REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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The People's Republic of Bulgaria, together with the other socialist countries, has a practical approach to the problem of reducing military expenditures. From the very outset it supported the clear and realistic proposal made by the Soviet Union in 1973 and adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 3093 A (XXVIII) on the reduction of the military budgets of States permanent members of the Security Council by 10 per cent and utilization of part of the funds thus saved to provide assistance to developing countries. Bulgaria also supports the proposal made by the Soviet Union at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, providing that States with a large economic and military potential, including all the States permanent members of the Security Council, should agree on specific amounts by which each of them would reduce its military budget not in terms of percentage points, but in absolute terms. This rational proposal would provide an opportunity for making the reduction of military budgets the subject of immediate business-like negotiations and an accepted international practice. In spite of their constructive nature, these proposals have not been implemented. In the opinion of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the reason for this is the unwillingness of a number of States, including certain permanent members of the Security Council, to reduce their military budgets. In order to conceal this unwillingness, demands have been made regarding the prior solution of the problem of monitoring and comparing military budgets, and the mechanism for the standardized accountability of military expenditures. This position has led to a deadlock on the question of reducing military budgets. Furthermore, the abstract, irrelevant efforts within the United Nations to investigate and formulate in detail certain of these questions not only does not promote the solution of the problem but, on the contrary, diverts attention from the core of the matter and the main objective.

The current situation regarding the reduction of military expenditures is causing serious concern. A number of countries have made an unprecedented increase in their military budgets. Their militarist policy of producing and deploying new types of nuclear missile, constructing new military bases, creating new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction, forming special rapid deployment forces, etc. threatens to lay the groundwork for a new stage in the arms race with all the attendant consequences for peace, security and the socio-economic development of peoples. Under these conditions, the problem of reducing military expenditures assumes a particularly acute and imperative nature.

The initiation of urgent negotiations with respect for the principle of equal security and non-infringement of the security of any of the parties is the best means of achieving a speedy solution of this particularly important and painful question. The task of reaching a generally acceptable agreement could be significantly facilitated if the question of freezing military budgets was considered first.
The adoption and implementation of measures for the real reduction of military expenditures could significantly contribute to efforts undertaken in other areas of disarmament. In this regard, it would be very important to observe the principle that funds released by carrying out partial disarmament measures in one area should be used for peaceful purposes and not for financing military programmes in other areas. When appropriate measures are adopted on a regional or other basis, the reduction of the military budgets of some States should not be allowed to lead to an increase in the military budgets of their allies.

Bulgaria is convinced that efforts in this field must be on a practical level in order to achieve success. On the basis of the proposals made by the Soviet Union, a real reduction of military budgets can be speedily achieved, if the States concerned show the necessary political will and readiness to do so.

CUBA

[Original: Spanish]  
[30 April 1981]

The steady growth of the military budgets of States, in addition to constituting a permanent threat to peace and the survival of mankind, represents a heavy burden for peoples and an obstacle to the social and economic development of States. Billions of dollars are currently spent each year on arms, which greatly aggravates the present financial and economic crisis and the conditions of under-development in which millions of people live.

In the opinion of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, the reduction of military expenditures, particularly by the nuclear Powers and the militarily significant States, is one of the most effective means of halting and even reversing the arms race. This is one of the main principles which should be considered in connexion with the freezing and reducing of military expenditures.

In this regard, it is necessary to recognize the need for a genuine political will on the part of all States in order to make the general reduction of military budgets effective. In recent years, the international community has witnessed unilateral measures undertaken by certain States to reduce military budgets; nevertheless, this example has not been followed and other States and military alliances have decided to increase drastically their military expenditures up to the end of this century.

Another principle which cannot be ignored in this field is the need to maintain a military balance. The reduction of military budgets must ensure that certain States refrain from seeking unilateral advantage to the detriment of the national security of others, since that would aggravate the international situation. In the opinion of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, consideration should also be given to the advisability of immediately initiating negotiations between the States with great military power, including the permanent members of the Security Council, on measures to reduce their respective military budgets.
Likewise, it is necessary to ensure that the resources which are released by disarmament measures or arms control are used only for peaceful development purposes and are not allocated to other sections of the military budgets of States.

