Fifteenth special session
Item 10 of the provisional agenda*

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

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* A/S-15/10.
I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 30 November 1987, the General Assembly adopted resolution 42/38 I, entitled "Objective information on military matters", the relevant paragraphs of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"

"3. Recommends that all States, in particular nuclear-weapon States and other militarily significant States, should consider implementing additional measures based on the principles of openness and transparency, such as, for example, the international system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures, with the aim of achieving a realistic comparison of military budgets, facilitating the availability of objective information on, as well as objective assessment of, military capabilities and contributing towards the process of disarmament;

"4. Invites all Member States to transmit to the Secretary-General, not later than 15 April 1988, their views concerning ways and means of ensuring confidence and furthering openness and transparency in military matters for submission to the General Assembly at its third special session devoted to disarmament;

"5. Requests the General Assembly at its third special session devoted to disarmament to take into account all the provisions of the present resolution in its deliberations;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its third special session devoted to disarmament on the implementation of all the provisions of the resolutions on the subject;

"7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-third session the items entitled 'Objective information on military matters'."

2. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of the resolution, the Secretary-General in a note verbale dated 16 February 1988 invited all Member States to inform him of their views concerning ways and means in application of the above-mentioned resolution. To date he has received replies from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. These are reproduced in section II below. Other replies, when received, will be published as addenda to the present report.

3. An earlier report of the Secretary-General on the subject dated 5 August 1987 (A/42/435) and prepared in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 41/59 B of 3 December 1986, reproduced the replies received from Bulgaria, Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

/...
4. Also in pursuance to paragraphs 3 and 6 of the resolution 42/38 I, cited above, the Secretary-General submits the following information:

An Ad Hoc Panel on Military Budgeting, appointed by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 33/67 of 14 December 1978, completed in 1980 practical testing of a military expenditure reporting instrument that consisted of a proposed reporting matrix and instructions. Fourteen Member States participated on a voluntary basis in the testing. The Ad Hoc Panel recommended the early implementation of the use of the reporting instrument and also recommended steps to promote increasing participation of Member States in providing information about the recommended reporting instrument. In its resolution 35/142 B of 12 December 1980, the General Assembly decided to adopt the system for standardized reporting of military expenditures as tested and recommended by the Panel. Subsequently, the Secretary-General has published in annual reports the information communicated to him by Member States on their military expenditures in standardized form using the reporting instrument. Out of 24 States reporting in 1987, 22 used the reporting system. The information so obtained is included in the report of the Secretary-General (A/42/573), which also contains, in an annex, the reporting system and accompanying instructions.

II. REPLES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

[Original: Russian]

[10 May 1988]

1. In its approach to the problem of ensuring confidence and furthering openness in military matters, the Byelorussian SSR is guided by the need to overcome, once and for all, the negative and confrontational tendencies which have until recently been on the increase in international relations, to make confidence an integral part of international relations, to clear the way for the recognized goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international supervision, and to ensure a non-nuclear and non-violent world and genuine security for all States on an equal basis. That approach is also reflected, in particular, in the provisions of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (Assembly resolution S-10/2), according to which "In order to facilitate the process of disarmament, it is necessary to take measures and pursue policies to strengthen international peace and security and to build confidence among States" (para. 93).

2. The Byelorussian SSR is convinced that the current realities of international relations in the nuclear and space age call for the strict observance by all countries of the principle of peaceful co-existence among States with different social systems, and for a considerable broadening of the sphere of reasonable accountability and the rational organization of international affairs, which in turn presupposes the need to raise the standards for confidence and openness, and
the scope and depth of mutual verification and supervision of accepted commitments, to a qualitatively new level.

3. The attainment of such a new level would be facilitated by rejection of the concept of "the enemy", the establishment of the unconditional practice of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, observance of the right of peoples to choose freely their path of development, and peaceful settlement of regional conflicts.

4. Greater glasnost, openness and predictability in the political and military fields, the exchange of essential information and the creation of a strict and effective system of mutual verification would be particularly important for the conclusion and successful implementation of agreements in all the priority fields of disarmament.

5. The Byelorussian SSR welcomes the progress which has been made in strengthening confidence and security through the implementation of regional agreements, such as the document of the 1986 Stockholm Conference, which fosters co-operation in Europe. In the opinion of the Byelorussian SSR, the regional processes for enhancing openness and confidence should help expand confidence on a broader international scale.

6. The process of increasing openness and confidence must continue to move forward. New kinds of measures for strengthening confidence and security must be worked out. After all, confidence does not come from out of the blue. It requires contacts, searches and negotiations - not confrontation or passive waiting.

7. The need has arisen for a system of confidence-building measures which, in particular, would exclude the sudden outbreak of war. In that context, the States members of the Warsaw Treaty have proposed a number of measures for the European region, namely the reduction of the concentration of armed forces and armaments in the zone of contact between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization to the minimum agreed level; the removal from that zone of the most dangerous and offensive types of weapons; the establishment of a non-nuclear corridor along the lines of contact between the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO, and of a chemical-weapon-free zone in Central Europe; a plan to reduce weapons and build confidence in that region; and, in the end, the establishment of zones of confidence, co-operation and good-neighbourly relations along the lines of contact between the two alliances.

