Disarmament Commission

Views of the Chinese Delegation on Conventional Disarmament

Working Paper: China

All the wars and armed conflicts that have broken out in various parts of the world during the more than three decades since the Second World War have been fought with conventional weapons. The super-Powers have always regarded nuclear and conventional armaments as two inseparable components of their over-all military strength. Nuclear weapons serve primarily as a deterrent and a means of blackmail while conventional arms have invariably been used in actual aggression. This is particularly true of the hegemonist super-Power that has been using tanks, aircraft, artillery and warships rather than nuclear weapons in its military aggression. That is why China is in favour of giving equal importance to conventional and nuclear disarmament. It would be beneficial to world peace and the security of the small and medium-sized countries if corresponding progress could be made in conventional disarmament while striving for nuclear disarmament.

To give due consideration to conventional disarmament does not detract from the importance of nuclear disarmament; much less does it imply any failure to recognize the destruction entailed in a nuclear war, or disagreement with the priority given to nuclear disarmament. Serious efforts should be made to promote substantial progress in genuine nuclear disarmament.

The super-Powers should therefore drastically reduce their nuclear armaments. We are opposed to the possession of nuclear weapons by the racist régime of South Africa and the Israeli expansionists. We believe that pressing for corresponding progress in conventional disarmament would constitute a severe test for the super-Powers, which are neither willing to reduce their nuclear weapons nor ready to cut back their conventional arms. The cause of over-all disarmament only stands to gain therefrom.
The following proposals are submitted regarding the principles and steps of conventional disarmament studies:

1. In order to enhance the security of all countries, a basic principle should be laid down regarding conventional disarmament, namely that the two super-Powers possessing the largest arsenals have a major responsibility with regard to conventional disarmament. To begin with, they should undertake to desist from military intervention, whether direct or indirect, and the threat of force against other countries. They should withdraw all their occupation forces from abroad, dismantle all their foreign bases and terminate all forms of overseas military presence. Meanwhile, the reduction of armaments might begin with heavy or sophisticated equipment such as tanks, aircraft, artillery and warships. When these cutbacks have gone far enough, the other militarily significant countries should join them in further reducing their respective conventional arms according to a reasonable ratio and an agreed schedule.

2. Conventional disarmament should be closely linked with the safeguarding of international peace and security and with the combat against hegemonism. Conventional disarmament should serve to strengthen rather than weaken the sovereignty, independence and security of small and medium-sized countries. Pending the elimination of the threat posed by the super-Powers and the effective curtailment of expansion by the aggressive forces supported by the super-Powers, the problem for most of the small and medium-sized countries without adequate defence power is not to reduce, but to maintain and strengthen their necessary defence capabilities.

3. While formulating disarmament measures of a general nature, attention should also be given to partial measures, particularly regional measures. Zones of peace and neutrality should be established wherever feasible in accordance with local conditions and the desire of the countries concerned. The main criterion for a zone of peace is to prevent the establishment of any form of dominance and hegemony by any country in such a zone or in nearby areas that are of direct military strategic importance to such a zone, to withdraw all occupation forces, to dismantle all foreign military bases, to terminate all forms of foreign military presence and to eliminate all foreign aggression, expansion, interference and control.

4. Feasible international supervision should be prescribed for all conventional disarmament agreements.

5. Studies on the various aspects of the question of conventional disarmament are necessary for they will play a useful role in promoting such disarmament. The idea of a group of experts to be appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations is also feasible. These studies should focus on the crux of the matter - the conventional arms race. Emphasis should be placed on investigating and verifying how the super-Powers are engaged in the conventional arms race and how they resort to such arms for expansion and aggression, and on exploring, on the basis of the findings, possible ways of putting an end to their conventional arms race.