DISARMAMENT COMMISSION
Agenda item 8

STUDY ON THE NAVAL ARMS RACE

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

Substantive consideration of the question of naval arms race
and disarmament: limitation of naval fleet activities,
limitation and reduction of naval armaments and extension of
confidence-building measures to seas and oceans

In addition to working paper A/CN.10/73 and in pursuance of General Assembly
resolutions 40/94 I and 40/94 F, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the German
Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics find it necessary
to put forward for examination within the framework of the consultations initiated
in the Commission the following suggestions and considerations.

I

The further build-up of naval fleets and the intensification of their
activities are fraught with the danger of upsetting stability on a global scale and
within individual regions and are leading to a significant diversion of resources
from constructive purposes. This tendency has a negative effect on the security of
peaceful navigation and on the exploration and exploitation of marine resources,
whose value to mankind is growing ever greater. That is the present situation,
which in general has been faithfully reflected in the study on the naval arms race
(document A/40/535), undertaken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations with
the assistance of qualified experts in accordance with General Assembly resolution
38/188 G of 20 December 1983 and noted with satisfaction at the fortieth session of
the United Nations General Assembly.

Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union are convinced
that it is imperative to close off effectively all channels of the arms race and to
stop and reverse the continuing escalation of the naval arms race. They advocate
the early commencement of appropriate talks and the holding for that purpose of
consultations on the elaboration of concrete measures to limit naval activities, limit and reduce naval arms and extend confidence-building measures to seas and oceans. This conviction, as is confirmed by the discussion of this subject in the United Nations and by many provisions of the above-mentioned study, coincides with the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

II

The People's Republic of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics welcome the beginning of consultations on this subject within the United Nations Disarmament Commission and, desirous of making a concrete contribution to the elaboration of relevant recommendations, draw attention to the following:

1. Implementation of the programme of nuclear disarmament, proposed by the Soviet Union (document A/41/97), as well as of the Soviet proposal on the principles of an all-embracing system of international security (document A/41/185), would undoubtedly close off the channels of the arms race, including that of the naval arms race, contribute to the limitation of naval activities and to the extension of confidence-building measures to seas and oceans.

2. As an urgent measure, agreement could be reached on the non-expansion of naval activities of States in the areas with the busiest sea lanes or where the probability of conflict situations is highest, be it in the Indian, Atlantic or Pacific Oceans, the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf.

As regards one such region - the Mediterranean, where events are taking a dangerous turn - arrangements might be made to extend agreed confidence-building measures to that region, reduce armed forces, withdraw from the Mediterranean Sea ships carrying nuclear weapons and renounce the deployment of nuclear weapons in the territory of non-nuclear Mediterranean countries, and for the nuclear Powers to undertake not to use such weapons against any Mediterranean country which does not allow them to be deployed in its territory.

If the United States were to withdraw its navy from the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union, being ready to enter into talks on this question without delay, would do so at the same time.

In this first phase, no limitation would be imposed on the naval activities and naval armaments of the coastal States of the Mediterranean. Further steps to strengthen security in this region could be determined taking into account the Soviet proposals contained in the statement of 15 January 1986 on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

3. It is advisable to embark on a practical search for solutions that would eliminate the situation in which naval fleets of major Powers are at sea for long periods of time far from their own shores. Such steps as withdrawing vessels carrying nuclear weapons from certain ocean and sea areas, establishing limits on the presence in those areas of vessels of various classes, and other steps could also be taken.

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4. Further along the way towards direct and effective limitation of naval armaments, measures could be agreed on such as, for example, limitation of the number of warships of the principal classes, placing of limits on anti-submarine forces and weapons, as well as measures concerning naval bases in foreign territories.

Subsequently, consideration could be given to a balanced reduction of the numbers of operational vessels in the navies of major Powers, particularly of such warships as, for example, aircraft carriers, which, as was proved also by recent events, have a particularly destabilizing effect and are used for a show of force and for exerting pressure on independent States.

5. Such regional measures as, for instance, turning the Mediterranean into a zone of stable peace and co-operation, transforming the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace and implementing measures aimed at strengthening peace and security in the Persian Gulf area would have a positive effect.

6. The establishment of nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world's seas and oceans could also play an essential role. The People's Republic of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics welcome the decision of the States of the South Pacific to declare that region a nuclear-free zone and support the implementation of confidence-building measures and the reduction of naval fleet activities in the Pacific Ocean, as well as the establishment of nuclear-free zones in the Asian part of the Pacific.

It is important that agreements on establishing such zones should indeed ensure that the territories of participating States become areas completely free of nuclear weapons. That presupposes, in particular, a prohibition of the transit of nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices through the territory of a nuclear-free zone and of access to ports and airports in the zone by foreign military vessels and aircraft with nuclear weapons on board.

III

The harmonization and implementation of confidence-building measures designed to avert conflict situations and enhance the safety of maritime communications could also be of great political significance.

In Europe, for example, the question of notifications regarding major naval exercises could be settled at the next stage of the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe.

All the necessary measures should, of course, be elaborated and implemented in accordance with the principle of undiminished security for all, with due account being taken of all factors that determine the balance of forces at sea, as well as of other aspects of arms limitation which affect naval forces in one way or another.
IV

Appropriate measures of verification designed to ensure mutual confidence of States regarding compliance with obligations undertaken could also be considered during the negotiations. The scope and forms of verification should correspond to the scope and nature of the obligations undertaken by States.

V

All the major naval Powers and other interested States should take part in the negotiations on limiting naval activities and naval armaments.

The possibility of holding separate multilateral negotiations on this set of questions should also be studied. Multilateral negotiations on the limitation of naval activities and naval armaments must not be an obstacle to the consideration of these questions in negotiations among the nuclear Powers.

The possibilities of a regional approach to limiting naval activities and naval armaments should also be fully utilized.

A useful role could be played by a conference on the Mediterranean similar to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. In addition to the Mediterranean States and States bordering on the region, the United States and other interested States could participate in such a conference.

A conference on the Indian Ocean should be convened without further delay as a necessary step towards implementing the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

A separate conference of the Pacific Ocean countries should be prepared and held to consider questions of security. That would also serve to establish the pre-conditions for holding an all-Asian forum.

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The People's Republic of Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are ready to undertake a practical discussion of constructive proposals from other States, and to reach specific agreements on the limitation of naval activities, and the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, as well as on corresponding confidence-building measures at both the global and the regional levels.