General Assembly

Forty-third session

DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 1 December 1988, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HEPBURN (Bahamas)

- Opening of the session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Election of the Chairman and other officers for 1989
- Review of the draft resolutions adopted by the First Committee of the General Assembly at its forty-third session relating to the Disarmament Commission
- Draft provisional agenda for the 1989 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission
- Organizational matters

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: I declare open the organizational session of the
Disarmament Commission.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The CHAIRMAN: If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission
wishes to adopt the draft provisional agenda for this organizational session of the

It was so decided.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS FOR 1989

The CHAIRMAN: The next item on the agenda is the election of the
Chairman and other officers of the Commission for 1989. In accordance with the
established principle of rotation for the chairmanship of the Commission, the
candidacy for the chairmanship for 1989 should come from the Group of African
States. I am pleased to report to the Commission that the Group has endorsed the
candidacy of Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire for election to the post
of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1989.

If I hear no comments I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission
that Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya of Zaire be elected Chairman by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I now declare that Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya has
been elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1989.

Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya is a distinguished diplomat of his country
and has been well known in United Nations diplomatic circles for many years,
particularly with valuable experience in the field of disarmament. He is currently
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the Permanent Representative of Zaire to the United Nations here in New York. Over the years he has been very active in the sessions of the General Assembly, including, in 1989, the third special session devoted to disarmament, as well as in other important disarmament conferences and in sessions of the Disarmament Commission. In particular, in 1987 he was elected Chairman of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

I am convinced that with his broad experience in the United Nations and expertise in the field of disarmament the Disarmament Commission will conduct its business successfully at the next substantive session in 1989 under the leadership of Ambassador Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya.

It was my pleasure to work with him, and I now have the pleasure of extending to him my warmest congratulations. I wish him every success.

Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire) (interpretation from French): I should like to express to you, Mr. Chairman, my appreciation of and personal regard for the remarkable manner in which you have conducted the work of the Disarmament Commission this year. Your wide experience in the field of disarmament, since you yourself were Chairman of the First Committee in 1979, has contributed to the success you have achieved as Chairman of the Commission.

I should like to congratulate all the officers of the Commission and the members of its Secretariat, in particular the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Akashi and his assistant, for their valuable contribution.

At this time when the Commission has entrusted to me the important task of chairing its meetings let me express to all members my gratitude for the confidence they have placed in me and, through me, my country, Zaire.
The agenda of the Disarmament Commission is eloquent enough to explain the very reasons for being of the Disarmament Commission — a body that includes all States Members of the United Nations. Therefore every effort must be made throughout our mandate — with the valuable assistance, I am certain, of Mr. Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and his assistant — to deal with all these matters in detail and in great depth.
The CHAIRMAN: Now I wish to proceed to the election of the other officers of the Commission for the year 1989, namely, eight Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. In this connection, I wish to announce the following:

Firstly, the Group of African States has endorsed the candidacy of Togo for the Vice-Chairmanship of the Commission.

Secondly, the Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidacy of the German Democratic Republic and Romania for Vice-Chairmanship of the Commission.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect the representatives of the aforementioned countries as Vice-Chairmen of the Disarmament Commission for 1989 by acclamation.

As for the other officers of the Commission, I understand that consultations are under way within the regional groups concerned - the Asian, Western European, Latin American and Caribbean Groups - to select candidates for Vice-Chairmanship and Rapporteur for 1989. Therefore, those elections will have to take place in 1989 at the beginning of the next substantive session in May.

Does any delegation wish to speak at this time?

I see none. We will proceed to item 4 on our agenda.

