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### ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

Working paper submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany

#### Improvement of the work of the First Committee

1. The Federal Republic of Germany has supported and contributed to the endeavours aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament since this item was put on the international agenda by Cameroon and others at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly (our delegation co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 39/151 G). It welcomes the fact that the Disarmament Commission at its 1987 substantive session is taking up this matter again.
2. Twice in recent years we have voiced our opinion on the item through the Presidency of the twelve States members of the European Community (see A/CN.10/69/Add.1, pp. 2-4 and A/C.1/41/PV.27, pp. 2-8) and, on the occasion of last year's deliberations within the Disarmament Commission we have added more specific thoughts on how to improve the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly. We consider the First Committee as a pivotal organ in the multilateral disarmament process (see A/CN.10/1986/WG.II/CR, p. 9).
3. We stated then that the First Committee had not done all in its power to perform its role efficiently and effectively. The proper functioning of the Committee has all too often been hindered by too much debate - often with the purpose of scoring propaganda points - and, above all, by the presentation of too many draft resolutions, often covering the same point, often in a repetitive manner.
4. Unfortunately, a year after we made these observations the problems remain. However, we think that awareness of these problems has risen, together with the readiness to look for a solution conducive to creating a work situation for the First Committee in which it can optimally perform its duty in helping the international community to achieve progress in the field of disarmament.

5. Among the developments holding out hope of improvement, we would like to cite especially the output of this Working Group on the item under consideration, notably the very constructive thoughts presented by the Chairman in his working paper issued during last year's session (A/CN.10/1986/WG.II/CRP.1). Furthermore, we should like to commend the efforts undertaken by the Wise Men's Group of Former and Present Chairmen and Bureau Members of the First Committee and other distinguished personalities which met during the substantive session of the First Committee at the forty-first session of the General Assembly. In this context, we consider it necessary that the Group should continue to operate, and we appreciate the fact that the Chairman of the First Committee, in his functions as Chairman of this Group, pledged to continue his activities to that end at the closure of the session of the First Committee.

6. At this point, the Federal Republic of Germany wishes to reiterate some of the proposals it previously made and to bring them into sharper focus. The proposals are re-stated on the assumption that they are operationally executable. We also think that chances are great that the political will to execute those proposals exists. For this reason, we have carefully examined the opinions that many delegations have expressed in this context. Moreover, we have actively sought the opinion of a greater number of States on this issue through numerous bilateral consultations in capitals.

7. First and foremost we see the necessity for introducing a two- and more years' rhythm for the agenda of the First Committee. Operationally this could be achieved by a consensus after intensive consultations among the members of the First Committee. With the aim of identifying agenda items which could be omitted from the agenda of the succeeding General Assembly, a body such as the Wise Men's Group seems to us especially appropriate to hold these consultations, since it consists of distinguished personalities from all geographical groups with a particular interest in improving the work of the Committee.

Based on the result of the consultations mentioned above, the Secretariat of the United Nations should come up with a draft agenda revised accordingly. States members of the General Committee then would only have to instruct their representatives in the General Committee of the succeeding General Assembly to accept the "new and lean" agenda.

By this means the yearly deliberations on all those repetitive draft resolutions which have been tabled year after year could be avoided, and time and energy be directed to really central matters.

We think it is feasible to introduce these measures already at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, preparing for it during the gathering of the First Committee at the forty-second session of the General Assembly.

My delegation would be ready to suggest, at the forty-second session of the General Assembly, a number of items which should be dealt with on a biannual or even wider basis from the forty-third session onward.

8. Even if it is not possible to take a certain item out of the agenda of the First Committee, the number of resolutions could still be reduced in the course of the deliberations themselves. We are of the opinion that in the future every draft resolution should be thoroughly reviewed in the light of the following questions: is it necessary for the sake of progress in the disarmament field to table it this year or could it be postponed one or more years, and, if it is tabled, should provision be made - in the operative part - for the relevant agenda item (i.e. resolution) to be dealt with after a lapse of more than one year.

My delegation is ready to approach from this angle any draft resolution projected or tabled, and will not hesitate to voice its opinion.

We think the time is ripe for such a procedure. The work of the Group of Eighteen and their recommendations point in this direction (see A/41/49, p. 6, recommendation 3 (b)). The success achieved by the Second Committee in this year's General Assembly shows that, given the will of all parties concerned, results can be achieved.

9. Besides the above-mentioned proposals, which we consider of central importance, there are other conceivable measures that, in our opinion, would facilitate the work of the First Committee with a view to streamlining its debate.

(a) Creating more flexibility for the Committee by giving up the artificial division between the various stages of work. It should be possible to introduce and act upon draft resolutions at any stage of the work of the Committee. Proceeding in this way, uncontroversial matters could be dealt with at an early stage and room would be made for the necessary negotiations on more complex draft resolutions;

(b) States should concentrate in their contributions to the General Debate, regarding issues that are of operational relevance to the upcoming work in the First Committee, on which draft resolutions a delegation intends to put forward. This could include indications. In this manner, early negotiations would be possible and valuable time for a true dialogue could be gained;

(c) Perhaps it would be possible for the First Committee to concentrate more in the future on issues which are of topical interest during the time when the Committee is meeting. Thus the Committee could - in a manner more visible to the outside world than hitherto - make its own contribution to the disarmament process.

10. The Federal Republic of Germany appeals to all States Members of the United Nations carefully to examine the suggestions just presented. It is hoped that these suggestions will initiate a process eventually leading to a situation where the role of the First Committee, and thus of the whole United Nations system, in the field of disarmament will be strengthened. To this end the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany will continue its dialogue with other interested Governments.

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