Fifteenth special session
Agenda item 10

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

Objective information on military matters

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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1. The United States Government welcomes the opportunity afforded by General Assembly resolution 42/38 I to offer its views concerning ways and means of ensuring confidence and furthering openness and transparency in military matters.

2. The United States first submitted its views on this resolution in July 1986 (A/41/466). As in previous years the United States voted for this resolution in 1987 for it is consistent with the fundamental principle of openness/transparency. The United States firmly believes that, if faithfully implemented, this principle can act as a building block for enhancing confidence among nations.

3. The principle of openness should apply in the internal politics of States as well as in their international policies, for if States cannot trust in the ability of their own people to make informed judgements then they can hardly be expected to trust one another in such contentious issues as arms control. Thus an open flow of military information, be it domestic or international, can allay suspicions, lessen the possibility of misjudgements and promote governmental accountability. There has been an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of openness of late, particularly by closed societies which had previously downplayed this principle. We welcome this trend. At the same time, while much lip-service has been paid to openness much remains to be done by closed societies to put this principle into practice. Indeed, the concept of openness has long been a cardinal principle of the Western approach to arms control. Without exchanges of reliable and appropriate military information in arms control and disarmament negotiations there can be little confidence that any reductions can be effectively verified.

4. The United States is encouraged that the number of States abstaining in the vote on resolution 43/38 I last year diminished significantly over 1986 (12 versus 26). During the coming year, the United States hopes that the approach to openness as embodied in resolution 42/38 I and the noteworthy developments described below will be reflected in the work of the third special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and the forty-third General Assembly.

5. The following events, in our view, represent positive developments in applying the principle of openness/transparency in the domain of objective information on military matters:

   (a) The first exchange of views between the United States Secretary of Defense and the Soviet Defense Minister in March 1988 (Bern, Switzerland), followed by their discussions in Moscow during the United States/Soviet Summit (May 1988).

   The United States hopes that this exchange will lead towards greater openness in bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, particularly regarding military matters.
(b) The unprecedented exchange of data provided for by the United States/Soviet treaty on the elimination of their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles of December 1987, includes data on the numbers, locations and technical characteristics of INF missiles, launchers, support structures and support equipment. The treaty provides for regular updates of this data throughout the life of the treaty, which is of unlimited duration. In addition, the INF treaty contains the most stringent on-site inspection procedures in the history of arms control agreements, whereby teams of United States and Soviet inspectors will visit each other's missile bases and facilities to conduct: (1) baseline inspections to help verify the initial exchange of updated data; (2) close-out inspections to confirm that treaty-prohibited activities have ceased after bases or missile support facilities are eliminated; (3) elimination inspections to observe the destruction of missiles, launchers and support equipment; (4) a specified number of short-notice inspections for 13 years at specified locations; and (5) continuous portal monitoring for up to 13 years at specific production facilities in the Soviet Union and the United States.

(c) The United States/Soviet agreement on ballistic missile launch notifications, signed at the Moscow Summit on 31 May 1988, requiring each nation to give at least 24 hours' notice of all intercontinental ballistic missile tests from land or sea, to include the launch date, launch area and impact area. The notice is to be given through nuclear risk reduction centres established last year in Washington and Moscow. The agreement is a practical new step, reflecting the desire of the sides to reduce the risk of outbreak of nuclear war, in particular as a result of misinterpretation, miscalculation or accident.

(d) The Joint Verification Experiment (JVE) agreed upon by the United States and the Soviet Union in December 1987, to be conducted at the nuclear test sites of the two parties in 1988, for the purpose of facilitating agreement on effective verification measures for the Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974 and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty of 1976. The JVE will provide opportunities to measure the yield of one nuclear explosion at each site using the technique preferred by each side. The joint experiment is expected to resolve concerns and, by demonstrating the practicability, non-intrusiveness and accuracy of the United States-preferred method (direct, hydrodynamic yield measurement - CORTEX), provide the Soviet Union with the information it needs to accept routine United States use of CORTEX. Formal guidelines for JVE were agreed upon at the Moscow Summit on 31 May 1988.

(e) Acceptance of the principle of short-notice mandatory challenge inspection in the Conference on Disarmament negotiations on a convention banning chemical weapons globally. In an effort to promote the critical objective of a comprehensive, effectively verifiable ban, the United States and the Soviet Union hosted visits by delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to chemical weapons facilities in each of the two countries. Reciprocal visits of this kind are designed to maximize exchange of data on chemical weapon capabilities and enhance mutual confidence.

(f) The agreement signed by the 35 participants in the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe in 1986,
providing for inspections, and notification of military activities applicable to all of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. These confidence- and security-building measures are designed to increase openness about, and predictability of, military activities on the continent. Since the Stockholm agreement went into effect in January 1987, as of 1 June of this year, 10 on-site inspections have been conducted. Furthermore, representatives from participating States have been invited to observe military activities on each other's territory involving more than 17,000 troops. Exercises above 13,000 troops are to be notified 42 days in advance, and included in an annual calendar of military activities exchanged one year in advance. Although the Stockholm document is an important milestone in promoting the exchange of military information and contributes to greater confidence, stability and predictability among European nations, further efforts in the field are desirable.

(g) The United States Government is looking forward to the consideration of this important subject at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.