CURBING THE NAVAL ARMS RACE: LIMITATION AND REDUCTION OF NAVAL ARMAMENTS AND EXTENSION OF CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES TO SEAS AND OCEANS

Agenda item 8 of the current session of the Commission

Working paper: Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

I

1. The debates conducted at the thirty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly and a number of resolutions adopted constitute a clear new confirmation of the international community's conviction that the averting of the danger of nuclear war and the guaranteeing of stable peace and security depend above all on preventing an arms race in outer space and putting an end to it on earth, on the taking of urgent steps to reduce existing nuclear armaments, with the ultimate aim of annihilating them for all time.

2. The interests of peace and of international security require an effective limitation of the arms race in all fields. This applies fully, in particular, to the naval arms race, in both its quantitative and its qualitative aspects, at the global or at the regional level.

3. Naval forces and activities in a number of important regions of the world's seas and oceans, especially in areas of conflict and tension, constitute a second important component of the growing military confrontation. The presence of large naval units in explosive regions makes more likely the outbreak of regional conflicts which can easily grow into a world-wide nuclear war. The use of naval units for a show of force against sovereign States not only constitutes interference in their internal affairs but also dangerously heightens tension in the area involved and exacerbates the international situation as a whole. Furthermore, the increase in naval activity threatens the security of the international sea lane and creates obstacles to the development of maritime transport and of trade relations between States and to the peaceful utilization of marine resources.
4. The obligations of States to safeguard international peace and security, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in other documents of international law, include the obligation to safeguard international security on the seas and oceans. The prohibition of the threat or use of force from the seas and oceans against the territorial inviolability or political independence of any State is of great importance to the maintenance of peace.

The most serious and dangerous form of the illegal use of force is armed aggression. Of the seven specific actions defined as acts of aggression by the United Nations in 1974, two relate directly to operations at sea: the blockade of the ports or coasts of a State by the armed forces of another State and an attack by the armed forces of a State on the land, sea or air forces, or marine and air fleets, of another State (General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX)).

5. Bearing in mind all of the foregoing, in the Prague Political Declaration of the Political Consultative Committee of 5 January 1983 (A/38/67) the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty "advocated the beginning of negotiations for the limitation of naval activities, for the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, and for the extension of confidence-building measures to seas and oceans".

6. The General Assembly, in resolution 38/188 F, recognized "the urgent need to start negotiations with the participation of the major naval Powers, the nuclear-weapon States in particular, and other interested States on the limitation of naval activities, the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, taking into due account the nuclear aspect of the naval arms race, and the extension of confidence-building measures to seas and oceans, especially to regions with the busiest sea lanes or regions where the probability of conflict situations is high". At the same time, the General Assembly appealed "to all Member States, in particular the major naval Powers, to refrain from enlarging their naval activities in areas of conflict or tension, or far from their own shores".

7. A good starting point for further work was the report of the Secretary-General (A/39/419), containing the views of a number of States on the questions raised in resolution 38/188 F.

8. Resolution 39/151 I adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session reaffirmed the fundamental principles of the preceding resolution. In addition, it invited "Member States, particularly the major naval Powers, to consider the possibility of holding direct consultations, bilateral or/and multilateral, with a view to preparing the opening at an early date of such negotiations". Paragraph 5 of the resolution contains a request for the Disarmament Commission "to consider this question and to report to the General Assembly at its fortieth session".

II

The People's Republic of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics believe that in the application of the aforementioned resolutions, some initial steps might be considered by the Disarmament Commission.
1. The abstention of States with major naval fleets from further actions leading to the acceleration of the naval arms race and to an increase in their naval activity in areas far from their own shores.

2. A limitation and reduction of the levels of naval presence and naval activity in areas of conflict or tension; in this connection, special attention should be given to ships armed with nuclear weapons.

3. The withdrawal of nuclear-weapon ships from certain areas of the seas and oceans.

4. The withdrawal of nuclear-missile submarines from broad areas of combat patrol and the restriction of their cruising to mutually agreed limits.

5. The discussion of measures relating to naval bases in foreign territories.

6. Agreeing on and implementing confidence-building measures in the seas and oceans, with due regard for the need to ensure the safety of international sea lanes and prevent conflict situations.

7. The implementation of a number of regional measures would also be helpful in achieving the purposes of resolutions 38/188 F and 39/151 I; among such measures are:

   (a) Conversion of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, including limitation of the level of naval presence in the area;

   (b) The implementation of measures aimed at strengthening peace and security in the Persian Gulf area;

   (c) The conversion of the Mediterranean area into a zone of stable peace and co-operation.

III

It would be of great importance to adopt control measures guaranteeing mutual confidence that States would comply with the obligations they had assumed. The scope and forms of the control should correspond to the scope and nature of the obligations assumed by States, and the control should be exercised simultaneously with the fulfilment of the obligations.

IV

All appropriate measures should be worked out and implemented in accordance with the principle of not impairing the security of anyone, with due regard for all factors determining the balance of forces on the seas, as well as other types of arms limitation which in one way or another involve naval forces.
A discussion of the foregoing proposals, and also of all other views and proposals that may be presented in the Disarmament Commission, must be aimed at preparing the conditions for a direct transition to negotiations, with a view to arriving at agreements on a number of specific measures concerning the mutual limitation of naval activities and the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, as well as concerning appropriate confidence-building measures, both in general and in connection with specific areas, whether the Indian, Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf.

Investigations relating to naval armaments conducted by the United Nations parallel with the discussion in the Commission should also be aimed at achieving a concrete result - the beginning of negotiations on the question.

Participants in the negotiations should include all the major naval Powers and other interested countries. The possibility of conducting the negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Disarmament Conference might be considered from this point of view.

The possibility of conducting individual multilateral negotiations on this complex of questions could also be considered. The conduct of the multilateral negotiations should not, of course, interfere with the consideration of these questions in the negotiations between the nuclear-weapon States.

It is also essential to make full use of the possibilities of the regional approach to the limitation of naval activities and naval armaments.