8. It is also important to broaden existing confidence-building measures and to extend them to areas not previously covered. In particular, the socialist countries have advocated the development of confidence measures on the seas and oceans and, at the Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, have put forward a number of initiatives aimed at broadening confidence measures and extending them to the activities of air and naval forces in sea and ocean regions adjacent to Europe and in European air space.

9. The policy of strengthening mutual understanding and confidence in the military field would be furthered by such measures as meetings between the
ministers of defence and the commanders-in-chief of the military alliances to discuss urgent issues. The recent meeting of the United States and Soviet ministers of defence, which included the consideration of military doctrines, is evidence of new standards. The well-known Soviet proposal for a meeting of the Commanders-in-Chief of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization to discuss the asymmetry of the armed forces of the two sides in Europe, is in the interest of openness. Unfortunately, to date that proposal has not received a positive response.

10. The goal of major reductions in armed forces and armaments with the establishment of international supervision also requires the exchange of the relevant information regarding the armed forces and armaments of the States concerned. Experience in such kinds of exchange has been gained, in particular, as a result of the negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America on the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles. At a meeting at Sofia in March 1988, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty put forward a proposal to strengthen openness and create an atmosphere of confidence through the multilateral exchange of information pertinent to the drafting of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, and also the exchange of the necessary information for eliminating, through reductions on a reciprocal basis, the historically established asymmetries and imbalances in the field of conventional weapons in Europe.

11. The United Nations has already made a certain amount of progress in the field of confidence and openness; for example, General Assembly resolution 42/38 I on ways and means of ensuring confidence and furthering openness in military matters, Assembly resolution 42/38 C, entitled "Notification of nuclear tests", the action programme adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, the work undertaken in the Disarmament Commission to draft guiding principles for confidence-building measures, and so forth. States are increasingly adhering to the practice of informing the United Nations about negotiations which they conduct outside the Organization.

12. The policy of increased openness must be consistent. In that respect, it is regrettable that, of all the nuclear Powers, including the co-sponsors of General Assembly resolution 42/38 I, entitled "Objective information on military matters", only one - the USSR - has declared its readiness to notify the United Nations of its nuclear tests, as called for in Assembly resolution 42/38 C. Not all the socialist countries' proposals regarding the exchange of information on military matters with a view to strengthening confidence and openness have been met with a positive response by those States to which such proposals were addressed.

13. Practical work in the United Nations on criteria for openness, the purely defensive nature of military doctrines, and the structure of armed forces could become an important element in the strengthening of predictability and confidence in the military sphere.

14. The realities of the nuclear and space age require States Members of the United Nations to make joint and persistent efforts to ensure the transition to a comprehensive system which would include measures for furthering openness in...
military matters, strengthening confidence, security and disarmament, establishing effective international supervision in the broad context of both disarmament and the settlement and prevention of military conflicts.

15. The Byelorussian SSR sees in progress along those parallel paths an earnest of readiness to promote the emergency of the United Nations as a genuine centre for co-ordinating the activities of States and a guarantor of comprehensive security.

GERMANY, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF

(on behalf of the States members of the European Community)

[Original: English]

[18 March 1988]

1. The twelve member States of the European Community remain convinced that a better flow of information on military capabilities would help to relieve international tension and contribute to the building of confidence among States on a global, regional and subregional level. Such a flow is, at the same time, an important prerequisite for the conclusion of verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements. The need for a better flow of objective information on military capabilities is reflected in General Assembly resolution 42/38 I, among whose sponsors were members of the Twelve.

2. The final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament (Assembly resolution S-10/2), encourages Member States to ensure a better flow of information with regard to the various aspects of disarmament. As part of the natural contribution by democratic Governments to a free and open debate on military matters, member States of the European Community have consistently implemented a wide variety of measures whose aim is to contribute to the widest possible level of openness in military matters in general. Extensive, objective and publicly available information on these matters is thus provided by members of the Twelve. They urge all States to provide similar information, both for their own publics and for the international community as a whole.

3. The adoption of measures that contribute to greater openness and transparency helps to prevent misperceptions of the intention and military capabilities of others. Prevention of such misperceptions itself constitutes a practical and concrete confidence-building measure.

4. An important and valuable first step towards greater openness and transparency in the military field is the international system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures, established through General Assembly resolution 35/142 B. This reporting matrix provides a universal framework whereby States with different social and economic systems can supply information about their military spending in a comparable and non-prejudicial form. An increasing number of States have provided annual reports on military expenditures in conformity with the
international system for standardized reporting; the Twelve regret that not all States have produced such reports and call upon all States to do so and to make every effort to increase openness and transparency in military matters.

5. The Twelve wish to reiterate the importance they attach to the application of the new reporting instrument by the broadest possible number of States, from all regions and whatever their budgeting and accounting system.