Fifteenth special session
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE
FIFTEENTH SPECIAL SESSION
Agenda items 10 and 13

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

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

Review of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament:
   a proposal for limited expansion

Working paper submitted by Austria, Bangladesh, Cameroon,
Ecuador, Finland, Greece, Senegal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey
and Zimbabwe

1. The present working paper takes as its starting-point the agreement recorded
in paragraph 120 of the Final Document of the First Special Session of the General
Assembly (resolution S-10/2) devoted to disarmament that the membership of the
Committee on Disarmament [Conference on Disarmament] 1/ will be reviewed at regular
intervals.

2. In 1983, the Conference on Disarmament agreed to an expansion of its
membership by not more than four States, subject to agreement by the Conference on
the selection of the new members and taking into account the necessity of
maintaining balance. In 1984, the Conference agreed that candidates for membership
should be nominated, two by the Group of 21, one by the Socialist Group and one by
the Western Group, so as to maintain balance in the membership of the Conference.

3. Since then, successive Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament have
conducted consultations with the members of the Conference in order to reach a
decision as to the selection of the new members. No agreement on concrete ways and means for implementing the 1984 decision has emerged from them despite the urgency attached to the question of expansion of membership, duly recognized by the Conference in its special report to the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

4. It is evident by now that the implementation of the 1984 decision is deadlocked. The prospect of indefinite delay does not do justice to the interests of those States which have requested membership in the Conference on Disarmament. These States are entitled to having their requests for membership considered without further delay.

5. In view of the present deadlock, the third special session should take a fresh look at the question of membership with a view to making a concrete recommendation to the Conference on Disarmament so as to enable it to rapidly bring its consultations on this question to a successful conclusion and report to the forty-third regular session of the General Assembly accordingly.

6. The need for a rapid resolution of the question of the expansion of membership should also be viewed against the background of current negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which are at an advanced stage. Universal adherence to the future Convention is an objective whose importance is recognized by all. Expansion of the Conference on Disarmament would assist in the realization of this objective.

7. Any new proposal that might conceivably serve as a basis for a concrete recommendation to the Conference on Disarmament will have to respect certain basic principles on which consensus already exists. Among these are the continuing requirement for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size, as recognized in paragraph 120 of the Final Document, as well as the necessity of maintaining balance in the membership, as recognized by the Conference on Disarmament in its own decisions on the matter. The expansion also has to be consistent with the need to assure the effective functioning of the Conference.

8. A possible solution to the present deadlock which would be in keeping with the principles of limited size, balance and effectiveness, would consist of a step-by-step but limited expansion of membership over a specified period of time.

9. Expansion along these lines, and following the concept of not more than four new members at each step, could consist of the admission of four new members every three years. Depending on the timing of the admission of the first four new members, the expansion by twelve new members would thus operate over a total time span of six or nine years from the time of decision on expansion.

10. The essential feature in such an approach is the introduction of the time element. Time as part of the solution provides the necessary flexibility to satisfy a number of different concerns, among them:
Interest. There are considerably more than four States which have requested membership in the Conference. The proposed addition of 12 new members would accommodate the interest of almost all of them (15 candidates at present).

Limited size. In view of the 1984 decision of the Conference, the proposed addition of 12 new members would in fact be a net increase of only eight. Moreover, 52 members as the size of the single disarmament negotiating body of the international community of some 160 States is entirely reasonable.

Balance. In view of the number of steps, there would be no need to require balance at each step so long as a generally acceptable balance would be maintained or restored at the end.

Effectiveness. As the expansion would be limited to four at each step with an intervening time period, the new members could be "absorbed" by the Conference without any loss of effectiveness. Moreover, a Conference with 52 members, working on the basis of consensus, is inherently no less effective than a Conference with 40 members.

Notes

1/ The Committee on Disarmament was redesignated the Conference on Disarmament as from 7 February 1984.