DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

Agenda item 4 of the current session of the Commission

Working paper: a number of Western Countries

1. The Disarmament Commission notes with deep concern that developments in the field of disarmament since 1978 have not lived up to hopes engendered by the first special session devoted to disarmament. The Final Document of the first special session stated that disarmament, relaxation of international tension, respect for the right to self-determination and national independence, the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the strengthening of international peace and security are directly related to each other. Progress in any of the spheres has a beneficial effect on all of them; in turn, failure in one sphere has negative effects on others. The past five years have witnessed increasing recourse to the use or threat of use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Open threats, pressures and military interventions against independent States and violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations are taking place, posing the most serious threat to international peace and security. The consequent tensions and confrontations have retarded progress in disarmament and have in turn been aggravated by the failure to make significant progress towards disarmament.

2. The Disarmament Commission stresses that, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, States should never use any weapon except in exercise of the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence.

3. The Disarmament Commission stresses the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, to implement the security system provided for in the Charter of the United Nations and to enhance the effectiveness of the Committee on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating body.

4. Guided by these considerations, the Disarmament Commission emphasizes the importance of the negotiation and adoption of effective measures of disarmament, and for the prevention of war, in particular nuclear war. In that context the Disarmament Commission adopts the following recommendations.
(a) All States, particularly nuclear-weapon States and especially those among them which possess the most important nuclear arsenals, should pursue as a matter of urgency negotiations to fulfil the priority tasks set forth in the Programme of Action contained in the Final Document of the first special session. These negotiations must take into account the legitimate security interests of nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States alike. Agreements should provide for effective measures of verification and compliance.

(b) Negotiations should be pursued and concluded, in appropriate fora, which would lead to substantial equitable and verifiable reductions in weapons, in particular nuclear weapons.

(c) A nuclear-test ban should be negotiated and concluded within the framework of an effective disarmament process.

(d) Pending more effective measures of nuclear disarmament, all States, in particular the major nuclear-weapon States, should co-operate in the development of a comprehensive set of measures for the prevention of nuclear war and of all armed conflict. In particular, where the necessary conditions exist, confidence-building measures should be negotiated in appropriate frameworks for regional or global application, in order to increase trust and confidence and to decrease the risk of misunderstanding among nations.

(e) Bearing in mind assurances already given, negotiations should continue on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

(f) Since the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects is a matter of universal concern, all States are urged to contribute effectively to the objective of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. States should fully implement all provisions of relevant international treaties to which they are parties.

(g) The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world on the basis of agreements and/or arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned should be encouraged, with the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons. In the process of establishing such zones, the characteristics of each region should be taken into account. Those agreements or arrangements should be fully complied with and nuclear-weapon States should respect the status of such zones, thus ensuring that the zones are genuinely free from nuclear weapons.

(h) All States, in particular the major nuclear-weapon States, are urged to pursue their negotiations on arms limitation and disarmament with vigour, and to keep the United Nations appropriately informed of all steps in this field, without prejudice to the progress of negotiations.

(i) Efforts should be made to conclude urgently a treaty on the prohibition of chemical weapons, including adequate verification provisions. To this end, the Committee on Disarmament should expedite its work with a view to presenting a draft treaty to the General Assembly without further delay.

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(j) The limitation and gradual reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons should be resolutely pursued concurrently with nuclear disarmament, especially in regions where there is a concentration of armed forces and armaments. States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility in this field.

(k) The extension of an arms race into outer space should be prevented.

(l) In the context of the World Disarmament Campaign measures should be adopted in order that the public in all regions of the world have access to a broad range of information and opinions on questions of arms limitations and disarmament, to facilitate informed choices about these vital questions.