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CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT

Working paper submitted by Hungary

1. The new situation prevailing after the Soviet-American summit meeting in Reykjavik has highlighted the urgency and feasibility of nuclear disarmament. After the emergence at Reykjavik of the possibility of creating a world free from nuclear weapons, we can see the first signs of new momentum in the nuclear disarmament process. One promising result of this is the fact that a Soviet-American agreement can be reached in the foreseeable future on the complete elimination of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe and on a significant reduction in such weapons on a global scale. The possibility exists both for the elimination of the parties' operational-tactical nuclear missiles and for a radical reduction in tactical nuclear weapons.

In these circumstances, the problem of the limitation and reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments acquires a qualitatively new dimension. The solution of this problem is also facilitated by such factors as the successful conclusion of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe which, from the point of view of security- and confidence-building and preparation for the transition to disarmament, provides us with valuable experience that is applicable on a global scale.

More and more countries and international organizations are engaged in political efforts aimed at the settlement of armed conflicts involving conventional weapons in various parts of the world. Proposals are being made for the elaboration of measures and agreements designed to settle conflicts by means of the limitation and radical reduction of the armed forces involved in an armed conflict of parties and through the restoration of confidence between them and the creation of the military conditions for lasting security.

The time has come for the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as one of the most competent forums, to begin to sum up the experience existing with regard to the limitation of the conventional arms race and to conventional disarmament.

2. The problem of conventional weapons and of conventional disarmament is acquiring greater urgency also because such weapons are becoming increasingly sophisticated, powerful, accurate and long-range and by their characteristics are coming to resemble weapons of mass destruction. The use of the latest achievements of the scientific and technological revolution for the development of conventional weapons is producing changes that require a complete reappraisal of the political, military and economic threat posed by conventional weapons.

The efforts to create increasingly sophisticated conventional weapons also force the other party to engage in costly research and development and radically reorganize its armed forces. A growing number of countries are unable to produce modern conventional weapons and weapon systems. In order to meet their needs, such countries are increasingly obliged to rely on foreign sources and are thus in a position of growing political and, above all, economic dependence.

At the same time, the qualitative development of conventional weapons on the basis of new scientific and technological achievements means that the emergence of new weapon systems - accompanied by a growth in their destructive force - increases the likelihood that the development of potential (accidental) armed conflicts will escape political and military control. These weapon systems and the related military concepts increase to an unprecedented level the danger that weapons of mass destruction may be used in such conflicts even in their early stage. In addition, most of the weapons in this category have a "dual purpose", i.e. they can carry both conventional and nuclear (or chemical) warheads.

3. The characteristics of modern weaponry and technological progress, in which the time factor is increasingly important, may in practice blur the distinction between the beginning of an armed conflict involving conventional weapons and a universal catastrophe. The likelihood of conflicts involving conventional weapons developing into a nuclear war increases immeasurably as greater use is made of automated systems of troop management. The automation of more and more management functions limits the ability of political leaders to take well-founded decisions and, in extreme conditions, may lead to an irreversible escalation of hostilities.

In these circumstances, the existence of military parity between opposing States or groupings as regards conventional weapons and armed forces is no guarantee of their security and does not preclude the possibility of war breaking out by accident or because of a misinterpretation of each other's actions.

4. When conventional weapons are widely used, there is a possibility of an intentional or accidental attack on nuclear and chemical facilities and of the destruction of atomic installations used for peaceful purposes. Depending on the target and location, such an attack may trigger a national or regional catastrophe. In fact, the result would be equivalent to an attack using nuclear weapons.

5. The use of conventional weapons inflicts incalculable suffering on people and, even in local conflicts, causes numerous deaths and vast destruction, primarily in developing countries. It is contrary to the elementary principles of contemporary civilization. Human life must be set at a higher value, and non-violence must become the basis for the life of the international community.

6. The spiralling cost of the new conventional weapon types and systems is placing a growing burden on both developed and developing States, inflicting irreparable harm on the economic and social development of peoples and limiting the resources available for assistance to developing countries and for efforts to combat economic backwardness.

7. The continuing conventional arms race is causing deepening anxiety in the international community. It was pointed out, for example, in statements in the United Nations General Assembly that the maintenance and further development of conventional weapons increases the risk of armed conflicts in various regions of the world. The General Assembly adopted a whole series of resolutions on this problem, which were endorsed by a majority of States. This shows that the issues concerning the reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments must be resolved.

8. Security interests in the nuclear-space age require that, along with the general elimination of weapons of mass destruction - both nuclear and chemical - from States' arsenals by the end of this century, and the prohibition of space strike weapons, conventional weapons and armed forces should also be reduced. Such an all-round approach to disarmament is completely in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which asserts, in particular, that "significant progress in nuclear disarmament would be facilitated ... by progress in the limitation and reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments of the nuclear-weapon States and other States in the regions concerned".

9. In the first place, armed forces and conventional weapons must be radically reduced on the European continent, where the two largest military groupings, equipped with the most up-to-date weapons, stand in confrontation. The programme for reducing armed forces and conventional weapons in Europe proposed by the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty in June 1986 and addressed to all the other European States, as well as to the United States of America and Canada, is aimed at that goal. These proposals are an important addition to the Soviet Union's programme for eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, the proposals are completely independent and are not linked with other issues.

The proposals give concrete expression to a major aspect of the creation of a comprehensive system of peace and security in the military and political sphere.

