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### CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT

#### Working paper submitted by Denmark

1. The study on all aspects of the conventional arms race and on disarmament relating to conventional weapons and armed forces entitled Study on Conventional Disarmament, 1/ was submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session. In the foreward the Secretary-General noted that "the situation relating to conventional arms is a source of increasing concern" and he went on to state the case very clearly for focusing increased attention on conventional disarmament:

"The resources devoted to huge arsenals, nuclear and conventional, restrict the amount of funds that can be devoted to science, education, environmental protection and development, which are of great importance to the future of the inhabitants of developed and developing countries alike. Furthermore, the apprehensions of many nations concerning their security are such that they feel impelled to spend valuable resources, which most can ill-afford, for defence purposes rather than on pressing social and economic needs. At the same time, therefore, as efforts are made towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the broad international community, both outside and within the United Nations, should focus additional efforts in the need to find effective measures of conventional disarmament in order to assist in diverting the sinews of war towards the better goal of social and economic progress".

2. The study constituted the first effort in the United Nations, and elsewhere in the international community, at a comprehensive consideration of the subject of conventional arms and armed forces as a whole. The importance attached to the study is illustrated by the representative composition of the Group of Experts. It included members from all geographical groups in the United Nations and all five permanent members of the Security Council.

3. The basic principles to guide the efforts of States in the pursuit of conventional disarmament can be found in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, 2/ the first special session devoted to disarmament, characterized in the study as the disarmament strategy for the international community. The study identifies those principles which provide the perspective on, and address, the subjects of the conventional arms race and conventional disarmament.

4. Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. Therefore, effective measures of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war have the highest priority. However, this can in no way reduce the pressing need for measures to halt and reverse the conventional arms race and prevent conventional war. Concrete measures of conventional disarmament would do much to reduce distrust and fear among nations and could, in turn, improve prospects for measures of nuclear disarmament.

5. While States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility in pursuing the process of conventional armaments reductions, there is an urgent need for all States to explore what each and every one of them might be able to do in the way of initiating or facilitating efforts aimed at conventional arms limitations and disarmament. The Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament states that the adoption of disarmament measures should take place in such an equitable and balanced manner as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may obtain advantages over others at any stage. At each stage the objective should be undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments and military forces.

6. The study describes in detail the magnitude and the characteristics of the problems connected with the conventional arms race and conventional warfare, including the grave dangers and the terrible costs in human and material terms stemming therefrom. It recalls that conventional warfare has been a permanent feature since the end of the Second World War in 1945 and that it has been estimated that, during this period, over 150 conflicts have been fought with conventional weapons in over 70 States, with a loss of more than 20 million lives. Furthermore, it has been estimated that world annual military spending, in 1983 US dollars, exceeds 800 billion, at least 80 per cent of this amount being expended on conventional arms and armed forces. Under the circumstances, it is clear that efforts aiming at limitation and gradual reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons should be resolutely pursued.

7. As could be expected, the study does not provide any definite answers to concrete questions concerning conventional disarmament, but points in general terms to ways and means which could be utilized in efforts by States to come to grips with the serious problems posed by the conventional arms race and conventional warfare.

8. The study is the product of a common exertion to reach consensus. From the outset, the debate in the United Nations General Assembly and in the Disarmament Commission confirmed that conventional disarmament is an area in which States hold widely differing views. One of the merits of the study is that it succeeds in

making allowance for these views and yet appears as a coherent and significant contribution. In our view, the study, therefore, constitutes a very useful basis for further deliberations. It is important that it is not merely registered and filed, but that it is brought to serve States in the identification and clarification and, whenever possible, in the practical handling and solution of the complex issues related to conventional disarmament.

9. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 39/151 C and 40/94 C, invited all Member States to inform the Secretary-General of their views regarding the study. ~~Some 30 States have availed themselves of this opportunity. Their answers reflect~~ the importance they attach to the subject and reveal a multitude of views. As was to be expected, these do not all point in the same direction, but certain elements recur in a number of cases.

10. Most notable among these are the support for regional approaches. Other elements taken up by some States pertain to arms transfer, the merits of confidence-building measures and openness regarding military matters, and disarmament-development issues.

