DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

Working paper: India

The freezing and reduction of military expenditures must be conceived in the context of a global approach to disarmament, taking into account established objectives, principles and priorities. In carrying out these measures, States must take into account the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Negotiations on this item must be based on the principles set forth in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in accordance with provisions contained in its relevant paragraphs related to this item.

In dealing with agenda items 5 (a) and (b), what is required is the identification of concrete steps to be undertaken by States on the freezing and reduction of military expenditures based on principles that are already well known and established by consensus. In addition, the international community must work out a practical programme for the reallocation of resources now being used for military purposes to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries. To engage in a so-called identification and elaboration of the principles which should govern further action of States in the field of freezing and reduction of military expenditures would merely serve to detract attention from the urgent need to adopt concrete and practical measures in this field and involve the Commission in a sterile and fruitless debate of an academic character. Furthermore, inherent in such an exercise is a very real danger of diluting or even distorting the principles already accepted by consensus in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. An unfortunate precedent would be created for the rewriting of the provisions of the Final Document with respect to other measures of disarmament which have greater priority.

The freezing and reduction of military expenditures must be carried out in stages. During the initial stage, it is the five or six militarily significant States with the largest military arsenals which should undertake measures in this field. This is because it is these very States who account for over 80 per cent of
global military expenditures at present. It is only after significant reductions have been undertaken by these States that other States can be expected to freeze or reduce their military expenditures. The ultimate objective in this regard should be to abolish all appropriations for military purposes, except for those non-nuclear forces, armaments, facilities and establishments as are agreed to be necessary to maintain internal order and protect the personal security of citizens and in order that States shall support and provide agreed manpower for a United Nations peace force, in the context of achieving general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The adoption of measures for the freezing and reduction of military expenditures must be interrelated with other measures of disarmament within the context of progress towards general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Together with the process of freezing and reducing military expenditure, measures should be undertaken to ensure that the resources released as a result shall be reallocated, in a planned and systematic manner, to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries. The Disarmament Commission should make concrete recommendations in this regard, taking into account the report of the recent United Nations study on the relationship between disarmament and development as well as any specific proposals and views that may be submitted by Member States.

At its current session the Commission can make a valuable contribution to the forthcoming second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament by carrying out a further elaboration of the main areas identified in this working paper, namely (a) concrete measures for the freezing and reduction of military expenditures, in stages, based on the principles and guide-lines already established by consensus; and (b) a programme for the reallocation of the resources released as a result to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries. A debate on the principles which would govern the actions of States in the field of freezing and reduction of military expenditures would only serve to reopen issues that have already been settled and delay the adoption of practical and concrete steps in this field, particularly by those States who have the primary responsibility for disarmament.