DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

Addendum

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The Ten member States of the European Community uphold the principle, embodied in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, that the United Nations must play a central role in the sphere of disarmament and help the international community in gradually pursuing the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. The United Nations have already made and are making a major contribution to the cause of disarmament. However, their role should be further strengthened in order to enable the Organization to cope with ever-increasing complexities in the disarmament process and in the international situation.

1. In the view of the Ten, the authority and the effectiveness of the Organization in the field of disarmament cannot be separate from the authority and effectiveness of the Organization as a whole. Therefore, the United Nations contribution to the disarmament process would be greatly enhanced if full respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter were ensured.

2. From a general point of view, the Ten believe that the effectiveness of the Organization's action in the field of disarmament would benefit from greater understanding by all Member States of the security concepts and principles which determine the positions of individual countries or groups of countries. Moreover, the effective handling of confidence-building measures facilitated in a context of greater trust among nations. This in turn requires general respect for the Charter of the United Nations and especially for the principles of non-use of force in international relations, of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the full observance of sovereign equality and individual human rights.

3. In order to give greater impulse to the disarmament process, the Ten believe that periodic reviews of the United Nations machinery and of the prospects for its improvement would be both useful and desirable, also bearing in mind the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on the institutional arrangements. The extent to which the disarmament machinery and institutional arrangements can effectively handle increasing activities must be regularly assessed, so as to identify what interventions are needed to develop new functions and strengthen the United Nations role. On the other hand, the enhancement of the role of the United Nations, the improvement of its machinery and the prompt implementation of its decisions could be an important factor in supporting the peaceful endeavours of Member States.

4. The United Nations General Assembly, because of its universality, provides the most appropriate forum for overall consideration of activities in the field of disarmament. The recommendation contained in paragraph 117 of the Final Document
of the Tenth Special Session devoted to disarmament, according to which "the First Committee of the General Assembly should deal in the future only with questions of disarmament and related international security questions" maintains its validity and should be reaffirmed. At the same time, experience shows that the burden of work of the First Committee is constantly increasing. Therefore there is a need to enhance the Committee's effectiveness through rationalization of its proceedings building on recent efforts in this direction. Measures aimed at shortening the duration of the general debate and the length of individual statements would leave more time for consultation and negotiations on draft resolutions which would help broaden the basis of consensus and significantly contribute to a constructive outcome of the Committee's work. In the same spirit, Member States should informally agree to limit the number of draft resolutions tabled under the various agenda items, thus avoiding, inter alia, a proliferation of contradictory texts. Finally, if real progress is to be achieved, Member States should refrain from giving priority to the scoring of political or propagandistic advantages and take a constructive and realistic approach to the work of the Committee. The process of deliberation and review would gain significantly if the main issues were kept sharply in focus and declaratory resolutions avoided. In the view of the Ten, resolutions which are not directed to the achievement of concrete action weaken the credibility of the Committee.

5. The Ten consider the Disarmament Commission as an important deliberative organ and an essential element of the United Nations machinery in the sphere of disarmament. Consideration should be given to the Commission's role and competences. In particular, the Commission should be allowed to maintain its specificity with primary responsibility for making recommendations on important disarmament questions requiring consideration at the multilateral level. Therefore, the Commission's agenda should not be overburdened with a proliferation of new items as a consequence of the deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly. The inclusion in the Commission's agenda of an excessive number of subjects would seriously weaken the effectiveness of the Commission's contribution to the disarmament process. The Ten believe that, on the contrary, the Commission should be entrusted with the examination of selected questions which cannot be adequately discussed and solved during the ordinary sessions of the General Assembly because of their inherent complexity and specificity. The agenda should be as concise as possible and consideration of substantive items should be completed if necessary over a number of sessions. The work of the Commission would certainly gain if Member States were to concentrate their efforts on in-depth consideration and elaboration of specific recommendations on a limited number of important issues, as provided by resolution 37/78 H.

6. The Ten believe that the United Nations machinery in the sphere of disarmament would also be made more effective by the adoption of the following measures:

- In cases where aspects of the activities of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system concern the disarmament field, it is desirable to bear in mind the need to enable better use to be made of the available resources and to avoid duplication in the areas covered by the work of the United Nations itself and by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.
In any event, there should be effective co-ordination with the United Nations bodies and institutions (in particular, the Department for Disarmament Affairs) in regard to aspects of the activities of the specialized agencies which have a direct or indirect bearing on disarmament questions.

Bearing in mind the financial constraints on the United Nations budget, more attention should be paid in the establishing of studies to the limited financial resources available, in order that these studies might be undertaken in a more cost-effective manner.