11. The importance of the regional dimension in conventional disarmament is thoroughly substantiated in the study. Also, the regional approach permeates most of the possible concrete measures outlined in the study, which states that it might be possible in some cases to reach agreement on a regional basis on measures more far-reaching than those which could be implemented at that time on a global basis. In other cases, initiatives taken in one region, suitably modified, might be valid models for other regions or give impetus to global efforts along similar lines.

12. Therefore, whenever concrete aspects of conventional disarmament are being discussed, the possible relevance of regional approaches should be kept in mind. If it comes to negotiating concrete measures, these may be expected, more often than not, to be in themselves of a regional character. In a way this is borne out by the study when it notes that the security concerns of States and, to some extent, even the concepts of security differ markedly from region to region. Precisely because it can take regional differences fully into account, a regional approach to disarmament has a particularly important role to play in the field of conventional disarmament.

13. This being said, the global aspects of disarmament should never be lost sight of. The study emphasizes that regional disarmament is a necessary complement to global measures and an important constituent in the step-by-step approach to global disarmament. In particular, it can facilitate global negotiations aimed at general and complete disarmament through promoting security, mutual confidence and co-operation among States. Regional restraint in the production, acquisition and accumulation of conventional weapons can also contribute to world-wide disarmament in the conventional field.

14. The study states that arms transfers have considerable implications for conventional disarmament. In dealing with possible concrete measures in this field, it does, however, strike a very precise cautionary note: it is necessary to bear in mind the reasons why the attempts made in the past have been unsuccessful

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and to recognize the sensitivities that exist. Thus possible measures should be non-discriminatory, take into account legitimate security concerns, and have regard to concerns about sufficiency and security in relation to the provision of data.

15. Considering the relative importance of arms transfers, the matter should, however, be kept under discussion. The agreement, be it ever so modest in scope, established in the study between experts of differing opinions should be used as a basis for such discussion, which could aim at further clarifying the possibilities for progress towards fair and durable agreements to restrain the transfer of arms, including the possible merit of exchange of information in this field.

16. Confidence-building measures and the concept of openness in military matters could be considered under one and the same angle. Openness, of course, does not in itself produce reductions in arms or armed forces, but it will tend to create confidence, thus having the potential for paving the way for proper disarmament measures. This was a leading thought behind the Stockholm document adopted by the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe on 19 September 1986.

17. The study considered that a successful outcome in Stockholm would be a meaningful contribution to the process of disarmament and represent a significant contribution to European security as well as to international peace and security in general. As the outcome was successful, it is reasonable to assume that the Stockholm document and the comprehensive set of measures it has introduced will serve, as intended, to strengthen confidence and security in Europe and also provide a basis for further progress in the process which was initiated in Stockholm. Hopefully, it may also serve as a source of inspiration if similar endeavours are contemplated or set in motion in other regions.

18. One aspect of the Stockholm document deserves to be given prominent attention. In respect to compliance and verification the document introduces a detailed system of inspection based on the right for each participating State to conduct inspection on the territory of any other participating State on whose territory compliance with the agreed measures is in doubt. This is an epoch-making innovation in an international multilateral security policy context. Hopefully, it will pave the way for comparable, suitable arrangements in other future cases of agreement in the field of disarmament, arms control and related measures.

19. While it is true that the vast majority of conventional weapons are found among a few, notably nuclear weapon States, the burden of the conventional arms race in terms of diversion of resources from economic and social purposes is an urgent problem in a large number of countries and is often a serious obstacle to social and economic development. The arms race causes an enormous drain on both economic and technological resources.

20. The study being a work of consensus represents in many instances a very delicate balance reconciling views differing from the outset. The observations in the preceding paragraphs do not intend in any case to affect that balance. To some extent the choice of their subjects is derived from the answers by Member States to the Secretary-General's enquiry.

21. The third special session of the General Assembly, devoted to disarmament should offer an opportunity for endeavours to expand the area of consensus in the field of conventional disarmament in the light of developments since 1978, including the contribution made by the study.

22. Starting from the Study on conventional disarmament and the comments made by Member States thereto, the purpose of this working paper has been to identify certain pertinent issues in the hope that interest might focus on some of these in the course of the present session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

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Notes

1/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IX.1.

2/ General Assembly resolution S-10/2.

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