REVIEW OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-THIRD SESSION RELATING TO THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: As members of the Commission are aware, the First Committee at its current session adopted 10 draft resolutions which have a direct relevance to the work of the Commission. Those draft resolutions will be taken up at the plenary meetings of the General Assembly soon. For the sake of clarity and the benefit of the members of the Commission, I shall refer to them one by one.
The first one is draft resolution A/C.1/43/L.3, adopted by the First Committee under item 67 (a) entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". Operative paragraphs 1-9 read as follows:

"1. Takes note of the special and annual reports of the Disarmament Commission;

"2. Commends the Disarmament Commission for its adoption by consensus of a set of principles of verification on disarmament issues as well as a set of guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level, which were recommended to the General Assembly for consideration;

"3. Notes that the Disarmament Commission has yet to conclude its consideration of some items on its agenda, but notes also with appreciation the progress achieved on some of these;

"4. Recalls the role of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues;

"5. Stresses the importance for the Disarmament Commission to work on the basis of a relevant agenda of disarmament topics, thereby enabling the Commission to concentrate its efforts and thus optimize its progress on specific subjects in accordance with resolution 37/78 H;

"6. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate, as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, and with paragraph 3 of resolution 37/78 H, and to that end to make every effort to
(The Chairman)

achieve specific recommendations, at its 1989 substantive session, on the outstanding items on its agenda, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly as well as the results of its 1988 substantive session;

"7. Also requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding four weeks during 1989 and to submit a substantive report, containing specific recommendations on the items included in its agenda, to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session;

"8. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit to the Disarmament Commission the special and annual reports of the Conference on Disarmament, together with all the official records of the fifteenth special session and the forty-third session of the General Assembly relating to disarmament matters, and to render all assistance that the Commission may require for implementing the present resolution;

"9. Also requests the Secretary-General to ensure full provision to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies of interpretation and translation facilities in the official languages, and to assign, as a matter of priority, all the necessary resources and services to this end."

The second draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.10/Rev.1, was adopted by the First Committee under item 64 (d) entitled "Conventional disarmament". Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 read as follows:

"2. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue at its 1989 session its substantive consideration of issues related to conventional disarmament and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session with a view to facilitating possible measures in the fields of conventional arms reduction and disarmament;
(The Chairman)

"3. Also requests the Disarmament Commission for this purpose to include in the agenda for its 1989 session an item entitled 'Substantive consideration of issues related to conventional disarmament'."

The third draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.15, was adopted by the First Committee under item 64 (d), entitled "Conventional disarmament". Operative paragraph 5 reads as follows:

"5. Requests the Disarmament Commission to consider further, at its 1989 substantive session, issues related to conventional disarmament;"

The fourth draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.19/Rev.2, was adopted by the First Committee under item 64 (f) entitled "Objective information on military matters". Operative paragraph 6 reads as follows:

"6. Further invites all Member States also to communicate to the Secretary-General their views on ways and means of further consolidating the emerging trend toward greater openness in military matters, specifically with regard to the provisions of objective information on military matters for consideration by the Disarmament Commission at its 1990 session."

The fifth draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.22/Rev.2, was adopted by the First Committee under item 64 entitled "International arms transfers". Operative paragraph 3 reads as follows:

"3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to take into account the above-mentioned matters in its deliberations on the issue of conventional disarmament."

The sixth draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.31 B, was adopted by the First Committee under item 60 entitled "Nuclear capability of South Africa". Operative paragraph 9 reads as follows:
(The Chairman)

"9. Requests the Disarmament Commission to consider once again as a matter of priority during its substantive session in 1989 South Africa's nuclear capability, taking into account, inter alia, the findings of the report of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on South Africa's nuclear capability."

