Fifteenth special session
Agenda items 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13

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 DUTY
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

Letter dated 17 June 1988 from the Deputy Head of the Delegation of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the fifteenth special
session of the General Assembly, the third special session devoted
to disarmament, addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request you to circulate the annexed text of a letter
from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, E. A. Shevardnadze, on the
question of openness and glasnost in international relations, sent to you on
8 June 1988, as an official document of the fifteenth special session of the General Assembly under agenda items 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

(Signed) Vladimir F. PETROVSKY
Deputy Head of the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament
ANNEX

Letter dated 8 June 1988 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR addressed to the Secretary-General

The Soviet Union attaches fundamental importance to the transition from specific measures of confidence-building, openness and glasnost in international relations to a broad policy in this area that would become and integral part of the comprehensive system of international security, an important factor in truly strengthening confidence and making the actions of States more predictable, and one of the elements required for progress in disarmament.

The process of developing glasnost in international affairs as a whole and in the military sphere in particular is already exercising favourable influence on the international situation, and is directly correlated with the revival of negotiations on the curtailment of the arms race. The problem of openness is taking on a new dimension in the context of the process of genuine disarmament based on implementation of the Treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, which has established unprecedented standards, inter alia, for openness in the military sphere.

The policy of increasing openness and glasnost in the military sphere also guides the Soviet Union in its negotiations with the United States on bringing about a 50 per cent reduction of strategic strike weapons, while maintaining and complying strictly with the ABM Treaty in the form in which it was signed in 1972.

We feel that now more than ever there is a need to eliminate the gap between word and deed, and that this concerns all States rather than any single one selected on the basis of an arbitrary division of the world into "open" and "closed" societies.

The Soviet Union, for its part, is demonstrating in practice its readiness to take the most serious steps towards openness.

Unprecedented unilateral measures of openness have been undertaken by the USSR, which has given United States representatives an opportunity to inspect the construction of the Krasnoyarsk radar station and the mobile radar stations in the Gomel and Moscow regions so that they could convince themselves at first hand of the absence of any violations of the 1972 ABM Treaty by the Soviet side.

Indeed, do not the joint experiments conducted by Soviet and American seismologists at the Semipalatinsk test site speak of a readiness in fact to practice glasnost in military matters? Openness and glasnost have become one of the basic elements in the elaboration, at the full-scale negotiations between the USSR and the United States on the limitation and reduction of nuclear tests, of an improved system, based on the results of the Joint Verification Experiment at each other's test sites, for verifying compliance with the yield threshold for nuclear explosions established in the Soviet-United States treaties of 1974 and 1976.

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The USSR has declared the size of its chemical weapon stocks and organized for the participants in the negotiations on the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons a visit to the Soviet military facility at Shikhany, where they were able to familiarize themselves with the standard types of chemical munitions and techniques for the destruction of chemical weapons at a mobile unit. When the construction near Chapaevsk of a special plant for the destruction of chemical weapons has been completed, the Soviet Union will invite the participants in the negotiations to visit it. In connection with the convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons currently under preparation, we have proposed a multilateral exchange of data even before the signing of the convention.

We have proposed the exchange of information on armed forces and armaments in Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. This information would cover data on the NATO and Warsaw Treaty countries as a whole, on each of these countries and on regions - northern, central and southern Europe.

All these steps are indissolubly linked with the democratization and restructuring of our society, which give a clear indication of the direction in which the USSR wishes to channel its resources, what the focus of its thoughts is, its aspirations and what its real intentions and plans for the future are.

The Soviet Union welcomes the growing awareness in the world of the need to elaborate and adopt confidence-building measures which will promote greater openness and create an objective picture of the States' military potential, doctrines and intentions. We are convinced that an important role in the development of openness on behalf of disarmament can and must be played by the United Nations.

The members of the international community are entitled to, indeed they must, be in a position to know how things really stand in the military sphere. Indeed, it is precisely the inadequacy of such information that frequently gives the opponents of disarmament a pretext for disinformation and mythmaking designed to whip up the arms race and extend it to new areas. Without objective information it is difficult to evaluate the feasibility and merits of proposals put forward in the field of military security. Keeping States and peoples fully informed is a means of promoting their constructive and creative participation in world politics and making it international in the literal sense of the word.

The Soviet Union supports the General Assembly's call to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of objective information on problems of the arms race and disarmament.

The gathering momentum of the aspirations of the States Members of the United Nations to enhance the authority of the Organization in the interests of consolidating glasnost and openness in international relations is evidenced in the resolution on objective information on military matters adopted at the forty-second session of the General Assembly. As a sponsor of the resolution we feel it essential that all States should make practical efforts to implement the provisions of this and other resolutions and decisions of the United Nations containing specific recommendations on measures of openness.
For its part, the Soviet Union, in accordance with the action programme adopted by consensus at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, intends to continue to assess its security requirements and the levels of its military spending, taking into account the need to keep these expenditures at the lowest possible level and to keep the public informed on the subject. The task of all States, under this programme, is to show the real return to be derived from measures of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament and to begin formulating specific plans for the conversion of military production.

Recognizing the important role of the United Nations in helping to solve the question of reducing military budgets, the USSR will within its stated time-limits, when the conditions have been established for a realistic comparison of military expenditures, start using the systems of standardized accounting existing within the United Nations system to submit data concerning its military spending. We are prepared to join in the work currently being conducted in the United Nations on the systematic study of various problems relating to formulations, the submission of information and the comparison of military budget data.

We feel that the time has come to begin, within the framework of the United Nations, developing objective criteria and parameters for ensuring openness in order to promote the process of genuine disarmament. The practical work of harmonizing such criteria and parameters might be assigned, for example, to the Military Staff Committee.

The implementation of measures of openness and glasnost within the framework of the United Nations would strengthen its potential for maintaining international peace and security and lay the foundations for building a system of international relations free from mutual fear and suspicion.

In the view of the USSR, the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament could give a powerful impetus to the development of the policy of openness and glasnost in international relations on the solid foundation of a balance between the interests of all groups of States.