NOTE VERBALE DATED 15 MAY 1981 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF DENMARK TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to submit to the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its third session a paper prepared by the Danish Government on general approach, structure and scope of the United Nations study on conventional disarmament.

The Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations requests that this paper be circulated as an official document of the third session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.
GENERAL APPROACH, STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
STUDY ON CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT

1. At its thirty-fifth session the General Assembly, by its resolution 35/156 A
of 12 December 1980, approved in principle the carrying out of a study on all
aspects of the conventional arms race and on disarmament relating to conventional
weapons and armed forces. The General Assembly further agreed that the
Disarmament Commission, at its present third substantive session, should work out
the general approach to the study, its structure and scope.

2. In a paper submitted to the Disarmament Commission at its second substantive
session the Danish delegation explained its reasons for recommending that such a
study be conducted, the purposes it would serve and the modalities for carrying it
out. 1/ In the present paper recommendations are made regarding the general
approach to the study, its structure and scope in the light of bilateral
consultations and discussions in the Disarmament Commission and the First
Committee of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

3. The basic principles which should guide the study can be derived from the
Final Document of the special session devoted to disarmament where it deals with
limitation and reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons. Conventional
disarmament should be pursued within the framework of progress towards general
and complete disarmament and alongside efforts to curb the nuclear-arms race and
achieve nuclear disarmament. It is evident that conventional disarmament efforts
should not be allowed to detract attention from nuclear disarmament. It is
equally important that the urgency of nuclear disarmament should not cause the
conventional aspect of disarmament to be neglected.

4. The Final Document further stressed, inter alia:

- That negotiations on the balanced reduction of armed forces and of
  conventional armament should be based on the principle of undiminished security of
  the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military
  level; 2/

- That these negotiations should be conducted with particular emphasis on
  armed forces and conventional weapons of nuclear-weapon States and other militarily
  significant countries; 2/

- That negotiations on the limitation of international transfer of
  conventional weapons, in particular, should be based on the same principle of
  undiminished security and should take into account the inalienable right to self-

1/ A/CN.10/13.

2/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Tenth Special Session,

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determination and independence of peoples under colonial or foreign domination as well as the right of recipient States to protect their security. 2/

- That all States have the duty to contribute to efforts in the field of disarmament and that they have a right to participate on equal footing in those multinational negotiations which have a direct bearing on their national security. 3/

These elements constitute fundamental principles for the study.

5. The descriptive parts of the study should consist of a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the pertinent aspects of the conventional arms race. The study should be based on open material as well as such further information as Member States may wish to make available. Consideration should be given not only to the size of present arsenals but also to the types and capabilities of weapons now being developed or deployed as well as the implications of foreseeable trends in technological developments and their consequences for disarmament.

6. The conventional arms buildup assumes a very different character in different parts of the world. This fact must of course be taken into account from the outset, and it indicates that the problems of disarmament are in many respects quite different in different regions. In fact, the conventional arms race is heavily concentrated on a limited number of countries which account for the major part of world arsenals. Other countries are also important in the context of conventional disarmament because in several cases they are involved in conflicts which could threaten international peace and security, and because regional arms races, even if modest by global standards, can have deleterious consequences for the economic and social development of the countries concerned and of other countries in their regions.

7. The very different character of the conventional arms buildup in different parts of the world points to the fact that although effective measures of conventional disarmament must be seen in a comprehensive perspective the regional dimension is of considerable importance. This interrelation is emphasized and further developed in the report of the Secretary-General on all the aspects of regional disarmament. 4/ The study on conventional disarmament should take due account of the several parts of that report relating to armed forces and conventional disarmament. It should also take due account of the conclusions in which ways are suggested to set in motion disarmament efforts in the various regions.

8. Other studies related in important ways to conventional disarmament will become available in the near future. Particular mention may be made of the study of the interrelationship between disarmament and international security, the comprehensive study of confidence-building measures, the study on reduction of military budgets and the study on the relationship between disarmament and

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3/ Ibid., para. 20.

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development. For the latter study some 45 research projects have been commissioned, many of which deal with particular aspects of conventional weapons in relation to disarmament.

9. The aim of the study should be to identify and clarify the many complex issues involved. The usefulness of the study would be greatly impaired if full account were not taken of existing differences of opinion. It is felt, however, that a political and conceptual balance is best ensured, not by imposing tight restrictions on the character and scope of the study by means of narrow terms of reference, but by the equitable geographical balance in the composition of the group of experts. Given the tradition of unanimity in reporting which has developed for these studies, the expert group should be allowed a certain degree of freedom to choose their own ways and means in carrying out the study.

10. Consequently, the general approach, structure and scope of the study should comprise the following:

- In view of the long-standing tradition for consensus-reporting in United Nations studies, this principle should also guide the expert group;

- It should be guided by the principles and perspectives set forth in the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament;

- It should seek to ascertain the facts of the conventional arms buildup, the risks and costs involved and the prospects for disarmament, including the size of present conventional arsenals, the capabilities and effects of present weapon systems and foreseeable developments;

- It should examine the different importance and the different implications of the conventional weapons and forces existing in various parts of the world;

- It should take fully into account existing relationships between conventional arms buildup and the development of the nuclear-arms race;

- It should draw, as appropriate, upon results of the study of all aspects of regional disarmament and on other relevant studies by the Secretary-General;

- It should consider the general principles and guidelines which are applicable to conventional disarmament;

- It should seek out areas in which measures to curb the conventional arms race and to achieve conventional disarmament are most urgent and seem most feasible;

- It should take into account throughout of the principle that the adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage, of the right of each State to protect its security, of the special responsibility of States with the largest military arsenals in pursuing conventional armaments reductions, and, generally, of the need to achieve an acceptable balance of the responsibilities and obligations of all States in the disarmament process.