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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 16 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. KAISER (Bangladesh) considered that the escalating global budget for the maintenance and expansion of the means of destruction, in a world where countless millions of people barely managed to subsist, was sufficient justification for the convening of the special session devoted to disarmament. In the opinion of his Government, the special session afforded a vital opportunity for tackling anew the fundamental problems concerning disarmament, on the basis of equal participation by all States. The most important objective of the special session must be to marshal the political will of all countries, big or small, to give new impetus and stimulus to the disarmament process. A critical element for the success of that catalytic endeavour was education of world public opinion regarding the magnitude and dangers of the arms race and the efforts required to halt it. Success would also depend on the ability of all States to create the necessary climate of mutual confidence and understanding, backed by objective facts and studies that could provide a positive framework and time-phased programme for future action.

2. There appeared to be an emerging consensus regarding the need to have a general declaration on disarmament, the main focus of which would be an evaluation of past endeavours, a set of practical guidelines and principles reflecting the common denominator of international consciousness and the incorporation of the major objectives desired.

3. His Government believed that the irrevocable link between security and economic development was of cardinal importance, since peace and prosperity were indivisible. He also stressed that considerations of national security were incompatible with disarmament, so long as no international security system existed. The real issue of disarmament, therefore, hinged on the balance between national insecurity and the degree of international trust that could be collectively reinforced.

4. The crucial role of the United Nations in the process could never be over-estimated; nor could the need to channel resources freed by disarmament measures towards the effective promotion of the social and economic progress of humanity, particularly in the developing countries. Equally important was the recognition of the right of all States to free and equal access to technology for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

5. Among the most important principles governing future disarmament negotiations was the recognition that progress towards disarmament was the responsibility of all States, individually and collectively. Nevertheless, it was the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States to participate in and implement disarmament measures, and also to guarantee that they would not resort to the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons against other States and in particular against non-nuclear-weapon countries.

6. Disarmament was intimately related to the search for a new international political and economic order based on mutual trust and justice, on the principle of equal security for all States, on the recognition of national independence and on international co-operation.

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7. The acid test of the Preparatory Committee, and indeed of the special session itself, would be its ability to formulate a programme of action-oriented recommendations, incorporating specific and achievable objectives and with machinery for co-ordinating, reviewing and following up action - a programme that was flexible and realistic enough to command the widest support.

8. Among the basic ingredients of such a programme, the highest priority must be given to measures pertaining to nuclear disarmament, the containment of vertical proliferation, including cessation of nuclear-weapon tests, and the reduction and complete elimination of nuclear arsenals. Equally important were efforts to contain horizontal proliferation, by increasing the credibility of measures towards that end. Closely related to those questions were problems posed by the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, their accessibility to all nations under effective international safeguards and the avoidance of dangers connected with nuclear explosive devices. His Government was vitally interested in measures to strengthen regional and subregional co-operation, in order to encourage the relaxation of tension and the settlement of disputes on the basis of friendship and recognition of equal sovereignty. Such collateral disarmament measures as the creation of zones of peace and nuclear-free zones were particularly important. Another area of vital interest was the generation of resources for peace through a more rational use of the vast sums wasted on the arms race. He therefore fully supported the proposal submitted by Sweden for a United Nations study on the relationship between disarmament efforts and economic and social progress.

9. Like other countries, Bangladesh also subscribed to the view that one of the serious omissions in the agenda in the past had been the phenomenal growth in the conventional arms race. The real threat to international security continued to emanate from conflicts located in States of the third world. The ramifications of those problems should also be the subject of discussion and recommendations during the special session devoted to disarmament.

10. So far as institutional and follow-up measures were concerned, he strongly supported the strengthening of the central role of the United Nations in the disarmament process. He agreed that attention should be devoted to streamlining and restructuring the working methods of existing bodies, such as CCD, in order to make them more representative and also to link them more intimately with the General Assembly.

11. Mr. ALZAMORA (Peru) said that, in view of the high hopes placed in disarmament by the vast majority of the human race, the Preparatory Committee was under an obligation to make every possible effort to ensure that proper preparations were made for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The special session was timely because the arms race had already reached an indescribable level. It was also important because all other efforts to consider the armaments problem in a suitable manner had been partial or had not won general
acceptance. The success of the current endeavour would be a victory not for any
group or groups of countries but for the whole world community.

