggestion would permit a more systematic organization of work.

41. The CHAIRMAN explained that the draft agenda submitted by the delegation of Sri Lanka was being discussed with other regional groups and did not represent a final text. It was therefore too early to say whether item 4 would retain its present form or would be modified. That would depend on the outcome of the
discussions. If item 4 remained unchanged, the comments of the representative of Pakistan were very much to the point. Otherwise, heading 7 might be included.

42. Mr. Ferretti (Italy) suggested that heading 7 of the list proposed by the Secretariat should be amended to read: "Role of the United Nations and other international organizations in the field of disarmament". Comments on the importance of CCD in future work on disarmament would thus be taken into account. The suggestion would also ensure that reference to activities parallel to those of the United Nations in the field of disarmament was not omitted from the analytical document.

43. Mr. Harry (Australia) considered that the proposed list of headings was adequate. If no consensus was reached on the agenda, it might be useful to summarize the proposals under heading 4. Otherwise, that would be pointless. As to where the views of Governments regarding a World Disarmament Conference should be included, that would depend on the context in which they mentioned the Conference, although generally speaking they would be included under heading 7. That heading did not require amendment, as it was sufficiently broad to cover the World Disarmament Conference, the special session and relations between the United Nations and other international bodies.

44. Mr. Garcia Robles (Mexico) thanked the Secretariat for its useful response to his initiative. He believed that the proposed list should be approved, since the goal was to classify the replies of Governments by the beginning of the following week. As the list was not inflexible, the Secretariat could, if necessary, modify the headings later as more material became available.

45. Mr. Schlaich (Federal Republic of Germany) supported the proposal made by the representative of Iran the previous day to the effect that the analysis should include not only the replies of Governments but also the statements made at the current session during the general debate. As regards heading 7, he supported the suggestion of the representative of Italy that reference should be made to CCD. He also agreed with the interpretation given by the Australian delegation.

46. The Chairman considered that the suggestion of the representative of Iran was very helpful and that the opinions expressed during the general debate should be included. Nevertheless, there was a technical difficulty: the summary records of the Committee's meetings required three days to prepare and, if those were to be included in the document under discussion, it would be impossible to have it ready for the following week. The document would therefore have to be drafted on the basis of the definite information already available, namely, the replies of Governments. At the end of the current session, the opinions expressed during the general debate would be included in a subsequent document.

47. Mr. Amerasinghe (Sri Lanka) said that he accepted the list of eight headings prepared by the Secretariat. He stressed the importance of producing the list as quickly as possible, so that it could be used during the work of the Preparatory Committee.
48. Mr. ALEM (Secretary of the Committee) recalled that at the fifth meeting of
the Committee (A/AC.187/SR.5) the representative of Canada had requested a list of
items which were usually included in the agenda of General Assembly sessions.
The Secretariat had prepared and distributed Conference room paper No. 1, to which
a small correction should be made. After item 1, the full stop should be replaced
by a comma and the following words added: "in accordance with rule 30 of the
rules of procedure of the General Assembly". Rule 30 stated: "At the opening of
each session of the General Assembly, the chairman of that delegation from which
the President of the previous session was elected shall preside until the Assembly
has elected a President for the session."

49. Following the item on the adoption of the agenda, there would be a list of
the substantive items approved by the Committee, representing a recommendation by
the Committee to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session. The closing
meeting would repeat item 2 (Minute of silent prayer or meditation).

50. The other question raised by the representative of Canada had referred to the
possible financial implications of any decisions taken at the special session.
When it decided to convene a special session, the General Assembly also took a
decision regarding the officers for the special session, including the President,
Vice-President and Committee Chairmen. When a decision had financial
implications, rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly should
apply: the Secretary-General should inform the Committee of those implications
and the information should then be forwarded to the Advisory Committee on
Administrative and Budgetary Questions as well as to the Fifth Committee. If the
officers and Committee Chairmen were the same as for the regular session of the
General Assembly, that would mean that the Fifth Committee was in session and
could therefore meet. Any recommendations made by the Fifth Committee would then
by transmitted to the special session of the General Assembly, where a final
decision would be taken.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.