1. There is a long tradition of proposals to create an international disarmament organization or to enhance the role of the United Nations in the verification of compliance with disarmament or arms control agreements. For example, Sweden suggested in 1973 the creation of an "International Disarmament Control Organization". It was suggested that this organization could provide knowledge about the implementation of disarmament agreements and also collect information from scientific journals and other open sources. It could also develop standardized techniques of reporting information and data relevant to verification problems.

2. The first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament stated in its Final Document that "the United Nations has a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament" (resolution S-10/2, para. 27) and that the organization "should be kept appropriately informed of all steps in this field" (ibid.). The document also stated, in paragraph 91, that "in order to facilitate the conclusion and effective implementation of disarmament agreements and to create confidence, States, should accept appropriate provisions for verification in such agreements". It further stated, in paragraph 31, that disarmament agreements "should provide for the participation of parties directly or through the United Nations system in the verification process".

3. At the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, there were two proposals which specifically concerned the role of the United Nations in verification of disarmament agreements. Italy circulated a working paper (A/S-12/AC.1/19) entitled "Institution of an international body for the
verification of disarmament agreements" and Japan a working paper (A/S-12/AC.1/43) entitled "Strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of verification".

4. The Italian proposal dealt with the institution of a permanent verification body which would operate in the United Nations framework and would be created in successive stages. Among its functions were mentioned "the collection of data and information related to the application of disarmament agreements and to compliance with the provisions of such agreements". Further, the organization should "disseminate the date and information received" and "develop knowledge and expertise on verification options and verifiability of weapons categories".

5. The Japanese proposal suggested the formation of an international verification unit within the United Nations. As a first step towards this long-term objective, the Government of Japan suggested, inter alia, the establishment of a special division in the Secretariat responsible for collecting information concerning compliance with and verification of disarmament agreements.

6. At its forty-first session, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 41/86 Q which, inter alia, requested the Disarmament Commission to consider, at its 1987 session, verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations and the Member States in the field of verification.

7. At the same session, during the general debate in the First Committee, Finland suggested that the ability of the United Nations to assist in verification and compliance arrangements could be strengthened by the creation of a verification data base compiled and managed by the United Nations (See A/C.1/41/PV.18).

8. The aim of the present paper is to elaborate on the idea of a verification data base presented in that statement.

9. The United Nations should be given a more operational role in the verification of disarmament agreements. It should be able to assist Member States in verifying compliance with arms control agreement to which they are parties. The data base could also form a channel for exchange of confidence-building information. The data base would compile, store and disseminate information. In view of its operational nature, the verification data base should be established and managed by an operational unit of the United Nations Secretariat, such as the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

10. The data base could assist Member States in verification of arms control agreements and the exchange of confidence-building information, both by making the information processing more cost-effective and reliable, and by collecting and supplying information on verification procedures and confidence-building measures in general. The base would thus be of a special value to neutral and non-aligned States, which do not themselves or through their alliances possess vast human and technical resources for verification purposes.

11. At the same time, it is clear that even an operational role for the United Nations in verification would be essentially technical in nature. Political
judgements as to whether a particular disarmament agreement is being complied with would continue to rest with the Member States concerned. The verification role of the United Nations would be to assist in informed decision-making by Member States.

12. The data base could contain the following kind of information:

(a) Verification provisions of existing multilateral arms control agreements, whether global or regional, and agreements on the exchange on confidence-building information;

(b) Data on confidence-building information compiled by the United Nations. For example, information on military expenditures, information on nuclear tests in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/59 N, information on activities related to the bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons Convention;

(c) Data provided by other international organizations entrusted with verification of arms control agreements (International Atomic Energy Agency, Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, the Consultative Committee of the South Pacific Forum) as well as data supplied in the framework of organized exchange of confidence-building information (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe);

(d) Information on planned international verification organizations (e.g. the verification structure of a future convention on chemical weapons) and work done in relation to these (e.g. work of the Group of Scientific Experts at the Conference on Disarmament);

(e) Scientific studies of political, organizational and technological problems connected with verification. For example, theoretical models of verification organizations, information on satellite or seismic monitoring, radars, black boxes.

13. Valuable work closely related especially to subparagraph (e) above is already done by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which last year started a project to create a disarmament data base within the Institute.

14. The organizational and technical aspects of establishing a verification data base would need to be studied in detail. A suitable solution could be to entrust to the Department for Disarmament Affairs the task of making a feasibility study in co-operation with UNIDIR concerning the creation of such a data base.