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GENERAL  
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UNITED NATIONS  
CENTRE FOR DISARMAMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL AND SECURITY CO-OPERATION  
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A/CN.10/23/Add.1  
6 May 1981  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/FRENCH/  
RUSSIAN



DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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BELGIUM

/Original: French/  
/16 April 1981/

Belgium has for some time been expressing concern at the unrestrained nature of the arms race resulting from growing political, economic and social imbalances between peoples. This anxiety was forcefully expressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Charles Ferdinand Nothomb, during the thirty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Belgium therefore attaches great importance to the question of reducing military budgets and to the search for means of comparing defence expenditures effectively.

The aim, initially, is to achieve a balanced and gradual reduction in the expenditures of the major military States, and subsequently of all States.

Belgium was able to join in the consensus which emerged on resolution 35/142 A in so far as it is suitably complemented by resolution 35/142 B, which emphasizes the introduction of reliable ways of comparing military budgets as an indispensable means of achieving the desired reductions without impairing any country's security.

Belgium takes considerable interest in the activities which the Secretary-General has been requested to undertake with the assistance of an ad hoc group of experts under the terms of resolution 35/142 B and appeals to all countries, especially those which have a different budgetary system, to take an active part in this effort.

BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

/Original: Russian/  
/4 May 1981/

The reduction of military budgets has been on the agenda of the United Nations for a number of years, and the pressing nature of the problem is not diminishing but growing year by year. More and more resources are being misspent around the world on military ends which have nothing to do with creation or development. Despite mankind's yearnings and vital needs, despite resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly, a number of States, including some permanent members of the Security Council, have embarked on a long-term programme for expanding their military budgets and establishing new armaments programmes. As a result, and in spite of the socialist countries' willingness to make concrete moves on disarmament, additional obstacles are arising to hamper the strengthening of security in Europe and around the globe, progress towards military détente and disarmament continues to be inadequate, the build-up of armed forces and weapons in a number of States goes on, and weapons of destruction menacing all nations, especially nuclear weapons, are being stockpiled and deployed in growing numbers.

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As was stated in the report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delivered at the twenty-sixth Congress of the CPSU by L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, "It is not preparations for war, condemning people to the senseless squandering of their material and spiritual assets, but the strengthening of peace that provides the clue to tomorrow". Such sentiments provide the foundations for Soviet policy on disarmament and, in particular, on the reduction of military budgets. The Soviet Union was already calling for a reduction in military budgets many years ago, and it has repeatedly affirmed its willingness to enter into talks on the subject at any time.

If States reduce their military budgets, the outcome should be a resolve not to pursue the arms race further, a downturn in military programmes, and the release of resources for economic and social development purposes.

The principle of not jeopardizing the security of any of the parties must underlie the process of reducing military budgets.

That process could be initiated, as the Soviet Union has suggested, by States with major economic and military potential, including all the permanent members of the Security Council. A regional approach to reducing military spending may also be adopted. In this case the idea of offsetting some States' reductions in their military budgets by increases in military spending by the other allies in their blocs must be ruled out.

As a first step towards reducing military spending, an understanding might be reached on freezing it at its present level. Then arrangements would have to be made for a transition from the freeze to a gradual reduction in military spending.

One method for reducing expenditure may be to reach an understanding on specific amounts by which each of the States participating in the talks would reduce its budget, in either percentage or absolute terms. An initial period, acceptable to the parties involved, of, say, three years could be considered as a first step.

Bearing in mind the close link between disarmament and development, it would be advisable to assign a predetermined portion of the resources released as a result of such understandings to economic and social development in the newly independent countries. If such a transfer of resources is to take place, consideration could be given to setting up machinery within the United Nations for allocating the released resources among the developing countries on a fair, non-discriminatory basis, bearing in mind the most vital needs of the beneficiary countries.

In view of the possibility of liberating resources through the important partial disarmament measure of ending nuclear weapons production and reducing nuclear stockpiles until they are eliminated entirely, it would be advisable to reach an understanding that such resources should be devoted to peaceful ends and not transferred to other parts of the nuclear States' military budgets.

Obligations under the understandings reached must be fulfilled in good faith, and the process of reaching such understandings must not be dragged out on the contrived excuses that military budgets are "impenetrable" or that a standard accounting procedure is necessary. The programmes adopted by some States, which provide for automatic increases in military spending, the rapid transfer of armed forces to parts of the world far from home, and the establishment of military bases in other States' territory, bear witness to the fact that these contrived excuses conceal a lack of political will for disarmament and for the reduction of military budgets in particular.

The technical research into the comparability of military budgets which has been carried out by the United Nations in recent years is divorced from reality and cannot promote the reduction of military spending; nor can attempts to evolve a detailed accounting mechanism for military expenditure, which represent a departure from specific decisions already taken in the United Nations on reducing military budgets.