In order to avoid a multiplicity of studies, as in recent years, the views of the Advisory Board should be included in the report of the Secretary-General in which approval for a study is sought. The mandates for studies should be as precise and workable as possible. Limitations should be imposed on the time spent on study projects. Freely available academic research results should be incorporated whenever appropriate in studies, full utilization of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) should be sought, etc. While the Ten member States of the European Community look with considerable interest at the studies conducted on disarmament issues regarding both nuclear and conventional weapons, it is clear that on the one hand such studies are not a substitute for concrete measures and on the other that their impact will depend on the degree of consensus they reflect. The Ten therefore express the hope that studies conducted under United Nations auspices will seriously pursue the goal of advancing the cause of disarmament.

7. The Ten member States of the European Community have always attached great importance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament as the permanent multilateral negotiating body. The Ten are convinced of the importance of overcoming the obstacles preventing the work of the Conference on various issues. They trust that the enlargement of the Conference will take place as soon as possible. They believe that the negotiating character of the Conference should be enhanced. This can only be achieved if more efforts are devoted to realistic debates on substantive questions. This applies to various points on the agenda of the Conference. The Ten are fully committed to giving the greatest impulse to the work of the Conference. They are convinced that one of its most urgent priorities is to proceed constructively towards the inclusion of an agreement banning chemical weapons.

ROMANIA

[Original: French]

[25 April 1985]

The review of ways and means of strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament is of great political and practical importance, linked as it is to the primary task of the United Nations, namely the maintenance of international peace and security.
The development of the international situation, characterized by the continual acceleration of the arms race, in particular the nuclear arms race, and the build-up of increasingly sophisticated weapons in the world, is creating an increased danger of war, which in present circumstances would inevitably lead to a nuclear catastrophe. This is why the cessation of the arms race, and first and foremost the nuclear arms race, the transition to disarmament, the elimination of the danger of a world war and the maintenance of peace constitute the fundamental task of the modern era.

It is Romania's view that, in present conditions, any analysis of disarmament problems, including that of the role incumbent on the United Nations in the field of disarmament, must take as its starting-point this grave reality.

In the Final Document of its first special session devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly established by consensus that the United Nations has a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament. The international debating and negotiating machinery was thus established, through which the principal functions of the United Nations in this area are performed. Each year the volume of United Nations activity and the machinery set up to deal with the problem of disarmament has expanded. But the actual results of this activity are minimal. A matter of particular concern is the fact that, over the years that have elapsed since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it has not been possible to reach any significant agreement in the field of disarmament and primarily of nuclear disarmament, while the arms race, and particularly the nuclear arms race, has continually expanded, further increasing the danger of war. The serious situation currently prevailing requires the adoption of measures designed to step up activities in the bodies and international conferences devoted to disarmament. It is now more than ever necessary to ensure that the central role and primary responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament are fully demonstrated and that these functions are performed more effectively. As an organization of universal scope, the United Nations must direct its main effort towards the identification of the political will and the determination of all States, and primarily the nuclear-weapon States and other heavily armed States, to initiate action geared to the prevention of war, the cessation of the arms race and the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

In order to assist in the review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament questions, Romania submits the following observations:

1. In view of the vital interest of all States in the cessation of the arms race and the achievement of disarmament, the democratic character of the existing machinery for debate and negotiation on disarmament questions must be continuously enhanced and developed. Measures to improve the working of this machinery, including rationalization of its operating procedures and practices, should be based on effective respect for the right of all States, regardless of their size and economic or military potential, to participate in debates and negotiations on disarmament and to raise in the forums dealing with disarmament the problems which they consider essential to international peace and security.
(a) The General Assembly and the First Committee in the case of problems of security and disarmament, as representative bodies, provide the most appropriate forum for the expression of the political will of States, for a meeting of minds on the vital problems of disarmament and for the setting of priorities which could provide guidelines for the other negotiating bodies in this area.

The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on disarmament questions, as well as the opinions and proposals of States on the problems at issue, should be transmitted to the bilateral or regional negotiating bodies working outside the United Nations and taken into consideration by them. The parties to the negotiations could thus benefit from the assistance and support of the international community, which would in turn be associated with the negotiations in some appropriate manner, since the problems of peace and disarmament concern all States and peoples of the world.

If the General Assembly is to formulate informed recommendations, it would also be very important to agree that all bodies negotiating in the field of disarmament, both inside and outside the United Nations, should report to the General Assembly on the status of negotiations.

(b) Since the Disarmament Commission comprises all the States Members of the United Nations, it could usefully concentrate on co-ordination of the negotiating efforts being made in the various forums and submit its conclusions to the General Assembly.

(c) The Geneva Conference on Disarmament should intensify its substantive work and progress to actual negotiations on the problems included on its agenda. It is most regrettable that the only negotiating forum on disarmament has been unable over a long period of time to produce any draft treaty or convention.

