DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Addendum

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DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

A. Evaluation of military expenditures in the world

The increase in military expenditure is undoubtedly a factor in the worsening of the main world economic problems, beginning with the growth difficulties experienced by the developing countries and the social tensions in vast regions of the world. These expenditures must therefore be reduced as a matter of urgency; however, this task requires, first and foremost, a realistic and objective evaluation of the level of military budgets, beginning with those of the major powers and the most important countries in terms of military might. The difficulties involved – in the United Nations – in identifying criteria that will ensure the clarity, comparability and verifiability of military budgets are so obvious that it seems unlikely that any agreement can be reached in the short term between the countries concerned on the elaboration of the necessary instruments.

The success of the exercise now in progress in the study group set up by the United Nations is particularly important in that military expenditures – as is well known – are to a very large extent being directed towards the purchase of conventional weapons, while expenditures on nuclear weapons are relatively small.

It is also a well-known fact that, in the last decade the military expenditures of the developing countries have increased much faster than their civilian expenditures. Whereas in the late 1960s they accounted for 6 per cent of aggregate world military expenditure, in the early 1980s they accounted for 16 per cent. This is particularly disquieting since this percentage increase has been accompanied by a progressive and appreciable increase in the overall expenditure. It must also be considered that, whereas for the producer countries the transfer of weaponry is a source of income and employment, for the importing countries – that is to say the vast majority of developing countries – military expenditures simply constitute a disproportionate burden for their economies.

B. The impact of military expenditures on the world economic situation and development

National defence affects sensitive and jealously guarded aspects of the prerogatives pertaining to each country's national sovereignty. For the industrialized countries, in particular, which would be required to make the greatest effort, the reduction in arsenals and the transfer of resources thus released to more productive projects from the economic and social point of view or to the development of the economies of the newly emergent countries, will have to be accompanied by a series of understandings designed to safeguard respect for agreed balances, protection of the security interests of each State and mutual trust, all of which objectives have proved very difficult to achieve over the years.
Moreover, even if internal and external security can be considered favourable to the advancement of the developing countries, the fact remains that these countries often allocate to military expenditure a proportion of their budget in excess of their objective security requirements. There is no magic formula for breaking out of the vicious circle in which poverty and underdevelopment act as destabilizing and tension-producing factors that feed the demand for weapons, and this leads, in turn, to a further deterioration in the economic situation of these countries and in international relations in general. It would also be necessary to go back to the roots of this interrelationship between economic weakness and military insecurity and determine its causes in order to deal with them.

The economic problems involved in the relationship between development and security must therefore be examined in depth in an attempt to seek a compromise to this difficult conflict of priorities.

C. The contribution that a reduction in military expenditures, in particular by nuclear-weapon States and other militarily important States or a contribution by those States, would make to development tasks

Unfortunately, during this phase of international political life, efforts to promote disarmament negotiations are passing through a very difficult period.

At the same time one can discern a tendency to place the emphasis almost exclusively on nuclear disarmament and to follow a line of reasoning which - while partly justifiable in terms of the destructive capacity of the weapons - becomes totally unfounded when related to the problem of the diversion of resources from development. It is worth noting that the impact of nuclear weapons on military budgets is relatively small. The attention given to matters of nuclear disarmament must therefore not lead those who are concerned with the relationship between disarmament and development to make the mistake of considering only nuclear disarmament or of giving absolute priority to the reduction of atomic weapons.

Instead, the object must be to release resources through balanced and gradual measures in the field of conventional and nuclear disarmament so that they can be effectively channelled towards development; this could be achieved by resorting to flexible procedures, which would regularly follow the existing channels of the major international institutions, and to development models that would guarantee a real improvement in the economic and social conditions of the most disadvantaged countries.

D. The ways and means that would enable this contribution to be made, in particular in the interests of the economic and social progress of the developing countries

Even if many developing countries continue to devote substantial portions of their budgets to the purchase of weaponry, the industrialized countries (or the militarily important countries) will not be able to evade the obligation to co-operate, by reducing their armaments, in stabilizing the economies of the developing countries and in strengthening peace and international security.

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In fact, disarmament measures on the part of the major powers, negotiated in terms of a gradual and balanced reduction and involving mutual concessions and adequate controls, would enable substantial resources to be released in order to combat famine and underdevelopment; it must be realized that the elimination of these evils would, in turn, constitute a basic prerequisite for the strengthening of peace and international stability.

Development assistance programmes will therefore have to become far more substantial than military assistance programmes. The money saved by cutting back on military assistance and supplies could be diverted to the competent international bodies, the structure and diversification of which is such that there appears to be no need to establish any new ones.

In that context, consideration should be given to the need to establish a sufficiently broadly-based group of contributing countries, comprising not only industrialized or nuclear-weapon countries but also countries with adequate financial means and countries which, although disadvantaged, have acquired weapons to an extent that is clearly disproportionate to their security needs. It would be necessary, on the one hand, to discourage the acquisition of excessively large arsenals and, on the other, to strengthen the equitable participation of States in the development effort.

Based on the formulas elaborated by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research with a view to the establishment of an "international disarmament fund for development", it might also be possible to examine the possibility that the militarily more advanced States might give the fund "advances" on the savings derived from a reduction in military expenditures based on the size of their military arsenals.

With that end in view it would, however, be necessary to try to resolve the problem of the comparability and clarity of military budgets. Alternatively, and perhaps more appropriately, also in order to evaluate real contributions it might be possible to use a criterion based on verification - possibly by a United Nations group of experts - of the economic value of existing military arsenals using uniform parameters. In that calculation it would be necessary to include nuclear weapons, conventional weapons (aircraft, tanks, artillery, etc.) military installations and the maintenance of large trained armies in a state of readiness.

E. Comments on the proposal to convene a Conference

In the light of the above considerations, which also reflect the conclusions reached by the United Nations in 1981 in its study on disarmament and development, it is even more obvious that it is in the common interest of all peoples, without exception, not merely to recognize the connection between disarmament and development but to undertake an in-depth analysis of the causes of the continued growth in military arsenals. It will then be possible - in a multilateral context - to identify and explore means of mobilizing energies and resources for the improvement of the social and economic conditions of mankind.

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In order to generate a systematic political dialogue on the relationship between disarmament and development, a global initiative for a discussion, within its framework, of the entire range of problems connected with this very difficult subject, must be envisaged.

The serious intentions apparent in the United Nations approach so far, in terms both of studies and discussion, constitute an extremely important premise.

The allocation of the resources released by disarmament to development purposes can only be achieved through a structured multilateral process, in which a real readiness to engage in dialogue and a will to conduct the various negotiations on the subject with constructive energy must be manifested. This will require a continuous contribution of ideas as well as an effort of imagination and innovation, since several of the possible solutions considered thus far have proved inadequate.

In this context, the proposal to begin by organizing a meeting confined to the countries most concerned with the problem would seem appropriate. Through an analysis of studies and research, this meeting should help to identify the objectives shared by the countries which will be required to play a primary role in concerted action to divert resources thus far allocated to armaments for the benefit of development. In view of the obstacles to the reallocation of these resources, the process can only be carried out in successive stages: the first stages, connected with the verification of military expenditures and arsenals and with disarmament, will certainly be very difficult. In the period following the Second World War it was found that the path was strewn with obstacles, and that despite positive results in certain sectors, the disarmament process was frustrated by a continuous succession of tensions and crises. One cannot expect easy and rapid results: but the groundwork must be laid for an extensive multilateral process which, once the necessary conditions have been defined, could be constructively directed by a United Nations conference convened with the specific mandate of meeting this challenge, which no country can or should ignore.