Fifteenth special session
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE
FIFTEENTH SPECIAL SESSION
Agenda items 10, 11, 12 and 13

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

Limitation and reduction of naval armaments

Working paper submitted by the delegations of Bulgaria, German
Democratic Republic and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. The task of halting and turning back the naval arms race is necessitated
primarily by the fact that in the course of disarmament, which at the present stage
has affected principally land-based armaments, the share of naval forces in the
overall complement of forces is objectively growing.

The present state of affairs, including the course of discussions of the naval
issue in the United Nations, indicates that the objective of limiting and reducing
naval armaments can be achieved in practice stage by stage, starting with relatively simple measures in respect of which the elements of mutual understanding already exist. Such measures, agreement on which could serve as a starting point for the whole process of disarmament in the naval sphere, include primarily confidence-building measures and measures to strengthen guarantees of the safety of shipping.

The possibility in principle of concluding agreements on the limitation and reduction of naval activity and armaments is also demonstrated by historical experience, including the results of the 1921–1922 Washington Conference, at which agreement was reached on the proportional limitation of the major naval Powers' naval forces and on the prohibition of the construction of new naval bases over a broad region of the Pacific Ocean.

2. In view of the above, and also of the initiatives the authors of this paper have already put forward on the limitation of naval activity and naval armaments, the first step towards confidence-building could be to agree forthwith on prior notification of movements and manoeuvres by naval forces and the associated air forces, invitation of observers to naval exercises and manoeuvres, limitations on the number and scale of military exercises, and also on the regions in which they could be held, and exchange of information on naval issues. With respect to notification of exercises and manoeuvres, such information could include, in particular, the time of commencement of the exercises, their duration and purpose, the region in which they will be conducted, the States participating, the number and classes of vessels and aircraft involved and the on-shore facilities used for the purpose.

We advocate, as a real confidence-building measure, the conclusion of a multilateral agreement on the prevention of incidents on the high seas, analogous to the Soviet-American and Soviet-British agreements already in force in this respect. It would be useful to extend the scope of such an agreement, in addition, to the operations of general-purpose submarines.

With a view to strengthening confidence, it is important to arrive at the best possible understanding of each other's intentions and achieve predictability in naval affairs. It would be useful to discuss States' concerns in this sphere and, in so doing, to compare the necessary data on naval capacity, engage in a discussion on the principles of the use of major naval forces in military relations among States and make a comparison of the objectives of naval exercises and manoeuvres.

For these purposes the authors would be prepared, on a reciprocal basis, to provide information on the numbers of their naval vessels and aircraft by classes and the armament they carry, the size of their crews and their base ports. Information on naval capacity should also include the necessary data on the presence of naval bases and supply points abroad.

3. In view of the concern felt by many States over the problems of reliably guaranteeing the safety of shipping, a start should be made on the search for substantive solutions in this sphere. Our countries always try to make themselves
properly understood, and they have no intention of disrupting the communications which have developed in the course of history between individual States and regions. The safety of shipping is no less important to us than to other States. For these reasons, the Socialist countries are putting forward proposals aimed at ensuring the provision of guarantees of the safety of shipping, the non-use of force at sea and the creation of a situation in which any fears on the part of States in this respect would be fully allayed.

Even in the immediate future, the guarantees of the safety of shipping could include, in particular, prohibition of exercises and manoeuvres in international straits and zones of intensive shipping and fisheries, as well as in the air space above them, and of the concentration of major detachments of naval forces in such areas. In view of the considerable concern felt by many States at the growing extent of piracy, thought should be given to additional international measures to prevent it.

In developing the proposals put forward by a large number of States regarding the reduction of the danger of a surprise attack in Europe, similar measures in the naval sphere should also be agreed upon. To guarantee the safety of shipping, it is important to work towards a situation in which neither side would possess the potential for a surprise attack on the other or for deploying large-scale offensive actions at sea. Subsequently, therefore, in circumstances of enhanced security and naval détente measures, consideration could be given to the question of establishing in sectors of the major international ocean routes zones of decreased density of armaments and increased confidence, and of withdrawing offensive forces and facilities from such zones.