12. His Government believed that, although all States had a responsibility in the
task of disarmament, some States had a greater responsibility than others, and that
the failure of the claim that the arms race contributed to increased security must
be borne in mind in all thinking on the subject. The special session must establish
the broad objectives and the most important guidelines for future action.
Substantive principles for disarmament must be compiled and identified.
Requirements for action must be stipulated. Finally, decisions must be adopted so
that the United Nations could play its appropriate role in the field of disarmament.

13. In the outline of action and the establishment of priorities, vital importance
must be attached to the cessation of all nuclear-weapon tests, to respect for
nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace and other appropriate measures.

14. The Preparatory Committee had before it a draft agenda submitted by the
delegation of Sri Lanka on behalf of the non-aligned countries. The adoption of
an agenda in agreement with other groups of countries appeared to be very near and
his delegation welcomed that first agreement, which would enable progress to be
made on other important questions.

15. It had been suggested that the Committee should proceed to prepare the
principal documents for the special session. His delegation agreed with that
proposal since it was clear that the more progress was made in that preliminary
stage, the better would be the atmosphere at the special session and the chances
for the adoption of final agreements.

16. Mr. CORREA DA COSTA (Brazil) stated that, throughout the years, Brazil had
shown its readiness to participate in efforts aimed at promoting the objective of
general and complete disarmament under effective international control, not only in
the General Assembly but also in CCD and in other international bodies. Brazil had
co-sponsored resolution 31/189 B which had been adopted by the General Assembly by
consensus.

17. The views of the Brazilian Government on the subject of the special session of
the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were set forth in document A/AC.187/49

18. In that reply, addressed to the Secretary-General in accordance with resolution
31/189 B, the Government of Brazil had envisaged the adoption by the special session
of two basic documents: the first would be a political declaration of principles
and guidelines for future negotiations on disarmament, and the second would be a
programme of action for general and complete disarmament under effective
international control.
19. The declaration of principles and guidelines should, in the view of his delegation, include the following essential elements: first, the international community should give maximum priority to negotiating efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament; second, disarmament measures should be correlated with the preservation and strengthening of international security in order to avoid the creation of military imbalances which might, during the negotiation process, jeopardize international peace; third, the principle that responsibilities and obligations should be balanced must prevail in the field of disarmament; furthermore, obligations should not be discriminatory in nature; fourth, new international confidence-building measures or measures of non-armsament should be accompanied by truly significant steps in the field of real disarmament; fifth, the verification system should be an integral element of agreements on disarmament and should be implemented by the adoption of adequate methods, both at the national and international levels; sixth, all States, including those possessing nuclear weapons, should participate on an equal footing in international negotiations on disarmament; seventh, international efforts on chemical weapons should proceed at an accelerated pace, along with efforts to deal with weapons of mass destruction, arms which caused unnecessary suffering and those which were particularly inhumane; eighth, all countries must have free access to peaceful technologies both in the nuclear and other fields, with standardized non-discriminatory and universal safeguards. The system of safeguards should be applied equally to all States and should be extended, whenever necessary, to cover new advances in technological research and development. None of those measures, however, should permit unwarranted interference in the sovereignty of States or threaten scientific, technological or economic development for essentially peaceful purposes; ninth, firm commitments should be made to apply significant portions of the savings derived from disarmament measures to the promotion of economic development in less developed areas. Those commitments would facilitate the establishment of a new international economic order; tenth, the security of the non-nuclear-weapon States should rest on concrete commitments on the part of the nuclear weapon States, such as the commitment to respect demilitarized zones and zones of peace, positive guarantees on the part of nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States belonging to demilitarized zones, and an agreed programme of measures for general and complete disarmament, elaborated on non-discriminatory bases and with special regard to the interests of developing countries.

