1. At its forty-first session, the General Assembly by resolution 41/59 K of 3 December 1986, entitled "Naval armaments and disarmament", inter alia, requested the Disarmament Commission to continue, at its forthcoming session in 1987, the substantive consideration of the question and to report on its deliberations and recommendations to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

2. In its consideration of the item, the Commission had before it the following documents:

   (a) Report of the Secretary-General containing the study on the naval arms race (A/40/535);

   (b) Chairman's paper on agenda item 8 (A/CN.10/83);

   (c) Working paper submitted by Finland (A/CN.10/90);

   (d) Working paper submitted by Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (A/CN.10/92);


3. On 4 May 1987, the Disarmament Commission decided to follow last year's course of action and hold substantive and open-ended consultations on the subject. Pursuant to that decision, the Chairman delegated the actual conduct of the substantive and open-ended consultations to a "friend of the Chairman": in casu, the representative of Indonesia. The Consultation Group held seven meetings on the item.
4. In the course of the consultations participants continued their consideration of various aspects of the question including the possibility of measures of naval arms limitation and disarmament, as well as the desirability of applying confidence-building measures at sea.

5. Participants reaffirmed that the significant elements and principles that were identified in the paper arising from the consultations held in 1986 (A/CN.10/83) remained valid and provided a good basis for further consideration of the subject. It was acknowledged that, as stated in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session, in the task of achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament, all nuclear-weapon States, in particular those among them which possess the most important nuclear arsenals, bore a special responsibility, and that States with the largest military arsenals also had a special responsibility in pursuing the process of conventional arms reductions: these principles were equally applicable to the naval dimension of the global arms race and related issues.

6. It was recognized that, as stated in the Study on the Naval Arms Race, naval forces are not independent of other military forces and that they should be considered in their general military context. There is no such thing as an independent naval balance or parity. By the same token, the reduction of naval nuclear forces and naval non-nuclear forces falls within the framework of nuclear and conventional disarmament respectively, and therefore should follow the general approaches of nuclear and conventional disarmament efforts.

7. There was widespread concurrence of view that, at this stage, confidence-building measures of various kinds, both in the global and the regional context, would be more amenable to further consideration and possible negotiation in the appropriate forums. It was recognized that a fundamental feature of the global maritime environment, both military and non-military, was freedom of navigation and that naval confidence-building measures should be in harmony with current law of the sea.

8. In this regard, suggestions of initiatives that might be of relevance included: extension of existing confidence-building measures to seas and oceans especially to areas with the busiest sea-lanes; prior notification of naval activities; the invitation of observers to naval exercises or manoeuvres; limitations on the number or scale of naval exercises in specific regions; exchange of information on naval matters; greater openness on naval matters in general; strict observance of existing maritime measures designed to build confidence.

9. It was felt that the possibility should be pursued of negotiating a multilateral agreement concerning the prevention of incidents at sea beyond the territorial sea in addition to existing agreements. A multilateral agreement of this nature should be formulated in such a way as to respond to the needs of all interested nations for enhancing safety at sea without diminishing the traditional freedom of navigation.

10. A number of participants highlighted the benefits to be derived from the maritime aspects of existing proposals for zones of peace in certain regions, together with recent developments such as the declaration by the General Assembly
of a zone of peace and co-operation in the South Atlantic. The positions of
participants on this issue were noted.

11. Further discussion took place on the issue of the practicability of updating
some of the existing laws of sea warfare. In this connection specific mention was
made of the possibility of updating the Hague Convention VIII of 1907 on Laying of
Automatic Submarine Contact Mines, and the possibility of further work on the
development of international law concerning exclusion zones with particular
reference to the safety of non-belligerent vessels engaged in peaceful maritime
activities. It was noted that these issues need extensive consideration in the
appropriate forums.

12. In the consideration of possible measures, it was suggested that a useful way
of categorizing such measures was by identifying the objectives or purposes that
they would serve. In this regard such objectives as peacetime security, security
for non-military activities at sea and seaboard security could well be achieved
through effective and relevant confidence-building measures.

13. It was recognized that the harmful effects that conflict at sea could have on
the freedom of navigation and other uses of the sea, in accordance with current
international law, for States neutral to or otherwise not involved in an ongoing
conflict, have been amply demonstrated in recent years. The maintenance of freedom
of navigation and other uses of the sea is an important objective for all States
neutral to or otherwise not involved in such conflicts.

14. The proliferation of nuclear weapons at sea, particularly the aspect of
geographical dispersion of such weapons, has given rise to mounting concern on the
part of many States. It was recognized that most strategic nuclear weapons are
already the subject of certain bilateral negotiations. The view was expressed that
early consideration should be given by States to effective measures of curtailing
the numbers and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons at sea but some participants
noted that such weapons could not be seen in isolation from the overall military
balance.

15. Participants felt that the subject of naval armaments and disarmament should
continue to be the subject of further discussion by the Disarmament Commission at
its next substantive session.