A substantial reduction is proposed in the land and tactical air forces of European States and in the corresponding forces of the United States and Canada stationed in Europe, together with their troop arms and equipment. Simultaneously

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with conventional weapons, tactical nuclear weapons should also be reduced. The proposed reductions would be carried out all over Europe - from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals - with the military balance maintained at ever lower levels and without jeopardizing the security of any of the parties. There is an asymmetrical distribution of the armed forces of the two parties in Europe, which is the result of historical, geographical and other factors. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty are in favour of eliminating the inequality which has arisen in certain respects, but not through a build-up by the party which is lagging behind but through reductions to be carried out by the party which has taken the lead.

A balance could be achieved through mutual reductions, taking into account the existing advantages of each party as regards one or other component of its armed forces and armaments.

10. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty attach great importance to monitoring and verification measures. All the reductions proposed by them would be carried out under conditions of reliable and effective verification through international procedures, including on-site inspection. Together with measures for verifying the actual process of reduction, a means for observing the military activities of the troops remaining after reductions would be devised. There would also be appropriate methods for verifying measures to strengthen mutual confidence. In essence, the military activities of the troops remaining after the reduction would be open for observation in the whole territory of Europe, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals.

For purposes of verification, the parties would exchange, at an agreed date, the relevant numerical data. The parties would notify each other of the beginning and completion of the reduction.

For purposes of verification, an international consultative committee would be established with the participation of representatives of the NATO and Warsaw Treaty countries, as well as of interested neutral and non-aligned and other European States.

11. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty proceed from the assumption that the problem of armed forces and conventional weapons reduction throughout Europe must be considered in an overall European context.

The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty do not set any prior conditions for objective discussion of their proposals and the attainment of mutually acceptable agreements. They are also prepared to consider, in a constructive spirit, other proposals which may be made in this regard by States members of NATO, neutral, non-aligned and other European States. The most important consideration is to ensure, as quickly as possible, practical, genuinely tangible results leading to a reduction in the level of military confrontation in Europe.

12. In the interests of security in Europe and throughout the world, military concepts and the plans of military alliances must be based on defensive principles. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty have declared that they will never in any circumstances initiate military action against any State, whether in Europe or any other region of the world, unless they themselves are subjected to

aggression. This commitment and the proposals they have put forward are based on their consistent policy of peace and the defensive nature of their military planning, which is designed to maintain the balance between armed forces at the lowest possible level and to reduce war potential to the minimum limits necessary for defence.

The socialist countries are willing to give objective consideration to the question of military planning, including levels of sufficiency with respect to war potential.

Since the problem of limiting conventional weapons implicitly extends beyond the context of the European continent, it should be possible to determine levels of reasonable sufficiency with respect to war potential, based on the concept of defensive military planning, not only in specific regional contexts but also on a global scale. The United Nations Disarmament Commission could also become an appropriate forum for the elaboration of suitable general guidelines in this regard.

13. While noting the importance of armed forces and conventional weapons reduction for international and European security, one must at the same time condemn attempts to use the fact that this problem remains unsolved as a pretext to avoid taking measures to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. The very existence of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the survival of mankind. No excuses can justify a refusal to take steps to overcome and eliminate this unprecedented danger of universal annihilation.

As is noted in the study on conventional disarmament undertaken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations with the assistance of a group of experts (A/39/348), the belief that conventional disarmament must be accompanied by nuclear disarmament constitutes a fundamental principle which is upheld by the Programme of Action contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

The specific recommendations of the study may even now constitute suitable solutions for the unsolved questions relating to the reduction and limitation of conventional weapons.

The need for parallel negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the implementation of measures to limit and gradually to reduce armed forces and conventional weapons was also mentioned in the Political Declaration adopted at the Harare summit conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned States.

The Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have repeatedly expressed their willingness to reach agreement on the most radical arms reductions, with respect to both nuclear and conventional weapons.

14. A particularly important role in implementing specific decisions to halt the nuclear and conventional arms race and eliminate nuclear weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction must be played primarily by the States which are the strongest militarily, the members of the military and political alliances.

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Nevertheless, the problem of reducing conventional weapons and armed forces is in no way limited only to the major States which possess nuclear weapons and a large-scale military capability. This is a part of the overall problem of disarmament, which all States can help to solve.

15. The process of reducing conventional weapons and armed forces to the levels of sufficiency necessary for defence and keeping them at the lowest possible level is global in nature and affects all regions. Implementation of the programme proposed by the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty for reducing armed forces and armaments in Europe would help to lower the level of military confrontation world-wide. The forces and weapons reduced on the European continent could not be transferred to other regions of the world.

The situation concerning the maintenance of security in various regions should be considered not in isolation, but within the framework of the strengthening of international security. Although regional approaches may, of course, differ owing to the peculiarities of local conditions, they must all supplement and further global disarmament efforts.

16. Like all disarmament measures, the reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons must in any case be carried out in such a way as to ensure the right of each State to security and to ensure that no individual State or group of States may achieve military superiority. These principles, which are set forth in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (para. 29), and also the right of States to self-defence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are of lasting and fundamental importance for the success of conventional disarmament.

17. The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which was opened for signature in 1981, was a concrete result of the efforts of the international community to bring about conventional disarmament. At the present time the largest possible number of States, particularly those with the greatest military capability, should become parties to this Convention and ratify it.

18. The success of efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations as an instrument for achieving the lofty goal proclaimed in its Charter - "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" - will to a large extent also be judged by the contribution made by the Organization to the solution of the questions related to the reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons. Consistent implementation of the General Assembly decisions calling on States to continue conventional disarmament negotiations in all seriousness, in order to achieve agreements as soon as possible on limiting and reducing armed forces and conventional weapons, would greatly enhance the Organization's authority and role.

The full potential of the United Nations must be utilized in order to achieve the necessary progress in reducing armed forces and conventional weapons.