20. With regard to the second of the final documents of the special session, his delegation was of the opinion that the programme of action should accord the highest priority to negotiations on effective measures in the field of nuclear disarmament, with particular reference to a comprehensive nuclear-weapon-test ban, to the destruction of stockpiles of such weapons, to the ending of the process of research and development of new types of nuclear weapons and to the freezing of production of fissionable material for military purposes. The programme of action should also refer to negotiations on chemical weapons, on new weapons of mass destruction and on conventional weapons.

21. With regard to preparations for the special session, he welcomed the
preparation by the Secretariat of the background papers in documents A/AC.187/29, 30 and 31, and looked forward to the prompt distribution of the comparative analysis of the comments received pursuant to resolution 31/189 B. However, the Preparatory Committee should not overburden the Secretariat with new requests until it was agreed, after careful study, that the preparation of a new document would clearly serve an immediate purpose in its deliberations.

22. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) said there seemed to be a consensus that the Assembly should not allow the work of the special session to become a repetition of the debates in the First Committee that the special session was not an appropriate forum for negotiating specific agreements or trying to draw up draft treaties and that it was necessary to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

23. The working paper submitted by the non-aligned countries had the advantage of clearly and concisely defining both the subject-matter and the fundamental purpose of the special session. In his view, that purpose was twofold. On the one hand, the aim was to conduct a debate on disarmament with the participation of all States Members of the United Nations and with the breadth, depth and high level of representation that the subject deserved. The purpose of the debate would be to review and appraise the present international situation in light of the urgent need to achieve substantial progress in the field of disarmament, the continuation of the arms race and the close interrelationship between disarmament, international peace and security, and economic development, and 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, according to the draft agenda submitted by the non-aligned countries (A/AC.187/43) and slightly modified during informal talks. Furthermore, the debate must not be reduced to an academic exercise; that was why express reference was made to the adoption of two instruments that would include all the conclusions of the preparatory studies and the deliberations of the Assembly, avoiding unnecessary fragmentation. Those instruments would be a declaration on disarmament and a programme of action on disarmament.

24. In that context, unnecessary fragmentation should be avoided and an effort should be made to ensure that all the conclusions and provisions were contained in the two aforementioned documents. Thus, the declaration on disarmament would spell out all the most relevant and significant principles on the subject, such as the following: all peoples of the world had a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations; general and complete disarmament under effective international control should be the ultimate goal of mankind; gradual progress towards that goal required the conclusion of partial agreement on genuine disarmament measures; the gradual reduction of nuclear weapons leading to their total elimination should be given the highest priority among such measures; the reduction and elimination of other weapons of mass destruction should also be given high priority; the international transfer of conventional weapons should be restricted
and regulated; international verification was essential to many disarmament measures and the use of a combination of various verification methods provided the best guarantees; the declaration of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace was one of the most effective means of disarmament available to all non-nuclear-weapon States: nuclear-weapon States should faithfully comply with their obligations, as set forth in the definition approved by the General Assembly, towards nuclear-weapon-free zones and the States belonging to those zones; the reduction of the military budgets of the permanent members of the Security Council and of other militarily important States would be a commendable disarmament measure; although there was a close relationship between disarmament and international peace and security, on the one hand, and disarmament and development on the other, progress in one of those areas should not be conditional upon progress in the other; the growing arms race and the resulting waste of resources were incompatible with the decisions of the United Nations aimed at establishing a new international economic order based on justice and equity; a considerable portion of the resources released by the adoption of disarmament measures should be devoted primarily to promoting the economic and social development of the developing countries; in accordance with the Charter and with countless General Assembly resolutions, the United Nations had a vital role and responsibility in the field of disarmament and it should therefore keep abreast of all measures taken in the field of disarmament, whether they be unilateral, bilateral, regional or multilateral; the United Nations machinery for deliberations should be strengthened by the institutionalization of a World Disarmament Conference on terms acceptable to all Member States; the appropriate changes should be made in the organization and procedures of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in order to allow China and France to participate in its work; world public opinion should be adequately informed of the progress of work in the field of disarmament, in order that it might use its influence to intensify efforts to achieve positive results; non-governmental organizations recognized by the United Nations should have all the documentation they needed to carry out their complementary work effectively. A similar description, though much more extensive and detailed, could be made of the possible contents of the programme of action.

