DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
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Agenda item 9

SUBSTANTIVE CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES RELATING TO CONVENTIONAL
DISARMAMENT INCLUDING THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
CONTAINED IN THE STUDY ON CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT

Working paper submitted by India

1. The priorities on disarmament have been established by the first special
session of the General Assembly on Disarmament held in 1978 and are reflected in
paragraph 45 of the Final Document. These are:

   (a) Nuclear weapons;

   (b) Other weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons;

   (c) Conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively
       injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and,

   (d) Reduction of armed forces.

2. Nuclear disarmament must continue to have the highest priority as long as
there exists a nuclear threat to the human race and to our planet. Accordingly,
these priorities are even more valid in view of the escalating nuclear-arms race,
on earth and in other space. A conventional war can escalate into a nuclear war
but the reverse is not true. Therefore, conventional disarmament can and must be
resolutely pursued within the framework of progress towards general and complete
disarmament under effective international control.

3. Since the beginning of the 1980s, military spending has been growing, on an
average, by over 3 per cent per annum in real terms. This rate of growth is
substantively higher than the rate of growth during the 1970s. It implies that an
ever-increasing share of world resources is being transferred each year to military
use. There exists a direct relationship between expenditure on armaments and on
economic and social development, which justifies the demand for release of these resources, both military and non-military, hitherto blocked for military purposes to economic and social development in the world, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries.

4. Approximately three fourths of the world military expenditure (currently estimated at one trillion dollars per annum) is accounted for by the nuclear-weapon States and the Member States belonging to the two military alliances. The same nuclear-weapon States and Member States belonging to the two military alliances account for more than 93 per cent of the international arms transfers. There exists therefore, a linkage between nuclear weapons and conventional weapons because the nuclear-weapon Powers and the two military alliances account for the largest arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons. It is necessary that these countries should take a lead in ending the arms race, both nuclear and conventional, by halting the research, development and deployment of new types of weapons and reducing and eliminating their existing stockpiles.

5. Conventional weapons do not include only orthodox or traditional weapons which have been used in the past but also new weapons based on "emergent technologies", which need not be weapons of mass destruction. These include weapons with laser guidance, particle beams or other directed energy weapon systems.

6. Isolated measures in the field of conventional disarmament offer little hope for success, specially if these are used to seek advantage in other areas of military activity. It is clear therefore, that progress in curbing the nuclear-arms race would facilitate the conventional disarmament effort - directly or indirectly - for example by improving relations among the nuclear-weapon States. In the absence of tangible progress in dealing with the nuclear-arms race, several States, both nuclear and non-nuclear, may hesitate to move far in the direction of conventional disarmament. This underlines the importance of implementing the Programme of Action laid down in the Final Document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament.

7. In conclusion, it may be emphasized that the highest priority should continue to be given to nuclear disarmament, in particular, removing the threat of nuclear war and reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons. Conventional disarmament must be approached in this overall context and in a global approach. Within this frame of reference, it must be reiterated that countries with the largest military arsenals of conventional weapons (who also happen to be nuclear-weapon States and members of the two military alliances) and those with the largest military expenditures bear a special responsibility. Next, due attention should be given to regions which possess the highest concentration of nuclear and conventional forces. The international arms transfers, military alliance arrangements pertaining to these transfers and the related security doctrines on which such transfers are postulated also provide an important insight into the work to be undertaken on this agenda item.

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