Prevention of threats to the freedom of shipping is a direct responsibility of the United Nations. A transition must be made from unilateral reliance on naval strength in this sphere to multilateral measures of collective security and full utilization of the possibilities of the United Nations, up to and including the establishment in specific instances of United Nations naval forces. It is important to work out the practical aspects of the establishment of United Nations naval forces. In this context, the permanent members of the Security Council and other concerned States could declare in advance what part of their strength they are prepared, if necessary, to assign to the constitution of such forces. Trial joint operations by the fleets of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of the freedom of navigation by United Nations naval forces could also be conducted in the very near future.

4. The authors, in introducing proposals on confidence-building and safety measures for marine communications, have in mind that these may pave the way for negotiations on the limitation and reduction of military activity and armaments. In the light of the statements that have been made regarding the defensive nature of military doctrines, joint efforts should be undertaken to bring about a situation in which the military strength, armaments and organizational structure of States' naval forces are limited to the level of the requirements for defence and the protection of their friends and allies, but are insufficient for the conduct of offensive operations.
Parameters and limits for naval activity and armaments need to be drawn up from the standpoint of the principle of sufficiency and the criterion of the defensive purpose of naval forces. Such parameters and limits could be considered at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament or in the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

One of the signs of the defensive purpose of naval forces should be a reduction of the complement within them of forces and matériel for attacking on-shore targets and capturing territory, including such items as aircraft carriers and other ships carrying aircraft, vessels carrying sea-launched cruise missiles, amphibious forces (marine infantry) and the respective infrastructure.

In this connection the major naval Powers could in future agree on a limitation of the regions in which their fleets' strike forces would be deployed, including limits on the deployment of amphibious forces, so as to reduce the threat of an attack from the sea. Agreement should also be reached even now to refrain from constructing new naval bases in specific regions of the seas and oceans.

Subsequently, a search should be undertaken for approaches to a simultaneous freeze on numbers of the major maritime Powers' main-class naval vessels, followed by a reduction to a balanced level.

A major problem is the accumulation of tactical nuclear weapons at sea, which increases the risk of nuclear conflict occurring. In view of the international community's concern in this respect, it would be desirable to reach agreements, first bilateral, between the Soviet Union and the United States, and then multilateral, with the participation of all the nuclear Powers, on the mutual limitation of the number of vessels equipped with such weapons.

It would also be possible to take the course of mutual withdrawal of specific types of naval armaments from specified regions of the seas and oceans. In this connection, agreement should be reached on the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. In the light of the agreements in force concerning nuclear-free zones in Latin America and the South Pacific (the Tlatelolco and Rarotonga treaties), as well as of the process of establishing a zone of peace and co-operation in the South Atlantic and a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, the idea of declaring the entire southern hemisphere a nuclear-free zone is deserving of attention.

The Soviet Union has more than once stated its readiness to renew the bilateral Soviet-United States negotiations on the Indian Ocean.

The idea of proclaiming certain bodies of water as "seas of peace" in which, on a mutually agreed basis, military activity and armaments, especially of the coastal States, would be limited, could form an integral part of the concept of zones of peace. The proposals for "demilitarized seas" are also worthy of consideration.
5. A reliable system of verification and openness in the naval sphere needs to be established. The authors of this paper could accept, on a reciprocal basis, any measures to verify agreements on confidence-building and the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, including the use of national technical means, measures based on co-operation, on-site inspections and an international verification mechanism under United Nations auspices. Naturally, access for inspection to naval bases and facilities abroad would also be required.

On the basis of reciprocity with the United States of America and the other nuclear Powers, the USSR is ready to declare whether or not its naval vessels entering foreign ports are carrying nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union is ready to participate in joint work on the establishment of technical means for verifying that naval vessels are not carrying nuclear weapons, making maximum use of the experience and technology in this field available to countries.

6. The socialist countries take a flexible approach to the question of possible ways of discussing measures in the naval sphere, and they consider it necessary to make use of all opportunities for global, regional and bilateral approaches. They propose in particular that a multilateral meeting of military experts from the major naval Powers and other concerned States should be convened in the United Nations to discuss the concerns of all groups of States and of individual countries in the naval sphere, with a view to defining practical approaches to confidence-building measures and measures to limit and reduce naval activity and armaments. The holding of such a meeting would be facilitated by implementation of the proposals for the convening of a special international conference or a meeting of the Security Council on naval issues.