1. In its resolution 35/156 A the General Assembly 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, to be undertaken by the Secretary-General with the assistance of a group of qualified experts appointed by him on a balanced geographical basis. At its thirty-sixth session, in resolution 36/97 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish the Group of Experts. It further requested the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session in 1982 to complete its consideration of the general approach to the study, its structure and scope and to transmit the conclusions of its deliberations to the Group of Experts. The General Assembly also agreed that the Group of Experts should pursue its work after the above-mentioned session of the Disarmament Commission, taking into consideration such conclusions as the Commission may submit to it and, if necessary the deliberations at the substantive session of the Commission in 1981, in particular those reflected in paragraph 21 and annex III of the report on that session.

2. The discussions of this subject at previous sessions of the Disarmament Commission and in the First Committee of the General Assembly have been useful. It is important that discussions be continued on the problems of conventional disarmament in general and on approaches and priorities in this respect. Indeed, the main purpose of an in-depth expert study of the entire question of conventional disarmament is to assist the Commission and other relevant bodies in their task. With this in mind the study should provide a comprehensive factual assessment of the conventional arms buildup and of the problems it gives rise to and should help clarify the issues in conventional disarmament, elaborate adequate concepts and seek balanced and mutually acceptable approaches which can facilitate the achievement of practical results.
3. The Danish delegation has previously submitted its views on the general approach, structure and scope of the study. 1/ It was in particular suggested that 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 difference in importance and 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 the 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 guide-lines 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 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. 2/

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1/ Papers were submitted to the second and third substantive sessions of the Disarmament Commission in documents A/CN.10/13 and A/CN.10/25.

2/ A/CN.10/25, para.10.
4. In the opinion of the Danish delegation, however, the report of the 1981 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, particularly paragraph 21 and annex III, provides an acceptable and sufficiently detailed basis for the work of the Group of Experts in so far as the general approach, structure and scope of the study are concerned. It would be a mistake to confine too narrowly the mandate of the Group when its purpose is to reassess in depth the whole area of conventional disarmament and when the tradition of consensus-reporting and the geographical balance in the composition of the Group already ensure that the resulting report will not be partial or one-sided. Instead, the Disarmament Commission should avail itself of the present opportunity to offer guidance to the Group regarding the problems most in need of careful analysis and the approaches most conducive to concrete achievements. The following remarks are intended in this sense.

5. The discussions so far indicate that the issues relating to priorities and to the directions to be given to the study are among the most difficult and sensitive. This emphasizes the need for the study to open with a balanced factual assessment of all the aspects of the conventional arms race, including the size of conventional arsenals, their proliferation, vertical and horizontal, the capabilities and effects of present weapon systems and foreseeable developments. Such an assessment covering the risks, threats and costs inherent in the current arms buildup, but attentive to the reasons why States acquire arms, is crucial for the over-all balance and thus for the credibility and usefulness of the study. It seems to be the only way of approaching on a realistic basis and in the right perspective a number of issues, such as the relationship between nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament, the special responsibility of the most heavily armed countries, the relative importance to be given to global and regional approaches and the importance to be ascribed to the question of arms transfers in general and to each of its many different forms in particular. Without the basis provided by a global and comprehensive assessment of the conventional arms race neither the urgency nor the feasibility of specific disarmament steps can be adequately dealt with, and specific issues will be parcelled out for separate consideration, thus losing the comprehensive perspective which was a central theme emerging from the Final Document of the 1978 special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

6. Considerations of national security policy lie at the heart of the problem of disarmament. This is particularly true of conventional disarmament as limitations on conventional arms and armed forces in most cases have a direct impact on the immediate security situations and security perceptions of the countries concerned. In fact, preservation or enhancement of the security of each of the States concerned is both the main requirement for making disarmament agreements possible, and their main purpose. The key problem is to find ways in which States can protect their security without engaging in an arms race which only leads to greater insecurity for all. This problem ought to be the focus throughout the conceptual part of the study.

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the interrelationship between disarmament and international security, prepared by a group of experts, identified two approaches to achieve security without reliance on a continuous buildup of...
armaments. One is through agreements among States for mutual regulation, limitation and reduction of their armaments and armed forces. The other is to provide security through collective arrangements, such as the system based on the organs and bodies of the United Nations, primarily the Security Council with its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security and its mandate for taking enforcement action if need be. As regards the former the study stresses the need for a suitable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations and for agreements, as appropriate, on verification. It further emphasizes the fact that in the disarmament process particular attention should be paid to reduction of those weapon systems which are particularly destabilizing or which contribute most to over-all insecurity. This is one suggestion which seems worth examining in greater detail, both in general terms and in terms of the particular sources of instability in each region. By enhancing security and promoting military stability, shifts towards force structures which are more unambiguously defensive in character might be a feasible way of halting the arms race globally or in particular regions. More generally, recent studies on disarmament conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, and particularly those on regional disarmament, confidence-building measures, disarmament and international security and on disarmament and development contain concepts and recommendations which it would be fruitful to examine specifically in their application to conventional disarmament.

8. This context of the right of each State to security and of promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level also provides the proper perspective for the consideration of a number of relevant issues such as the role of verification, the contribution that effective and militarily significant confidence-building measures can make, and the different approaches to disarmament and enhanced security that have been envisaged or implemented in particular regions.

9. Finally, when it comes to practical conclusions, the study should seek to identify areas in which measures to curb the conventional arms race and to achieve conventional disarmament are most urgent and seem most feasible. The preceding analysis of the character of the arms race on the one hand, and of possible concepts and approaches on the other, should provide a framework for this part of the study which is both balanced and realistic.