Tenth special session
Items 9 and 11 of the provisional agenda*


ADOPTION OF A PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 25 April 1978 from the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you excerpts concerning contemporary international problems from the statement delivered by L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, at the eighteenth congress of the All-Union Lenin Communist Youth League on 25 April 1978.

I should be grateful if you would have these excerpts circulated as an official document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly under items 9 and 11 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) O. TROYANOVSKY

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* A/8-10/10.

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ANNEX

Excerpt from the statement by Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, at the eighteenth congress of the All-Union Lenin Communist Youth League on 25 April 1978 concerning contemporary international problems.

To ensure a lasting, stable peace is the aim of our foreign policy and of its main principles, such as peaceful coexistence and détente.

Détente today is not a theory, a slogan or a pious hope. It has accounted for a good many positive actions of a quite concrete and tangible nature. In Europe, it has become the basis of relations between States and has come to affect various aspects of their existence. Soviet–United States relations, too, despite all their ups and downs, now have a new look, one which is more favourable to the cause of peace. The path of détente is recognized and supported by nations as the only one that makes sense in these difficult times.

The most essential and most pressing task of our day is to bring about a further lessening of the danger of war and to halt the growth of armaments. That is sensed by all peoples and recognized by most Governments. Further evidence of this is the fact that a session of the United Nations General Assembly specially devoted to curbing armaments and achieving disarmament – the first such session in history – is to open in a few weeks. We wish it success and will actively promote its goals.

We favour general and complete disarmament. It is not our fault that the negotiations on this subject which have been under way for nearly 20 years have reached an impasse. Even so, during that period agreements have been concluded for the limitation of armaments in certain fields. And negotiations on a number of problems are continuing.

Under existing conditions, our fight for peace is directed primarily towards lessening the threat of a new world war and of the mass destruction of human beings with the aid of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union is taking a number of major steps with this end in view. One of these is the talks being conducted with the United States for the limitation of strategic offensive arms.

As you know, United States Secretary of State Vance recently made a visit to Moscow on a mission for President Carter. A thorough exchange of views was held, and, as a result, it was possible to make a certain amount of progress in preparing an agreement on the limitation of strategic arms. By no means all problems have been solved, and we are completely unable to accept certain United States positions. I believe, however, that through mutual efforts it is possible, on the basis of a reasonable, realistic compromise, to complete the preparation of an agreement which will take account of the security interests of both Powers in an equitable manner. This will make possible an appreciable slowing of the arms race and thus contribute to the strengthening of peace.

For a number of years now, the Soviet Union has been seeking the conclusion of an agreement on the general and complete prohibition of nuclear weapons tests. /.../
We are currently conducting negotiations with the United States and the United Kingdom on the banning of tests in all environments (that is to say, underground as well). It is gratifying to note that there has been a certain amount of forward movement recently in these negotiations. One would like to hope that the matter will be brought to a conclusion and an appropriate treaty signed in the near future. This will represent a significant success in the fight for the peace and security of peoples.

Together with the other peace-loving forces of the world, the Soviet Union is making an active effort to prevent the development of a new and most inhuman means of mass destruction, namely neutron weapons. Our position in this regard is as simple and radical as it can be: before it is too late, an agreement on mutual renunciation of the production of these weapons must be reached between the States concerned. Mankind must be delivered once and for all from the emergence of neutron weapons.

The United States, which was preparing to develop a neutron bomb, has unfortunately not yet agreed to our proposal. However, President Carter recently stated that he had postponed a final decision on launching the production of neutron weapons. That does not, of course, remove the matter from the agenda; it is, at best, a half-measure. However, I am able to inform you that, in the light of this statement by the President, we, too, will not start the production of neutron weapons unless the United States does so. The rest will depend on Washington ...

In accordance with our fundamental policy aimed at lessening the threat of nuclear war, the Soviet Union has also decided to accede in an appropriate manner to the international treaty banning nuclear weapons in Latin America. In so doing, we shall, like other nuclear-weapon Powers, assume an obligation not to assist the Latin American States in gaining access to nuclear weapons and also not to use such weapons against the States parties to the treaty.

And so, comrades, you see that the work on behalf of peace is continuing and that our country is making increasing efforts to that end.

We shall seek to ensure that, in addition, my forthcoming visit to the Federal Republic of Germany not only helps to define the outlook for further broad, mutually advantageous co-operation between our two countries (which is important in and of itself) but also serves to strengthen détente and universal peace, particularly in Europe.

For some time now the opponents of détente and disarmament in the NATO countries, all those politicking generals and bellicose politicians, have been raising a storm of propaganda, spreading fictitious notions about the alleged threatening military preponderance of the States of the Warsaw Pact over the NATO bloc in Europe, aggressive intentions with respect to Europe attributed to the Soviet Union and so forth. All this, of course, in nonsense. But it is not harmless nonsense; on the contrary, it is harmful, for it serves as a justification and cover for currently dangerous and potentially aggressive actions: intensifying the arms race, building up concentrations of armed forces and saturating the international atmosphere with poisonous fumes of fear, suspicion and hostility.
The Soviet Union, which suffered more greatly than any other country from the Second World War, is second to none in wanting peace in Europe never again to be violated, in wanting Europe to be for ever a continent of lasting peace and peaceful co-operation. And it may well be that no State has done as much to achieve that purpose as has our country.