The seventh draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/43/L.37, was adopted by the First Committee under item 64 (h) entitled "Naval armaments and disarmament". Operative paragraphs 1-3 read as follows:
(The Chairman)

"1. Notes with satisfaction the report on the substantive consideration of the question of the naval arms race and disarmament by the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission;

"2. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue, at its forthcoming session in 1989, the substantive consideration of the question and to report on its deliberations and recommendations to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session;

"3. Also requests the Disarmament Commission to inscribe on the agenda for its 1989 session the item entitled 'Naval armaments and disarmament';"

The eighth is draft resolution A/C.1/43/L.58/Rev.1, adopted by the First Committee under agenda item 62, entitled "Reduction of military budgets", operative paragraph 4 of which reads as follows:

"4. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue consideration of the item entitled 'Reduction of military budgets' and, in this context, to conclude, at its 1989 substantive session, its work on the last outstanding paragraph of the principles that should govern further actions of States in the field of freezing and reduction of military budgets, and to submit its report and recommendations to the General Assembly not later than at its forty-fourth session;"

The ninth is draft resolution A/C.1/43/L.63, adopted by the First Committee under item 67, entitled "Consideration of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade", operative paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of which read as follows:

"2. Directs the Disarmament Commission, at its substantive session in 1989, to prepare elements of a draft resolution to be entitled, 'Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade' and submit them to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session for consideration and adoption;
(The Chairman)

"3. Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views and suggestions of Member States and of relevant specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the possible elements to be included in the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade, and to make these available to the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session in 1989;

"4. Further requests the Secretary-General to render all necessary assistance to the Disarmament Commission in implementing the present resolution;"

The tenth is draft resolution A/C.1/43/L.69/Rev.1, adopted by the First Committee under item 64 (j), entitled "Review of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament", operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of which read as follows:

"1. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue its consideration of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament as a matter of priority at its next substantive session, in 1989, with a view to the elaboration of concrete recommendations and proposals, as appropriate, taking into account, inter alia, the views and suggestions of Member States as well as the aforementioned documents on the subject;

"2. Further requests the Disarmament Commission to submit its report on the subject, including findings, recommendations and proposals, as appropriate, to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session;"

I am really thankful that we have concluded the reading of all the paragraphs of the draft resolutions which I have just outlined and which have direct relevance to the work of the Commission.

If there are no comments in connection with item 4, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission to proceed to the next item.
DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 1989 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN:  In preparing the draft provisional agenda for the 1989 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission to be held in May 1989, account has been taken of the relevant draft resolutions approved by the First Committee, as I indicated a moment ago, and the recommendations contained in the reports of the Commission to the fifteenth special session and the forty-third session of the General Assembly contained in documents A/S-15/3, Supplement No. 3 and A/43/42, Supplement No. 42. For the convenience of the members of the Commission, the elements of the draft provisional agenda have been included in document A/CN.10/1988/CRP.13, which has been circulated.

In this connection then, I wish to point out that in that document, items 1-9, 11 and 12 are more or less the same as the agenda items of this year, with some slight technical changes. Item 10 is a new item, which was added in accordance with relevant draft resolutions approved by the First Committee and to be adopted by the General Assembly.


Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America): Our position regarding the inclusion of an agenda item on naval armaments is well known, as we registered in our recent "no" vote in the First Committee on draft resolution A/C.1/43/L.37. In that regard, we expect that this issue will be handled in the same way as in the past, that is through informal consultations under the Chairman's own responsibility.

Ms. TAYLOR (United Kingdom): I should like to make a remark on item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda for the next session's work. This includes the wording towards the end:
"... with a view to concluding its work on the last outstanding paragraph of the 'Principles which should govern further actions of States in the field of the freezing and reduction of military budgets'."

I know that this is a repetition of the earlier wording that has been used for this draft resolution. However, my delegation did make an explanation of vote on the adoption of the draft resolution this year, in which we pointed out that my delegation, and others, would like an opportunity to look again at the whole text of the draft resolution in question before it is finally adopted. It would perhaps therefore be more accurate to drop the words in the phrase that I read out, "the last outstanding paragraph of", in order to reflect more accurately the position of my delegation and others, and also to give perhaps a more correct mandate to the Disarmament Commission, in order to allow it to finalize its work properly on this subject.
Mr. FLOREAN (Romania) (interpretation from French): My delegation would like to express its support for the present wording of the provisional draft of the agenda for the forthcoming session of the Disarmament Commission. We stress the fact that the wording of paragraph 5 (b) should remain as it is because it merely reproduces the terms of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution adopted in the First Committee on the question of the reduction of military budgets. That draft resolution is in document A/C.1/43/L.58/Rev.1.

