DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

ITEM 4 OF THE AGENDA OF THE PRESENT SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

Working paper: Belgium

1. On 28 April 1983, Belgium submitted to the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva a paper entitled "The prevention of nuclear war - Confidence-building measures". That paper, the full text of which is reproduced below, was issued as document CD/380. It will be the subject of substantive discussions at the forthcoming summer session of the Committee on Disarmament.

2. There is a link between document CD/380 and document CD/357, submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany to the Committee on Disarmament on 29 March 1983, the latter constituting a general framework.

3. Document CD/380, for its part, advocates a very practical approach to the prevention of nuclear war and gives an illustrative list of measures which could form the subject of negotiations in that connection. It places those measures in six major categories.

   Information on nuclear matters, which would provide a better idea of the defence effort being made in nuclear matters. Such information could thus help to moderate the nuclear arms race.

   Notifications of nuclear activity. Such notifications would also help to reduce the risks of misperception or misunderstanding.

   Prevention of nuclear accidents.

   Actions by nuclear-weapon States.

   Consultations in the event of a crisis.

   Communication.

For each of these categories, document CD/380 identifies the existing bilateral measures.
4. Document CD/380 is furthermore based on the belief that there also exist tremendous possibilities for the creation of new instruments of a multilateral character, involving all the nuclear States without prejudice to the positions of each on nuclear disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests. In the course of such an undertaking, the Committee on Disarmament would also allow non-nuclear States to advance whatever arguments they considered it useful to express on the subject. The most appropriate procedures for the elaboration of an international agreement or agreements on these matters would, of course, have to be determined at a later stage.


Document CD/380

"Many practical measures are conceivable within the framework of the prevention of nuclear war, with a view to increasing confidence between the States participating in them, improving the climate of their relations and thereby reducing the risks of the use of nuclear weapons. Such measures can therefore play a not inconsiderable part in the reduction of international tensions.

They would be based on reciprocity and would in no way affect the security of the States concerned. They thus have the merit of being easily negotiable.

All nuclear-weapon States should take part in the talks leading to such measures, regardless of the views of each on the process of nuclear disarmament.

The measures contemplated also offer great flexibility in the matter of negotiation since they can form the subject of either bilateral or multilateral agreements or of a regional approach. They can also be envisaged both for peaceful situations and for periods of tension or crisis.

The elaboration of such measures should, furthermore, facilitate the process of the negotiation of nuclear arms limitation and disarmament. It would, in fact, provide the possibility of contacts during the negotiations and would permit the maintenance of those contacts during the implementation of the measures agreed on.

Lastly, such measures, without taking the place of verification measures, could help to facilitate the supervision of the application of subsequent nuclear disarmament agreements.

A clearer perception of the nuclear arsenals, possibilities and practices of other States could, through eliminating factors of fear and mistrust, help to ensure greater international stability and perhaps thereby put a brake on the nuclear arms race, pending the achievement of genuine nuclear disarmament.

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The following is a list - purely illustrative, and not exhaustive - of measures which could form the subject of negotiations in this connection.

1. **Measures concerning information on nuclear matters**

   (a) Exchanges of specific information could be prescribed as an accompaniment to disarmament agreements.

   The following may serve as examples:


   Likewise, the "memorandum of understanding" attached to the SALT II Treaty containing particulars concerning strategic offensive arms.

   The purpose of these exchanges is thus to make it easier for the parties to an agreement to verify compliance with its prohibitions.

   (b) However, exchanges of information could be agreed on, quickly, without reference to any nuclear disarmament agreement.

   Such exchanges of information between nuclear-weapon States could deal with many subjects, such as budgetary policies in nuclear matters, programmes for exercises involving nuclear weapons, measures for verifying the security of nuclear military sites and data relating to nuclear forces.

   A constant exchange of official information would undoubtedly help give a better idea of the defence effort being made by each of the nuclear-weapon States in nuclear matters. Such an exchange could help to moderate the nuclear arms race, again pending real measures of disarmament.

2. **Notification measures**

   Certain activities could form the subject of specific notifications on the part of the nuclear-weapon powers.

   This could apply to:

   Manoeuvres involving sizeable nuclear forces;

   Tests of intercontinental missiles.

   The agreement concluded between the United States and the USSR on 30 September 1971 in fact provides, in its article 4, for such notification in the event of missile launches extending beyond the national territory of one party in the direction of the other party.
3. Measures to prevent a nuclear accident

A series of precautionary measures and notifications on the part of the nuclear-weapon States could be devised so as to avoid risks of accident, incidents or misunderstandings. The 1971 Agreement between the United States and the USSR already referred to constituted a first attempt at legislation in this matter.

Another agreement was concluded between the same two States on 25 May 1972 on the prevention of incidents on the high seas.

In addition, France and the USSR (16 July 1976) and the United Kingdom and the USSR (10 October 1976) concluded "nuclear accident agreements".

Notification procedures could also be provided for in the event of a nuclear incident or accident or the detection of an unidentified object.

Undertakings could also be contemplated concerning national measures to prevent the accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons.

4. Measures relating to actions by nuclear-weapon States

Aware of the terrible consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States could undertake to avoid actions that might risk unleashing a nuclear conflict. They could also undertake to make the prevention of nuclear war a basic objective of their policies.

That was in fact the purpose of the bilateral agreement between the United States and the USSR on the prevention of nuclear war, concluded on 22 June 1973.

5. Measures providing for consultations in the event of a crisis

Undertakings to consult have already been assumed on a bilateral basis by the United States and the USSR.

This is in particular the spirit of the agreement of 1971 on measures to reduce the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war. It is also the precise purpose of article IV of the United States-USSR Agreement of 1973 on the prevention of nuclear war. Article V of the same Agreement provides for certain international authorities to be informed of the outcome of the consultations conducted.

A multilateralization of these consultation procedures could be arranged among all the nuclear-weapon powers (with a system for the information of others of the results of such consultations).

6. Measures relating to communications

In order to make these consultations possible in an atmosphere of nuclear risk, exceptional means for rapid communication are essential.
That was, in fact, the purpose of the United States-USSR "hot-line" agreements of 1963, 1971 and 1975. Special agreements also exist between France and the USSR (9 November 1966) and between the United Kingdom and the USSR (27 October 1967).

Here again, a broadening of the system to include all the nuclear-weapon powers would be a step forward in the effort to prevent nuclear war.

CONCLUSIONS

While it is true that a number of bilateral agreements already exist with respect to these various matters, it would seem to us essential that all the nuclear-weapon States should take part in the elaboration of broader, more precise and more detailed agreements of a multilateral character.

The participation of all the nuclear-weapon States in the elaboration of such agreements - without prejudice to the positions of each on nuclear disarmament or the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests - would constitute an important contribution to the prevention of nuclear war and, beyond that, to the effort to halt the nuclear arms race.

The Committee on Disarmament should be made responsible for carrying out, within a framework to be determined by it, the necessary work leading to the elaboration of an international agreement or several international agreements on these matters."