In the opinion of the Soviet Union, an indispensable condition for the successful solution of such an essential problem as that of ensuring the economic development of States, including those which have recently gained their political independence, is the prevention of nuclear war and the adoption of concrete measures to reduce armaments and achieve disarmament. It is from just this point of view that the USSR sees the relationship between disarmament and development.

The Soviet Union fully shares the deep concern of the great majority of the world's countries at the fact that the arms race being whipped up by the imperialist forces is diverting more and more material and intellectual resources to unproductive purposes every year, while much of the population of our planet continues to suffer from malnutrition and disease and remains deprived of elementary education and medical care.

The growth of the arms race leads to an intensification of the distortion and instability of international economic relations and worsens the prospects for restructuring them on just and democratic principles and creating a new international economic order free from exploitation and diktat.

The United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies have initiated a new round of the arms race, attempting to extend it to outer space and thereby increasing even further the danger of nuclear war; this threatens to bring
to a dead end the efforts aimed at solving such global problems involving all mankind as the provision of food to most of the peoples of the earth, the development of new sources of energy, the preservation of the environment and the eradication of disease. The economic difficulties experienced by many countries of the world are being still further aggravated, and the possibilities of their removal are becoming more remote. The resulting burdens and suffering are being borne most of all by working people.

The imperialist Powers' reliance on force and their arbitrary inclusion of many developing countries in their spheres of "vital interest" are forcing those countries to spend on the acquisition of armaments the funds which they desperately need for development. More and more States are becoming involved in the vicious circle of the arms race.

For that reason, there arises today with greater urgency than ever the question of taking action to avert nuclear war, end the growth of armaments and prevent the expansion of the arms race to new countries, to environments and spheres of human activity which are as yet free from it.

The USSR is persistently working for the adoption of real measures to curb the arms race and achieve disarmament, measures which would make it possible to release funds for the purposes of development, including that of the developing countries. To that end, it has advanced numerous specific proposals in the United Nations and outside the Organization. As early as 1962, the USSR proposed for consideration at the seventeenth session of the United Nations General Assembly a "Draft Déclaration concerning the conversion to peaceful needs of the resources released by disarmament" (A/C.2/L.646). Another USSR proposal made in the United Nations provided that the funds obtained by ending the production and reducing the stockpiles of nuclear weapons should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, including those of development.

One of the most effective and at the same time simplest ways to curb the arms race and thereby obtain additional funds for development purposes would be to reduce military budgets. The relevant Soviet initiatives in this connection have won widespread approval in the United Nations. More than 10 years have passed since the United Nations General Assembly approved the USSR proposal for reducing by 10 per cent the military budgets of the States which are permanent members of the Security Council and using part of the funds so saved for assistance to developing countries.

Since then, the Soviet Union has persistently tried to secure the implementation of that General Assembly decision, which was supported by a majority of the Members of the United Nations. Why has that useful United Nations decision not yet been put into effect? Because the United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies are unwilling to reduce their military allocations, which are programmed to grow at a dizzying rate until the beginning of the coming millennium.

Under these circumstances, the proposals from some sources to assess the "military efforts and potential" of States and the proposals, in the guise of
ensuring that military expenditures are "open", to expand the collection of data on
the military utilization of human and material resources are designed to mask the
true reason for the arms race, which is that certain States lack the political will
to undertake real disarmament measures and consequently to release funds for
development purposes.

The same is true of proposals aimed at replacing the reduction of military
budgets with deliberately complicated accounting investigations of the comparison
of those budgets which means nothing but endless numerical disputes among
economists, statisticians and other experts. This approach is alien to the Soviet
Union, since it would be merely another version of negotiating for the sake of
negotiating, or more precisely, of feigning disarmament efforts while the arms race
continues with growing intensity.

The ideas about introducing some kind of "tax" on military expenditures are
also unrealistic. They amount not to ending the arms race but merely to requiring
a sort of "payoff" for its continuation. Indeed, they might give rise to a
paradoxical situation in which a desire for greater deductions in relation to the
amount of weapons possessed by other States would give certain countries an
interest in further increasing their arsenals rather than reducing them.

It is also difficult to imagine how the freeing of resources for development
purposes could be furthered by holding a conference on various aspects of the
relationship between disarmament and development, which in fact have nothing
whatsoever to do with disarmament measures. On the other hand, one cannot rule out
the possibility that such a forum could be used by the opponents of disarmament as
a screen for hiding their unwillingness to undertake genuine and tangible steps in
arms limitation.

As international tensions increase, however, the adoption of practical
measures to reduce the military expenditures of States and to allocate additional
funds to development purposes is becoming especially relevant. The grave phenomena
of today affecting many capitalist and developing countries and producing a
profoundly adverse impact on the entire system of world economic relations also
dictate the need for such measures. Clearly, only real disarmament measures can
make possible the reallocation of resources to solving the truly critical social
and economic problems of the developing countries, which colonizers mercilessly
robbed in the past and international monopolies today would like to exploit
endlessly. Such measures would also be a means of alleviating the chronic ills
which afflict the economies of the capitalist countries, with their armies of many
millions of unemployed, hungry and suffering people.

The Soviet Union is sympathetic to the demand of many States, especially the
developing States, that arms-limitation and arms-reduction should be adopted in
close conjunction with the solution of the problems of economic development. This
can be done. The specific proposals made by the Soviet Union and other socialist
countries for the reduction of military budgets in percentage or absolute terms and
their readiness to solve, on a mutually acceptable basis, the problem of the
initial magnitude of such reductions, including, as a first step, an agreement to
freeze military expenditures, create a good basis for reaching agreement.

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Seeking to move the solution of this extraordinarily important problem off dead centre, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty have addressed to the States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization a proposal that both sides should refrain from increasing military expenditures and should subsequently reduce them. The joint document transmitted by the socialist countries to the members of NATO on 5 March 1984 contains proposals for actually starting negotiations on the problem. However, no answer has yet been received from NATO.

The Soviet Union is convinced that if the United States and those of its allies which possess a major economic and military potential had also shown a readiness to reach practical agreement on the reduction of military budgets, an agreement putting an end to the never-ending spiral of military expenditures would by now have become a fact of political life. And that would mean that substantial financial and material resources would already have been channelled towards constructive goals, towards social and economic development.

The release of significant resources for development purposes also would unquestionably be facilitated by the implementation of a broad range of proposals advanced by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries concerning a whole series of arms-limitation and disarmament problems. The realization of the Soviet proposal for agreement on definite rules to govern relations among States which possess nuclear weapons is very important in this context. With the strengthening of confidence and the turn for the better in the international situation which would inevitably result from such measures, States could devote an ever-increasing portion of the resources which they now expend on weapons to the goal of promoting development.

The sooner the military conveyor belts are slowed down and then halted and the sooner people stop wasting their vast intellectual and material resources on the creation and stockpiling of new weapons of destruction, the more successful and rapid the economic and social progress of all States and peoples will become.