Fifteenth special session
Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 of
the provisional agenda*

REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION,
especially in the light of the vital objective of terminating
the arms race and the pressing need to achieve substantial
progress in the field of disarmament

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS
TENTH AND TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSIONS

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME
OF DISARMAMENT

ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS, INCLUDING QUALITATIVE
AND QUANTITATIVE ASPECTS, RELEVANT TO THE DISARMAMENT PROCESS,
WITH A VIEW TO THE ELABORATION OF APPROPRIATE CONCRETE AND
PRACTICAL MEASURES AND, IF NECESSARY, ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES,
TAKING DUE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES
ESTABLISHED IN THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE TENTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE FIRST SPECIAL SESSION DEVOTED TO
DISARMAMENT

CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE
FIELD OF DISARMAMENT AND OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
DISARMAMENT MACHINERY

UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE
FIELD OF DISARMAMENT, INCLUDING MEASURES TO MOBILIZE WORLD
PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOUR OF DISARMAMENT

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, IN THE LIGHT OF
THE ACTION PROGRAMME ADOPTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

* A/8-15/10.
Note verbale dated 19 May 1988 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to enclose a memorandum prepared by the United Kingdom in connection with the forthcoming third special session devoted to disarmament (see annex), and would be grateful if this could be circulated as a document of the fifteenth special session of the General Assembly under items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the provisional agenda.

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ANNEX

Memorandum submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in connection with the fifteenth special session of the General Assembly, the third special session devoted to disarmament

Introduction

1. The fifteenth special session of the General Assembly, the third special session devoted to disarmament, is an opportunity for all countries to participate in a balanced and constructive discussion of all aspects of arms control and disarmament. Its value will be in whether it can stimulate negotiations already in train, whether bilateral, regional, or global, and prepare the ground for further progress.

The British approach

2. The United Kingdom is committed to seeking security and stability at lower levels of armaments. This aspiration is widely shared by those represented at the special session. The issue is how to achieve this objective while safeguarding and, if possible, enhancing security.

3. The United Kingdom's approach at the session rests on five principles:

(i) The relationship between disarmament and security. The United Nations acknowledged this principle at the first special session devoted to disarmament: "The adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage. At each stage the objective should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces." (Paragraph 29 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2 of 30 June 1978).)

(ii) The need to address the underlying causes of military confrontation. Arms control cannot bear the weight of solving regional tensions. Indeed, disarmament by itself can be destabilizing and even bring disastrous consequences. It needs to be nurtured by efforts to resolve the underlying political tensions and differences between States and to build confidence between them.

(iii) Verification. Disarmament and arms limitation agreements should provide for effective measures of verification satisfactory to all parties concerned in order to create the necessary confidence and ensure that they are being observed by all parties.
(iv) **Transparency.** Transparency in military matters (including the provision of accurate data on military capabilities) reduces the scope for misunderstanding and promotes progress in negotiations. Undue secrecy, on the other hand, breeds suspicion and inhibits progress in negotiations. The United Nations instrument for the standardized annual reporting of military budgets should be supported by all States.

(v) **Realism.** Disarmament and arms control measures must be realistic and concrete. Declaratory proposals do not contribute to security or confidence. A pragmatic step-by-step approach is needed rather than an unrealistic timetable or a grandiose framework.

**Current developments**

4. By contrast with the second special session on disarmament, held in 1982, the third special session is meeting at a time when the arms control agenda is busy and productive. The following are the items to which the British Government attaches particular importance:

**INF.** The INF Treaty will eliminate a complete category of ground-launched missiles world wide. The Treaty contains detailed and stringent verification arrangements for compliance which go further than any previously agreed between the two sides. These arrangements, and the asymmetrical reductions agreed, set a valuable precedent for future agreements.

**START.** Negotiations are advanced on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms, giving specific form to the proposal for 50 per cent reductions endorsed at their Reykjavik Summit in October 1986.

**Nuclear co-operation.** In 1987 the United States and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to set up Nuclear Risk Reduction Centres in Moscow and Washington, D.C., to improve communications in the event of accidents. These will supplement the "Hot Lines" set up between Moscow and Washington, Paris and London, and a series of agreements on the prevention of accidental nuclear war.

