DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE DECLARATION OF THE 1980s AS THE
SECOND DISARMAMENT DECADE

Addendum

REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

[15 May 1985]

The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic supported the adoption of the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/46) and regards the goals and principles proclaimed in that Declaration, together with the activities which it proposes, as important tasks facing the international community. The position of the Byelorussian SSR with regard to the Second Disarmament Decade was set forth in the letter dated 18 April 1980 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Byelorussian SSR addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the years since the adoption of the Declaration, the Byelorussian SSR has done its utmost to help in accomplishing the objectives of the Decade.

It must be observed that the first half of the 1980s witnessed a sharp and dangerous heightening of tension in international relations. This period was not marked by progress towards halting the arms race, and indeed there was even a regression in some areas. It is essential to understand clearly what was, and is, the source of the threat to peace and why the objectives of the Second Disarmament Decade are not being achieved. Certain States have overtly adopted a course of disrupting the military-strategic balance that had emerged and seeking military superiority with a view to achieving world domination and the opportunity to dictate their will to other States and peoples.
As a result of the policy and actions of the militarist forces, there has been a sharp increase in the threat of nuclear war, which is capable of destroying mankind, and an intensification of the arms race in all areas, especially in the most dangerous area of all - that of nuclear weapons. A major danger to peace has been posed by the adoption in the United States, with regard to armaments, of doctrines and concepts based on the "admissibility" of a first nuclear strike and the "acceptability" of nuclear war. The "star wars" plans and the associated threat of the arms race spreading to outer space have faced mankind with a new danger, which threatens to increase the risk of nuclear catastrophe by many times, block opportunities for arms limitation and disarmament and, consequently, cause an unprecedented escalation of the arms race in all its aspects. The argument underlying the concept of so-called "strategic defence" runs counter to the fundamental idea of providing security through disarmament, as embodied in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The present situation is being complicated by the persistent efforts of the United States and its closest allies to undermine existing agreements in the area of limiting the arms race and achieving disarmament, and by the refusal to ratify a number of signed treaties.

At the same time, the Byelorussian SSR is convinced that this course of events does not mean that a further slide towards the abyss of confrontation and nuclear holocaust is totally inevitable. Possibilities do exist for an improvement in international affairs. The experience of the 1970s shows that positive results in the field of arms limitation and disarmament are possible. The initiatives, both multilateral and bilateral, put forward by the USSR and the other countries of the socialist community in the 1980s at various international forums have established a firm basis for moving ahead in the most important areas of preventing nuclear war, halting and limiting the arms race and achieving disarmament. Their constructive, specific and flexible nature makes it possible to ensure the progress which is so essential in that regard.

The initiatives of the States of the socialist community have been significantly reinforced by the unilateral steps which those States have taken in the 1980s with a view to strengthening international security and creating a favourable climate for effective measures in the area of limiting the arms race and achieving disarmament. These include, among others, the historic undertaking by the USSR not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and its refusal to place anti-satellite weapons in outer space for as long as other States refrain from doing so.

In these years, the international community also received a number of positive proposals from the non-aligned and other States.

A good working basis is also provided by the series of important resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in the 1980s on the initiative of the socialist and non-aligned States. Action is urgently required to give effect to the measures they contain: there is a need to put a nuclear-arms freeze into effect, to achieve a general and complete prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests and to introduce, until a treaty on the subject has been concluded, a moratorium on all nuclear explosions, and to secure renunciation of the first use of nuclear weapons. Highly essential
measures include the prohibition of chemical weapons and of the development and production of all new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction, the limitation of military activities at sea and naval armaments, and the convening of the conference on making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. The States of the socialist community are doing everything to promote progress in each of those areas.

Along with the efforts at the global level, considerable positive possibilities are also offered by those now being undertaken on a regional scale and at the bilateral level. The Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe and the talks on reducing armed forces and armaments in Central Europe have an essential contribution to make to the implementation of the goals of the Second Disarmament Decade. The USSR and its allies have submitted major proposals at those forums. In particular, agreements on freezing Europe of chemical weapons and on freezing and reducing military expenditures, and the conclusion of a treaty on the mutual non-use of military force and the maintenance of peaceful relations, could represent major steps towards building international security and confidence.

The talks between the USSR and the United States on nuclear and space weapons are of great significance. It is essential that effective agreements aimed at preventing an arms race in space and ending that on Earth, at limiting and reducing nuclear weapons and at strengthening strategic stability should be worked out at those talks.

An important stimulus for progress in this direction is the proposal made by the Soviet Union to the United States this April that, for the entire duration of the talks, a moratorium should be established on development, and research work, and on testing and deployment of strike space weapons, that strategic offensive weapons should be frozen, and that there should be a stop to the deployment of American medium-range missiles in Europe and, accordingly, to the build-up of USSR responsive measures. It is essential that both sides should approach the talks constructively. This attitude which the USSR takes to the talks was confirmed by the new step it has taken - the unilateral establishment, until November 1985, of a moratorium on the deployment of its own medium-range missiles and the suspension of the implementation of other responsive measures in Europe.

The Byelorussian SSR considers that these proposals, resolutions and agreements represent a solid foundation for moving on to the implementation of effective, truly tangible measures to avert nuclear war, limit the arms race and achieve disarmament. All the necessary conditions exist for decisive progress in that direction. Political will is needed. The States of the socialist community have that will.

The accession of the widest possible number of States and, particularly, all the nuclear Powers without exception to the existing multilateral treaties and conventions on the subject would have an important positive impact on progress towards stopping the arms race, achieving disarmament and strengthening international security.
Achieving the goals of disarmament would not only mean the strengthening of international security but would also open the way for the redirection of considerable resources currently being swallowed up by the arms race to the provision of economic assistance to the developing countries.

It should also be realized that the latest scientific and technological advances can, unless timely and effective measures are taken, make controlling the arms race immeasurably more difficult.

In view of these matters, the second half of the 1980s may be decisive. Practical action is essential. For its part, the Byelorussian SSR will continue to make every effort to help attain the goals of disarmament.