25. Referring to some matters that had already been discussed, he expressed the view that the special session should ideally last from six to eight weeks, since there would be no justification for summoning nearly 150 Members to a special session that would merely rubber-stamp the drafts prepared by a body such as the Preparatory Committee which represented slightly more than one third of the membership of the Organization. Naturally, if the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament completed a draft treaty on the cessation of all nuclear-weapon tests that had the support of the two super-Powers and of the other members of that body, the treaty could be opened for signature during the special session even though that was not the purpose of the special session. The completion of the draft treaty appeared to be a possibility in light of the statements made a year previously at United Nations Headquarters by the current President of the United States and of the memorandum submitted by the Soviet Union to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament on 15 February 1977.
26. As to Governments' statements and suggestions, his delegation viewed as particularly encouraging the opinion expressed by the United States (A/AC.107/17), which had always shown itself to be a staunch defender of the status quo in the matter of international disarmament machinery, to the effect that the special session should be prepared to undertake the necessary improvements in existing machinery and practices and to launch any new organizational steps required for achievement of the goals established at the session.

27. In his opinion there was no need to establish any subsidiary intersessional bodies of the Committee, since the intervening time would have to be spent analysing the material available and studying the working papers prepared by the Secretariat on future stages of the work; that would not, of course, preclude the continuation of informal talks with a view to the preparation of preliminary drafts, which could be begun in connexion with the Committee's September session.

28. He thanked the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Björnsten, for the willingness of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament to prepare the working papers suggested by the Government of Mexico (A/AC.107/34). He agreed with him concerning paper No. 9 (Analytical list of the agreements concluded in the bilateral talks known by the acronym SALT). His delegation regarded the other working papers as purely descriptive and understood that they called for no value judgement by members of the Secretariat. His delegation had no preference in the matter of priorities and considered that the working papers could be issued in the order which the Centre deemed most appropriate for their preparation.

29. The Chairman, referring to the decision to allow Member States which were not members of the Preparatory Committee to participate in the Committee's work without the right to vote, gave the floor to the representative of Mongolia.

30. Mr. Purevsaghorov (Mongolia) said that the views of the Mongolian People's Republic on the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament were contained in document A/AC.187/16. As could be seen from that document, the Mongolian People's Republic attached great importance to the special session, which would deal with the urgent problems of halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament.

31. Determined efforts to control the arms race and achieve general and complete disarmament occupied a prominent place in his country's foreign policy. The Mongolian People's Republic had sponsored many constructive initiatives and proposals aimed at disarmament. As a member of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, it had played an active part in the preparation of various conventions in the field of disarmament. The arms race had led to the present disturbing situation in which huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons were threatening the very existence of all mankind and technological advances were moving towards the manufacture of increasingly deadly and destructive weapons. Such prospects were inevitably disturbing to all the peoples of the world. The movement for peace and general and complete disarmament had thus assumed international proportions, as could be seen from the World Assembly of peace-loving forces which had been held in Warsaw in May 1977 and in which representatives of 125 countries and more than 50 international
organizations had taken part. Representatives of States Members of the United Nations should heed the voice of world opinion, which called for the adoption of effective general measures to lay the foundations of lasting world peace in accordance with the principles of the Charter.

32. In the opinion of his delegation there was an urgent need to eliminate the danger of a new world war. To that end, maximum use must be made of all positive conditions for the preparation and implementation of effective measures aimed at the reduction and prohibition of the arms race and at disarmament.

33. The problem of disarmament was connected with economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. The question of disarmament was a world problem affecting all States without distinction, and the appropriate solutions to that problem could only be adopted within the context of a world disarmament conference, which would constitute a suitable forum. The special session should discuss the convening of such a conference as a separate item.

34. In its reply to the Secretary-General his Government had expressed support for the recommendation adopted at the Fifth Conference of the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in August 1976 at Colombo, to the effect that the agenda of the special session should include an item on the convening of a world disarmament conference. It was to be hoped that that recommendation would be duly reflected in the agenda of the special session.

