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

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

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 DULY
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

Working paper submitted by Denmark

1. The multilateral disarmament deliberations since the first special session
devoted to disarmament have been characterized by a growing awareness of and
increasing concern over the conventional arms race. The time has come for the
international community to recognize the need to deal systematically with the
problems related to conventional disarmament.

2. While States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility
in pursuing arms control and disarmament, all States have responsibilities in the
field of conventional disarmament. The burden of the conventional arms race in
terms of diversion of resources from economic and social development is an urgent
problem in a large number of countries, as also recognized by the International
Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. Perceived
security needs may compel many countries to spend valuable resources, which most
can ill afford, for military purposes rather than on pressing economic and social
needs. Furthermore, the increasing sophistication of conventional weapons and the
alarming spread of highly sophisticated and destructive weapons gives a new and
dangerous edge to the continuing arms race all over the world.
3. There is thus an urgent need for all countries to explore ways and means of initiating or facilitating efforts aimed at conventional arms limitation and disarmament. The fact that all countries bear a direct responsibility in this area gives the United Nations a unique role in generating awareness of the urgency of pursuing conventional arms limitation and disarmament, and of working out measures related to conventional disarmament. The subject of conventional disarmament should therefore be kept at the forefront of the multilateral debate on disarmament in United Nations forums.

4. The United Nations study of 1984 on all aspects of the conventional arms race and on disarmament relating to conventional weapons and armed forces constituted the first effort in the United Nations at a comprehensive consideration of this subject.

5. The international interest in, and awareness of, questions related to conventional disarmament have since been demonstrated by an increasing number of national statements at the General Assembly referring to conventional weapons and to problems related to the conventional arms race. It was also reflected in the decision to continue in the United Nations Disarmament Commission the consideration of the question of conventional disarmament with a view to facilitating the identification of possible measures in the field of conventional arms reduction and disarmament. Most recently the deliberations at the forty-second General Assembly and particularly the many statements in the general debate of this special session have underlined the increasing importance being attached to conventional disarmament.

6. The mounting toll of death, destruction and human suffering inflicted by the use of conventional weapons in conflicts around the world is a sad reminder for the international community of the urgency of dealing with the problems relating to conventional weapons.

7. The Final Document of the Tenth Special Session described the broad and comprehensive framework for priorities and programmes in arms limitation and disarmament. This framework should be used as a foundation to build upon in the light of new developments. Changes in attitudes in the past have led, and are leading, to progress in arms control and disarmament in the nuclear field. It is important that the subject of conventional disarmament should also continue to be actively pursued.

8. Conventional disarmament like other disarmament efforts cannot take place in a vacuum. Therefore, endeavours to establish the political conditions conducive for progress in disarmament efforts must be vigorously pursued, not least through confidence-building measures whether military or non-military, which may be particularly suited to generate a climate of trust and to further international co-operation.

9. The adoption by the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe of the Document of the Stockholm Conference, which contains concrete, militarily significant, politically binding and verifiable confidence- and security-building measures will serve to strengthen confidence and security in Europe. Hopefully, it may also serve as a source of inspiration for similar endeavours in other regions.

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10. The regional approach to the issue of conventional arms limitation and disarmament is likely to be the most practical for achieving progress in the foreseeable future. Regional disarmament is a necessary complement to global measures and an important constituent in the step-by-step approach to global disarmament. In particular, it can facilitate global negotiations through promoting security, mutual confidence and co-operation among States.

11. There is a need for greater openness and transparency in military matters. This would also increase confidence and make verification easier. All States should make use of the United Nations reporting instrument on military budgets. An improved and comprehensive data base on military expenditures could assist in obtaining an objective assessment of military capabilities and could prevent false perceptions of assumed threats to national security. The problems related to international arms transfers should also be considered in a United Nations context.

12. The United Nations, in accordance with the Charter, has a central role in promoting disarmament, and should facilitate and encourage all disarmament measures. The subject of conventional disarmament should be actively pursued in the United Nations, as well as in other appropriate forums. It should be kept on the agenda of the regular sessions of the United Nations. The ongoing deliberations in the United Nations Disarmament Commission of issues related to conventional disarmament should be intensified. Although progress has been achieved throughout the years, the outcome of the 1988 session of the Commission was a disappointment, as the Commission was unable to agree on a substantive report to be presented to the third special session devoted to disarmament. The bilateral negotiations towards arms control and disarmament must be followed up by corresponding multilateral efforts. The United Nations, as the premier multilateral intergovernmental organisation with world-wide responsibilities in disarmament, should be capable of addressing the complex issues of conventional disarmament energetically, systematically and substantially.

13. In addition to the deliberations in the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission on how to facilitate the process of conventional disarmament, it would be welcome if the Conference on Disarmament could address the item of conventional disarmament, which is already part of its decalogue.

14. The third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament offers an opportunity to expand the area of consensus in the field of conventional disarmament. The final document of the session should include appropriate references and formulations to this end, reflecting the increased recognition of the importance of conventional disarmament.