Furthermore, the development of under-developed countries is a very important principle in this field. The Government of the Republic of Cuba considers that any multilateral agreement on reducing military expenditures should include as a fundamental question the reallocation of a substantial part of the resources released for the benefit of developing countries. This is an essential requirement for the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of international security. In the opinion of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, agreements on the reduction of military budgets must necessarily be accompanied by the cessation of the policy of hostility and aggression against States, regardless of whether this is of an economic, political or military nature, and by full recognition of the principle of non-interference and non-intervention and self-determination of peoples.

POLAND

[Original: English]
[8 May 1981]

The Government of the Polish People's Republic is convinced - as repeatedly indicated in statements of its representatives - of the urgent need to take effective steps with a view to ensuring progress towards real disarmament. In order to be effective, such steps must proceed from the principle of elimination of issues likely to provoke controversy, in other words, they should envisage simple solutions.

As it is generally known, the rate of growth of military spending worldwide - constituting as it does an index of the arms race - is accelerating. The degree of danger posed by this tendency is determined by the qualitative development of weapons systems and the growing number of States joining in the arms race.

In this context, the tasks of checking the arms race and promoting disarmament measures become imperative. Viewing these objectives from a realistic angle, it must be recognized that the freezing and reduction of military budgets constitute meaningful instruments of effective action to halt the arms race.

In the opinion of the Polish Government, actions in favour of disarmament by way of the freezing and reduction of military budgets, considered in a comprehensive manner against the background of the state of international relations which obtains at present, should be linked with the aid for development since armaments directly and indirectly depress the development of all countries. The economies of the developing countries, of course, are the ones which are affected in the most destructive way.

Therefore, the escalation of military budgets and the resultant multifaceted social, economic and political perturbations call for urgent international and universal action leading up to the freeze and reduction of military budgets. If
the achievement of a comprehensive understanding in that regard should pose major difficulties – and from the international debate on that issue it appears to be, indeed, the case -- the Polish Government believes it would be appropriate to look for the least controversial 'small steps' solution. At present, when controversy arises over the publication of military budgets, conversion rates, definitions, reporting systems and verification systems -- that approach appears to be the most realistic one.

It would, therefore, be advisable to avoid all complicated solutions which will be difficult to negotiate, even if they aim at more radical and ambitious solutions.

While considering a concrete choice of solutions based on absolute, value-oriented or relative reductions, it will be obvious that the two former ones would probably require prior international agreement not only on the size and scope of reduction but also its time schedule, relationship with quantitative reduction and the conversion rates to be adopted.

The last solution of the three, based on relative reduction, appears to be the simplest one. It is exemplified by the initiative of the Soviet Union taken at the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 3093 A (XXVIII)). Its simplicity boils down to an agreement on the definition of military spending, the percentage of reduction, the participating countries, the time-limits for the execution of reduction, the manner of transfer for development needs of the funds released through reduction - if such reduction is to be linked to development - and on a verification mechanism.

Some difficulties may arise with respect to the scope of such a reduction. They can also result from the fact that the participating States, having the option to choose the scope of reduction, might tend to cut military spending where it would hurt the least their strategic capability. It can be assumed, however, that subsequent cuts executed according to specific time-limits would gradually cover ever wider and more important areas, thus effectively limiting the strategic potentials of the participating States.

Thus, it is conceivable to propose a solution which would envisage repeat percentage reductions executed at specific intervals, it being understood that the relative value of the rate of reduction might differ each year. An agreed proportion of resources thus released could be diverted for development purposes through the specialized agencies of the United Nations system of organizations.

It must be recognized that even such a simple solution would take time and in this connexion, to ensure the most effective use of time for the pursuit of disarmament objectives, it might be appropriate to suggest the adoption of a preliminary decision on the freeze of military budgets at an agreed level or for a specific trial period.