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NAVAL ARMAMENTS AND DISARMAMENT

Confidence-building measures at sea

Working paper: Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic and
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

To supplement working papers A/CN.10/73 and Corr.1, A/CN.10/80 and A/CN.10/92, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consider it necessary to submit the following considerations and proposals.

1. The authors of the document express their firm conviction that in the modern world security is a political problem which must be solved by political, not military, means. This applies in full to security on the seas and oceans as well. In the light of this understanding they consider it necessary for talks to start with the participation of the major naval States, especially the nuclear Powers, and also of other interested States, on the limitation and prohibition of military activity in agreed marine areas, the limitation and reduction of naval armaments and the extension of confidence-building measures to the seas and oceans for the purpose of guaranteeing the safety and freedom of navigation. The forum for consideration of these problems could be a special international conference or a meeting of the Security Council.

2. The importance of confidence-building measures at sea was emphasized in the United Nations study on the naval arms race (A/40/535). In the Consultation Group of the Disarmament Commission on agenda item 8, "Naval armaments and disarmament", there was widespread concurrence of views that, at the present stage, confidence-building measures of various kinds would be amenable to further consideration and possible negotiation in the appropriate forums both in the global and the regional context. This understanding, as well as a number of proposals in this field, can be found in the Chairman's paper A/CN.10/102 of 22 May 1987.
3. The authors of the document note the importance of confidence-building measures in strengthening security and stability and in creating favourable opportunities for progress in the field of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. In this connection, they draw attention to the danger presented by the growing presence and spread of nuclear weapons, including tactical nuclear weapons, in the seas and oceans. Confidence-building measures have among other things an important role to play in the establishment and functioning of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace which include parts of the seas and oceans. The authors of the document welcome the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific.

Agreement on and the implementation of confidence-building measures in the seas and oceans and the strengthening of the safety of international sea-lanes would promote the easing of tension and the reduction of the danger of military conflict. This in turn would promote the development of international co-operation in the harnessing of marine resources and the conservation of the marine environment.

Confidence-building measures at sea and guarantees of the safety of shipping must be militarily significant and politically binding. They must provide for appropriate international procedures to verify their implementation.

An important initial step in reducing tension in the maritime sphere could be the earliest possible agreement on confidence-building measures and measures for the safety of shipping, covering in the first place those areas through which the busiest sea-lanes pass or in which the probability of conflict is high. This would involve such measures as prior notification of naval exercises, movements and manoeuvres; invitation of observers to them; limitations on the number, scale and intensity of exercises by naval forces; refraining from conducting naval exercises and manoeuvres in international straits and adjacent regions and from using military weapons, in the course of exercises, in areas which include traditional sea-lanes; exchange of information on naval issues, etc. An important measure for confidence-building and the strengthening of security of international sea-lanes would be the conclusion of a multilateral agreement concerning the prevention of incidents on the high seas and in the airspace above them.

4. The authors of the document advocate priority consideration of and agreement on confidence-building measures and measures to increase the safety of sea-lanes, both in a global context and with reference to specific areas of the world's oceans and seas.

5. Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union take the position that, at the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, the confidence-building measures adopted at the first stage of its work should be developed and expanded, in parallel with the elaboration of qualitatively new confidence- and security-building measures, including limitation of the number and scale of military exercises and the extension of confidence-building measures to the activities of naval and air forces.

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6. There is a need to begin talks with the participation of the USSR, the United States and interested Asiatic countries on confidence-building measures in the military context in respect of the Pacific Ocean. During the talks the following issues, inter alia, could be considered:

- Limitation of areas in which vessels carrying nuclear weapons could sail, so that they would be unable to approach the coast of another country to a distance where it was in range of their on-board nuclear weapons;

- Limitation of anti-submarine rivalry, and prohibition in specific areas of anti-submarine activity, including that conducted by air forces;

- Limitation of the scale of naval exercises and manoeuvres in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and adjoining seas to no more than one or two large-scale naval (including naval-aviation) exercises and manoeuvres within one year; timely notice of such manoeuvres; mutual renunciation of naval exercises or manoeuvres in international straits and adjacent areas, and of the use during the exercises of battle weapons within the areas of traditional sea-lanes;

- Elaboration of international guarantees for the safety of shipping in the Indian Ocean and its constituent seas, straits and bays; maintenance of the safety of air routes in that region; and the elaboration of collective measures against terrorism on ships and aircraft in the Indian Ocean.

7. As a first step towards the substantial reduction of naval activity in the Mediterranean Sea, action should be taken to freeze the number and capability of Soviet and United States naval forces in the region, and subsequently to set limits for them.

Before reaching agreement on common confidence-building measures in the spirit of the Stockholm Agreements, the USSR and the United States should inform each other and all Mediterranean countries ahead of time about the movement of warships and about naval exercises, and to invite observers to them.

Mediterranean and other interested States might elaborate principles and methods for ensuring the safety of highly-frequented shipping lanes, especially in international straits.

8. Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the USSR draw attention to the need for consultations to begin between the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the reduction of military activity and limitation of the scale of naval and air-force activity in the Baltic, North, Norwegian and Greenland Seas, and on the extension to them of confidence-building measures, including the Barents Sea in the zone covered by such measures.

With a view to reducing the level of military confrontation in the north, agreement should be reached, in particular, on the following:

- Limiting the number of major naval and air exercises in the maritime areas in question to one exercise in two years;
- Creating in the North and West Atlantic agreed areas for the USSR and the United States respectively in which actions of anti-submarine forces and weapons of politico-military alliances would be prohibited;

- Refraining, on a reciprocal basis, from the conduct of naval exercises in areas of the North Atlantic through which major ocean and sea trade routes pass, as well as in areas of intensive seasonal fishing;

- Not permitting the concentration of groups of naval forces in international straits and the approaches to them, and defining the parameters for limiting such groups in terms of the number and classes of vessels and other characteristics;

- Including the Baltic Straits, the Denmark Strait, the English Channel and the region of Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Scandinavia in the limitation zone.

9. Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the USSR hope that the Disarmament Commission will undertake the thematic consideration of these and other proposals concerning confidence-building measures at sea and guarantees of the safety of shipping with a view to reaching agreement on substantial recommendations for submission to the General Assembly at its third special session devoted to disarmament.