The problem of how to enhance the effectiveness of negotiations in this forum should also be borne in mind.

To this end, a whole range of measures might be envisaged, aimed at restricting the duration of general debates in order to expand the activities of ad hoc negotiating committees. The time spent on procedural debates should also be reduced, by automatically renewing from year to year any decisions taken on the agenda and organization of work, and only new questions referred by the United Nations General Assembly should be discussed.

Ad hoc committees should also be established for all issues on the agenda and the principle of equality among States should be respected by ruling out any closed or selective consultative or negotiating structures.

2. If the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament is to be increased, Member States must participate not only in the drafting of disarmament agreements but also in the monitoring and collective evaluation of their implementation. In this connection, Romania wishes to recall its proposal that a body responsible for monitoring compliance with the obligations assumed by parties to disarmament agreements should be set up within the United Nations. The
importance and timeliness of this proposal are demonstrated by recent developments in the area of nuclear weapons and by the danger of the large-scale use of outer space for military purposes. In future, periodic conferences to review the implementation of existing disarmament agreements should not be restricted to reviewing the way in which the provisions of those agreements are being observed but should also examine the possibilities of supplementing and expanding those provisions with a view to adopting disarmament measures, which are as substantive as possible.

3. The strengthening of the role and the responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament depends primarily on the political will and the action of Member States. At the same time, the United Nations Secretary-General, and the Secretariat as the principal organ of the United Nations, could make a significant contribution to promoting a genuine disarmament process.

Romania attaches considerable importance to the action and the positions taken by the United Nations Secretary-General in favour of increased efforts on the part of Member States to halt the arms race, in particular the nuclear arms race, negotiate significant disarmament measures, reduce and eliminate the danger of nuclear war and war in general, and strengthen the United Nations capacity to act in the settlement of existing conflicts and the prevention of new armed conflicts in the future.

Better use should be made of the high level of expertise and experience of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in order to back up the activities of disarmament debating and negotiating forums and, in particular, to help solve problems considered by them and implement resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on disarmament questions.

United Nations studies prepared with the assistance of governmental experts on various questions relating to the world arms situation and the disarmament process have thoroughly demonstrated their usefulness. At the same time, in view of the relatively long process necessary for preparing these studies and, in particular, their high cost, it would be useful to consider the possibility of drawing more frequently on the services of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to prepare such studies.

Generally speaking, since the UNIDIR statute has been adopted and the General Assembly has taken a decision to finance part of the Institute's activities from its regular budget, a closer link should be established between UNIDIR's concerns and the activities of United Nations disarmament forums, through the preparation of studies and research and the production of documentary materials relating to questions on the agenda of these forums which would be made available to delegates for information and documentation purposes.

4. Recent years have seen a growing affirmation of the interest of the general public in peace and disarmament problems and increasing public involvement in efforts to solve these problems which are of vital importance to the future of mankind. The broad-based movements which have arisen in different regions of the world have shown that public opinion can be a considerable political force and also
prompt Governments to take a positive attitude to peace and disarmament problems. To this end, the United Nations should step up its action under the World Disarmament Campaign, in order to further arouse public interest in the problems of the arms race and disarmament by disseminating fuller and more objective information. Appropriate procedures should also be adopted to enable the representatives of public opinion to present, in the context of disarmament debates and negotiations, their positions and views on the arms race and on the status of disarmament talks.

5. The review of the role and the responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, and the identification of measures to strengthen them, should be approached from a broader perspective which takes account of the interdependence between disarmament problems and other major problems currently facing mankind.

Action to increase the role of the United Nations in achieving disarmament should be carried out in close co-ordination with the efforts being made to increase the Organization's role in the peaceful settlement of disputes among States, the maintenance of international peace and security, the elimination of the phenomenon of underdevelopment and the provision of support to peoples' economic and social development efforts.

On this occasion, Romania also expresses its readiness to work, together with other States, to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and in international life in general, in order to make this Organization an effective instrument for resolving, with the participation of all States, international problems which are of concern to all.

SWEDEN

[Original: English]

[3 May 1985]

The Swedish Government has, in the past, been actively engaged in strengthening the institutional capacity of the United Nations in the area of disarmament. As part of these efforts the Swedish delegation to the thirty-first session of the General Assembly in 1976 proposed that a study be undertaken on the organizational framework of United Nations activities for disarmament. The result of this study, which through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 37/99 K, inter alia, led to the establishment of a Department for Disarmament Affairs under the direction of an Under-Secretary-General, has, in the view of the Swedish Government, satisfactorily strengthened the organizational capabilities of the United Nations to deal with disarmament questions. Particularly in view of the short period that has lapsed since the adoption of the above-mentioned resolution and its implementation, further institutional reforms hardly seem to be called for.