COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE
FIFTEENTH SPECIAL SESSION
Working Group III
Agenda item 13

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

Working paper submitted by the Philippines

1. In the Action Programme of the Final Document of the International Conference
on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, it was stated that "the
United Nations should facilitate an international exchange of views and experience
in the field of conversion". 1/ The Philippines believes that for countries big or
small, the problem of converting arms industries or of reducing military facilities
or budgets in favour of development projects is a serious one which deserves
special attention. This had been acknowledged by the Panel of Eminent
Personalities on Disarmament and Development, which in April 1986 had recommended
as one of the courses of action which States could take "the promotion of measures
of conversion whenever possible within national context as well as internationally
for the benefit of socio-economic development, particularly of developing
countries".

2. Some studies on conversion have been conducted by developed countries. Yet
developing countries which have invested heavily in arms are often faced with the
twin problems of (a) how military expenditures can be reduced without undue loss of
security; and (b) how savings from arms reduction might be channelled properly
through development projects.

3. It is here where the United Nations can be tapped to serve as an advisory body
or as an exchange centre for ideas in the field of conversion.

4. With this goal in mind, the Philippines proposes the following:

   (a) As part of the United Nations machinery, advisory services on conversion
should be made available for developing countries interested in such services. The
bodies which could possibly be tapped for such advisory services would be the
United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Institute for
Disarmament Research, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the
Advisory Board on Disarmament Studies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Development Programme. All of
these bodies could include in their yearly programme a provision, either in terms o
research or studies or active expert advice, on conversion;

(b) Funding could be obtained from actual existing resources or from
contributions. Studies could also be made of obtaining funding through a tax on
armaments, as has been proposed in the past by several countries at United Nations
forums;

(c) Since there are now three regions in which United Nations Regional
Centres for Peace and Disarmament have been established – in Africa, Latin America
and Asia – dissemination of such ideas as well as exchanges of ideas on conversion
could be done through these centres.

5. The Philippines would gladly welcome other constructive proposals on this
agenda item.

Notes

1/ Report of the International Conference on the Relationship between
sect. II, para. 35, (c), (ix), f.