For several years now we have been trying in the negotiations at Vienna to have the level of the armed forces of the West and the East in Europe significantly lowered, without prejudice to the security of either side. Yet so far the only response has been attempts by the West to change the relationship of forces in its own favour. A few days ago, it is true, the Western countries brought to Vienna proposals that were updated to some extent. In them the views of the socialist States are taken into account after a fashion, although the general impression of a one-sided approach clearly remains. Well, we will keep on trying. We are ready to do everything in our power to find mutually acceptable solutions and to relax military tension in that part of the world where it is especially great and dangerous.

Everyone should know that the Soviet Union not only is not fostering any aggressive schemes and is not building up any "strike forces" in Europe for actions against the West but, on the contrary, has been doing and will continue to do everything possible to relax tension and promote understanding. Unlike the NATO countries, we have not expanded our armed forces in Central Europe for a long time and we do not intend - I wish to state this with the greatest emphasis - we do not intend in the future to increase them by even one soldier or one tank.

We call upon the Western States to follow that good example.

Seeking to distort the meaning and purpose of the Soviet Union's foreign policy, imperialist propaganda maintains that there is some sort of contradiction between our country's pursuit of détente and peaceful coexistence and our relations with States which have freed themselves from the colonial yoke. They are trying to ascribe to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries interference in the affairs of the young States. They even go so far as to accuse them of "political expansion" and "heightening tension". All this, of course, is pure fabrication and has nothing to do with reality.

We want to develop friendly co-operation with those countries on the basis of full equality. We support their independence, we support their development in conditions of peace and social progress. The USSR consistently advocates strict respect for the sovereignty of those States, as of all others, non-intervention in their internal affairs and the inviolability of their frontiers.

But the imperialist Powers - either openly or in a barely disguised form - are constantly interfering in the affairs of the independent liberated States. They are interfering so as to prevent their progressive development. They infringe their sovereignty in order to protect the mercenary interests of their monopolies and the plans of their military strategists.

The result of such interference, as a rule, is that violence occurs and the rights of the people are trampled underfoot. That happens either within
the State in question, as, for example, in the case of Chile, or in the form of open external aggression, an example of which is to be found in the brazen acts of the rulers of Israel.

The facts show that the more successfully the peoples of the young States protect and uphold their independence and their vital interests, the stronger are the unity and solidarity of those States and the firmer their friendship with the countries of the socialist world, on whose support they can rely in their just cause.

Examples are not hard to find. It was thanks to the solidarity of the progressive forces that the efforts of the imperialists and their henchmen to overthrow the people's power in Angola and disrupt the revolution in Ethiopia were frustrated.

Peace, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for independence and territorial integrity, equality of rights, mutually advantageous co-operation - these are the indispensable and most important elements of détente and lasting peace. That is our policy in Europe, as it is in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America, in all parts of the world. If anyone thinks that slanderous fabrications and threats will divert the Soviet Union from its course, he is sadly mistaken.

Comrades! Analysing the world situation, we reach the firm conclusion that the time has come to think about the complete cessation of further quantitative and qualitative increases in the arms and armed forces of States having a major military potential and thus to create the conditions for their subsequent reduction. Specifically, we urge consideration of a programme for the implementation of the following measures within a fixed time-limit:

Cessation of the production of nuclear weapons of all types;

Cessation of the production of, and prohibition of, all other types of weapons of mass destruction;

Cessation of the development of new types of conventional weapons of great destructive force;

Refraaining from expanding the armies and increasing the quantity of conventional weapons of the Powers which are permanent members of the Security Council and of the countries associated with them under military agreements.

Of course, to reach agreement on such matters is not easy. Probably a start could be made from one particular angle, for example, the cessation of the production of nuclear weapons, as we have already proposed. But the important thing is this: the whole task is simplified by the fact that the implementation of these measures would not affect the relationship of forces as it exists now between the States. No one would be the loser.

We cannot forget and we do not have the right to forget that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons still hangs over the world, creating among the peoples fear for their fate. Clearly its elimination requires the joint efforts of all the nuclear States. But each one of them can and must make its contribution. The Soviet Union, for its part, wishes to state as emphatically as it can that we are /...
against the use of nuclear weapons, that only extraordinary circumstances, only aggression against our country or its allies by another nuclear Power, could compel us to have recourse to that extreme means of self-defence.

The Soviet Union is doing and will continue to do everything possible to prevent the outbreak of an atomic war, to ensure that the peoples will not be the victims of an atomic strike - whether the first one or a subsequent one. That is our firm policy and we shall act accordingly.

To protect our earth and pass it on to the younger generation with all its wealth and beauty, not made ugly by the flames of a nuclear holocaust - that, in our opinion, is the goal towards which the efforts of mankind should be directed. The Soviet Union will do everything in its power to preserve and strengthen peace. And we believe, dear young friends, that your future will be the happiness of free work in a peaceful world.