35. The special session should, above all, make a thorough analysis of activities being conducted in the field of disarmament. In the absence of an objective analysis of that kind it would be difficult to establish guidelines for future talks and negotiations on disarmament. The time had come for those nuclear Powers that had refrained from taking specific measures in the matter to join in the efforts of the international community to limit the arms race and bring about disarmament. If all States without distinction, whether nuclear or non-nuclear, large or small, assumed the obligation not to resort to the use or threat of force, the climate of international trust would improve and that would facilitate the solution of the problem of disarmament.

36. The Soviet Union's memorandum of 27 September 1976 contained a full programme of measures in the field of disarmament. The practical measures proposed in that document on the prohibition of nuclear tests, the prohibition of proliferation of nuclear weapons and their gradual elimination, the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons, the prohibition of the manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction, etc., were of great interest. Both the measures proposed by the Soviet Union and those proposed by other countries could form a reasonable basis for agreement on practical disarmament measures.

37. The disarmament programme was a complex and delicate issue since the national security of all States was at stake. Hence, the document or documents approved by the special session should include the principle that the security of States must not be endangered. The special session should strengthen and enhance the efficacy of existing machinery for dealing with disarmament questions.
38. Mr. JAIPAL (India) said that the United Nations had been established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and that fulfilment of the other purposes of the Charter depended on ability to guarantee world peace. The purpose of the first resolution of the General Assembly, adopted in January 1946, had been the elimination of atomic weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Despite that, military expenditure was currently of the order of $350 billion, involving a criminal waste of precious natural resources and brain power in a world experiencing hunger and need. Politicians and generals were seriously discussing whether a pre-emptive nuclear strike was not a blessing in disguise. In that game of war, which had developed its own inexorable logic, the chief protagonists displayed a terrifying indifference to the condition of the rest of humanity. Never before in the history of the evolution of man had man possessed the means of destroying all life on earth. That was not a political question; it was essentially a moral problem.

39. It was not the first time that India was playing an active role in disarmament questions, for its experience in the matter dated back to the early days of the United Nations. In 1949, India had submitted a draft resolution proposing a Declaration on the duties of States and individuals in respect of the development of atomic energy in such a manner as to ensure the elimination of atomic weapons from national arsenals. In 1950, India had proposed a draft resolution on the establishment of a United Nations fund for reconstruction and development, to be formed of resources released through disarmament measures. In 1960, India had introduced a draft resolution outlining the principles for disarmament negotiations. Since 1962, India had participated continuously and actively in all disarmament organs.

40. His delegation hoped that the special session would address itself to the main issue of nuclear disarmament with a sense of realism and urgency. The survival of mankind should never be placed in jeopardy by any weapon. Nuclear weapons and other weapons of indiscriminate destruction should be prohibited as a matter of the highest priority. The doctrine of deterrence, which had led to the existing intolerable situation, should be re-examined with a view to preventing escalation from conventional to nuclear weapons. No solution would be possible unless there was agreement between the nuclear-weapon States. Since, however, a nuclear war posed a threat to the very survival of mankind at large, all States were called upon to play a role of conciliation and collaboration in order to attain the ultimate goal of disarmament.

41. The complexity of the disarmament question must not be overlooked; that was why the special session should confine itself to discussing concrete and feasible proposals. The nuclear-arms race was economically counterproductive and a threat to the existence of life on the planet. Yet, because of the doctrine of deterrence, there was a cynical acceptance of the arms race as inevitable. One side should take the risk of unilaterally halting the arms race and the others should be morally obliged to do the same. A halt to the arms race was feasible without the slightest jeopardy to national or collective security. The concept of surprise nuclear attack should be outlawed, and measures which would improve the climate of international confidence should be promoted.
42. Besides the moral imperative of peace, the other crying need of humanity was development for all people so that justice and equality could prevail. But the fruits of development were worth noting as long as the danger of the total destruction of life on earth existed. It was to be hoped, therefore, that the special session would, as a matter of priority, take the first steps towards nuclear disarmament.

43. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/AC.107/51, of 14 May 1977, which had been circulated in English. The document, which had been prepared by the Secretariat, consisted of classification of the replies of Member States under the headings agreed upon by the Committee the previous week. He commended the Secretariat on its swift and painstaking work.

The meeting rose at 12:40 p.m.