The forerunner and basis for successful talks on reducing military budgets must be a mutual undertaking by the parties involved not to try to attain military supremacy.

Besides the attainment of mutually-agreed reductions, unilateral moves by States in this area, in accordance with paragraph 41 of the Final Document, are also to be welcomed. Prompted by the peace-loving principles of its foreign policy, the Soviet Union is known to have unilaterally reduced its appropriations for defence purposes over a period of years, as a sign of goodwill.

The current international situation makes it imperative to make an immediate start on business-like negotiations on all aspects of limiting the arms race and of disarmament, including reductions in military spending: the negotiations should be conducted on the basis of the principles laid down in the Final Document and the Declaration on International Co-operation for Disarmament.

If all States are guided by the interests of peace and the security of peoples and show the necessary political will, a further dangerous intensification of the arms race can be averted through concerted efforts and the opportunity created of maintaining a balance of forces at a lower level.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

/Original: English/

/28 April 1981/

1. The Federal Republic of Germany believes that reducing the burden of military expenditures in the world is one of the most important goals of all efforts to establish, through concrete and balanced negotiated results, enhanced security and stability of all States at lower levels of military potential. The Federal Republic of Germany will continue to co-operate actively in these efforts within the United Nations and in other fora.

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2. In connexion with the question of reducing military budgets, the first concrete task to be solved is that of making military expenditures of different States comparable. The Federal Republic of Germany has contributed to and thus supported the United Nations activities in this field and will continue to do so.

In 1980 the Federal Republic of Germany participated in the test run of the standardized reporting instrument for military expenditures developed by a group of United Nations experts.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 35/142 B, a new group of experts has now been asked to further refine that reporting instrument. This Group of Experts has also been asked to examine and suggest solutions to the question of comparing military expenditures among different States, as well as to problems of verification that will arise in connexion with agreements on the reduction of military budgets. The Federal Republic of Germany continues to support fully this ongoing work of the expert Group. The availability of a reliable reporting instrument constitutes a precondition for agreements on the freezing and reduction of military budgets. A wider participation by States from all regional groups and different economic systems in the further development of the reporting instrument is necessary. The Federal Republic of Germany appeals to all States to co-operate actively in this endeavour.

An important step towards enhancing necessary transparency in the field of military expenditures would be the establishment of United Nations registers, as suggested by the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

3. The guiding principles for further action in this field are those set out in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament.

The Federal Republic of Germany believes that the reduction of military budgets can only be dealt with as a complementary measure in connexion with other steps towards disarmament. It cannot take the place of other steps.

Agreements on the reduction of military budgets must not affect the security of any State concerned. Such agreements must be based on mutuality and transparency, as well as provide for adequate verification.

UKRAINIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

/Original: Russian/

/20 April 1981/

The Ukrainian SSR invariably and consistently supports the ending of the arms race and the transition to disarmament. One of the simplest and most effective ways of achieving this aim is by reducing military expenditures. Representatives of the Ukrainian SSR have repeatedly confirmed this position of principle at

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sessions of the United Nations General Assembly and other international forums. Proceeding from this position, the delegation of the Ukrainian SSR to the thirty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly supported resolution 35/142 A on the reduction of military budgets.

Mankind cannot reconcile itself to the uninterrupted growth of military expenditures. Because of the arms race, huge material resources are diverted from solving the urgent economic and social problems confronting the peoples of the world. However, leading figures in a number of countries are supporting increased appropriations for military needs, building up their armed forces in other areas of the world and doing everything to start a new spiral in the arms race so as to achieve military supremacy over other countries. Such a course is profoundly alien to the socialist world. This is confirmed with full force by the resolutions of the recent Twenty-sixth Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, which envisaged a more radical redirection of the national economy to solving the multifarious tasks connected with improving the people's well-being.

The Ukrainian SSR considers that States which have great economic and military potential, and primarily permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, ought to start talks on the specific scale of reductions by each of them in their military budgets, expressed either as a percentage or in absolute figures. Of course, understandings on the freezing or reduction of military expenditures can also be reached on a regional or some other basis.

It is assumed that a certain part of the savings made by reducing military appropriations should be used to give assistance to developing countries, taking due account of their urgent needs and requirements. In that case, it will be necessary to agree the specific size of the sum which will be set aside for aid to developing countries by each State cutting military appropriations, and also to envisage machinery for allocating fairly the funds set aside for such aid.

If States Members of the United Nations show the political will and desire to attain concrete results in solving this pressing problem, it will be possible to bring about a reduction of military appropriations on a voluntary basis. In that case, there is no need to work out a system of verification and standardized reporting or to carry out, within the United Nations, research into the comparability of military expenditures which is divorced from reality.

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