**Nuclear testing.** In November 1987 the United States and the Soviet Union began stage-by-stage negotiations leading to the ultimate objective of a complete cessation of nuclear testing as part of an effective disarmament process. The first step is to agree on effective verification measures which will make it possible to ratify the threshold test-ban Treaty of 1974 and the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty of 1976.

**Non-proliferation.** A great deal of international effort has been devoted to controlling the spread of nuclear weapons, based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. At the Third Review Conference on the Treaty in 1985, the parties strongly endorsed the Treaty and stressed their determination to enhance its implementation. Before the advent of the non-proliferation Treaty there were many predictions that by the 1980s the number of nuclear-weapon States would reach double figures. That this has not happened is the finest tribute that could be paid to the effectiveness of the non-proliferation Treaty, which now has 135 members. The next review conference in 1990 will be another important landmark.
Conventional arms control. In December 1986, the Western States proposed new negotiations on conventional stability covering the whole of Europe between all members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It is hoped that talks will begin later this year. Their objective will be the establishment of a secure and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels, the elimination of disparities prejudicial to stability and security, and, as a matter of high priority, the elimination of the capability for launching surprise attacks and for initiative large-scale offensive action.

Chemical weapons. Considerable progress has been made in the Conference on Disarmament in drawing up a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable ban on chemical weapons, though much work remains to be done. The United Kingdom has played a leading part in these negotiations, tabling seven proposals since 1982 and taking the chair in 1986. The United Kingdom shall continue to work to achieve a successful conclusion at the earliest practicable date. Repeated reports about the use of chemical weapons in regional conflicts give urgency to this.

Confidence- and security-building measures. The Document of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, which came into effect in January 1987, has helped bring about greater openness and predictability about military activities in Europe, thus contributing to increased confidence and to reducing mistrust and the risk of miscalculation in time of tension. This is the first international security agreement to permit signatory States to mount on-site "challenge" inspection on each other to check compliance. The United Kingdom and its allies have tabled a proposal for further work on confidence-building.

The next steps

5. Encouraging progress in international arms control and disarmament has thus been achieved in recent years. The United Kingdom believes that the far-reaching and detailed agenda of nuclear, conventional and chemical weapons disarmament measures described in the preceding paragraphs represents both a challenge and an opportunity. If implemented, this ambitious programme will represent the most significant development in arms control and disarmament of our era. It deserves the full support of all States represented at the special session.

6. Other arms control measures in regions beyond the East-West arena should be pursued with no less urgency. Expenditure on arms bears very heavily on the economies of some States. Increased attention might usefully be given to the opportunities for reductions in such expenditure. The world is interdependent. Each State has a responsibility to make what contribution it can to progress in the subjects addressed by the special session. General acceptance of the principles set out at the beginning of this memorandum would promote the conditions in which such progress could be made.

7. These goals call for supportive efforts in bilateral, regional and multilateral forums. The United Nations and related bodies have a significant part to play, not least in the negotiation of a chemical weapons ban.
The task of the special session

8. The special session will enable all countries to address the world community on their particular concerns about arms control and disarmament. The United Kingdom will be working for a consensus which will build on the momentum generated by recent agreements and which will stimulate further progress in arms control. To achieve consensus on a concluding document, it is important to avoid divisive proposals, unrealistic declarations and over-ambitious targets. While the special session in itself cannot provide the answers to the complex problems of individual arms control negotiations, it may suggest ideas that can be followed up in those negotiations. Moreover, a successful special session will improve the atmosphere in which those negotiations take place.

9. The United Kingdom believes that the special session should examine carefully the operation of the United Nations disarmament machinery, to determine where improvements may be made.

Public information

10. Representatives of many non-governmental organizations will be attending the third special session. The views of those from Britain reflect a diversity which is part of the democratic process in the United Kingdom and which underlines the need for Governments to provide accurate and timely information to their publics on defence and arms control issues. The British Government produces a range of publications which are widely distributed to non-governmental organizations and interested individuals. In addition, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has published a booklet entitled, "The UK Role in Arms Control" and, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, a pack of 12 leaflets on "Arms Control and Defence: The Vital Issues". All these publications are available to national delegations represented at the special session.