1. Conventional disarmament is as urgent a matter as nuclear disarmament for several reasons. Most directly, it is conventional weapons which have been and are killing people in enormous numbers. In addition, a full-scale conventional war would now be more horrible and devastating even than the Second World War. Furthermore, nuclear weapons cannot be dealt with in isolation. The greater reductions in the nuclear field, the more important it becomes to make progress in redressing conventional imbalances. Fundamentally, the objective of both conventional and nuclear disarmament should be equal security for all States at the lowest possible level of armaments and forces.

2. All States bear an equal responsibility in the field of conventional arms limitation. All States possess conventional armaments. Today, many developing States devote proportionately more of their GNP to procuring such weapons than is the case for developed countries. The fact that all countries bear a direct responsibility in this area enables the United Nations to play a unique role in trying to solve the problems of conventional disarmament. The subject should therefore be kept at the forefront of the multilateral debate on disarmament in United Nations fora.

3. As a general principle, the issue of conventional arms limitation must be treated as a unified problem. It is impractical to try and single out one particular area or type of weapon, such as naval forces or airforces, and expect progress in this individual case without recognizing where these fit into the overall military picture and conventional force structures.

4. The regional approach to the issue of conventional arms limitation is likely to be the most practical for achieving progress in the foreseeable future. At the MBFR talks and the CDE, Europe showed that progress can be pursued and, in some
areas, worthwhile results achieved. The optimism created by the positive outcome of the CDE talks and the concrete measures embodied in the Stockholm Agreement show that such an incremental approach to confidence-building and ultimately conventional arms limitation is both practical and useful. This lesson is particularly important as it has been applied to a geographical area where there is one of the heaviest concentration of both arms and social and political differences.

5. The process embodied by MBFR and CDE may be easier to implement and quicker to reach fruition in regions where the problems which exist in Europe are only present to a lesser degree. More emphasis therefore needs to be given to a regional approach to conventional arms limitation, as initial building blocks towards a more global solution to the dangers raised by conventional armaments.

6. In any consideration of conventional arms limitation, security will need to be taken fundamentally into account. Until the political climate in the world makes possible the full implementation of the collective security provisions of the United Nations Charter, it is very important that States should be able to combine together in defensive alliances to provide for their own security. Proposals are unrealistic and unlikely to be fruitful if they fail to take sufficient account of the need to preserve, and if possible enhance, the security of all concerned. Inter alia this will mean that the objective of continued security and greater stability should be realized in a way which takes account of and seeks to redress regional imbalances and to exclude circumvention.

7. Nor is it sufficient to think in terms of numerically equal or percentage reductions in an area such as Europe. Meaningful successful conventional arms control in Europe is predicated on recognition of the fact that substantial imbalances exist and must be eliminated, particularly those which are prejudicial to stability and security. This will by definition require asymmetrical reductions. Conventional arms control can best be achieved by the side which enjoys superiority in a particular area reducing its forces rather than by the side which is inferior building theirs up.

8. As part of the aim of establishing a stable and secure balance of forces at lower levels, there is a need to focus not only on conventional forces and weapons but also on military strategies and the postures and deployments of military forces. Weapons are rarely unambiguously offensive or defensive. It is how they are deployed and the strategies which control them which largely determine the character of individual weapon systems. The priority aim here should be the elimination of the capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action.

9. As in other areas, any provisions of a conventional arms control agreement would have to be properly verifiable by means of an effective verification régime, including on-site inspection and willingness by all concerned to discuss, both before, during and after the negotiations the size, nature and disposition of their armed forces.

10. There remains a pressing need for increased transparency for both military budgets and general military activities. It is not possible to utilize a mechanism for the reduction of military budgets as an effective arms limitation measure until
11. Spending on armaments is undertaken for perceived security reasons, connected with ensuring an adequate level of defence. Therefore, States will be unlikely to undertake disarmament measures purely to ease the economic burden of defence. States will only be ready to pursue arms limitation and disarmament when they can be certain that their security will not be diminished. Thus, whilst the economic benefits may follow from reduced military spending, they are not in themselves a sufficient rationale for pursuing arms limitation and disarmament.

12. The control and limitation of arms transfers is an important mechanism for constraining the conventional arms race. Here as elsewhere greater transparency and openness will be needed before the real facts can be established and any measures can be contemplated. The limitation of arms transfers can best be achieved by efforts on the part of both recipient and supplier nations. It is not only a question of trade between developed supplier nations and recipient nations among developing countries. The trade between developing countries is constantly growing in both volume and in the sophistication of the individual weapons involved. The optimum solution may be for the nations of a particular region to agree amongst themselves the level and type of forces for their own particular area. They could then collectively approach all of the relevant suppliers with the objective of reaching binding agreements which would ensure that the provisions agreed to by the nations of a region are strictly adhered to.