Mr. STEVENSON (United States): My delegation was among those delegations which shared the view just expressed by the delegate of the United Kingdom. Accordingly, my delegation also shares the view that the phrase "the last outstanding paragraph of" should be deleted from paragraph 5 (b).

Mr. MANZHOSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): My delegation agrees with the draft agenda for the Disarmament Commission which has been proposed. We should like to support the proposal of the representative of Romania that we keep the present wording of paragraph 5 of the draft provisional agenda.

Ms. TAYLOR (United Kingdom): My delegation would like to say that we understand the position expressed particularly by the delegation of Romania. We do not wish to be legalistic about the actual language of the agenda item and therefore we will not insist on a change in the wording of the agenda item itself, but I would hope that it will be recorded that it is my delegation's wish and intention that the Working Group, when it comes to consider this item at the next session, should have the opportunity to look at the text as a whole before it is adopted.
The CHAIRMAN: We have heard the views expressed by the representatives of Romania, United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States on paragraph 5 (b). These views will be recorded, and we have taken note of them. We will also take note of the view expressed by the United States concerning naval armaments.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: Since there are no other delegations wishing to take the floor on this item, we can now proceed to item VI on organizational matters. As members of the Commission are aware, the organization of work of the next substantive session will be finalized in May 1989. However, the work of the Commission will continue to be very heavy next year, as reflected in the draft provisional agenda, which includes seven substantive items.

As far as the organization of the session is concerned, as in the previous year, in addition to the Committee of the Whole, seven subsidiary bodies will be established to deal with the seven substantive items on the agenda. The Commission might wish to have four working groups for items 6, 7, 9 and 10; a contact group for item 4 (a) and (b); and two consultation groups for items 5 and 8. Therefore, intensive consultations are required during the forthcoming months regarding the establishment of various subsidiary bodies to deal with the subjects and the equitable distribution of chairmanships among the various subsidiary bodies in accordance with the principle of political and geographical balance.

As to the date and duration of the next substantive session, in accordance with the report of the Committee on Conferences (Supplement No. 32, A/43/32, p. 40) the session has been scheduled from 1 to 26 May 1989 for a period of four weeks. However, it is my understanding that there was a proposal to schedule for the week from 1 to 5 May 1989 the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Fourth
(The Chairman)

Review Conference on the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In this regard, there will be conflict of meetings during that week. Therefore, if members of the Commission so agree it might be advisable for the Disarmament Commission to postpone the scheduled date for one week, namely to hold its session from 8 May until 2 June 1989. If that is the case, however, I was informed by the Secretariat that the meeting services for the last week, namely from 29 May to 2 June, will be limited to one team of interpreters and that the other team could be provided on an as available basis only and without guarantee. Consequently, the alternative solution may be that all subsidiary bodies could finalize their work by the end of the third week, namely on 26 May, so that the Secretariat could work on the reports of the subsidiary bodies and the report of the Commission during the long weekend including 29 May, which is an official holiday in New York. On 30 and 31 May, plenary meetings of the Commission could be held to consider all reports of the Commission and to hear concluding statements from delegations, since for all the plenary meetings only one team of interpreters will be required. The substantive session could be concluded on 31 May 1989.

I like now to find out if there are any comments with respect to the views that have been expressed.

Ms. TAYLOR (United Kingdom): Mr. Chairman, in response to your request for comments about the timing and duration of the session next year, my delegation wishes to point out that the session in 1988 was completed in, I believe, three weeks. Further, we note that the draft agenda for 1989, although it will clearly keep us busy, is in fact somewhat shorter than the agenda with which we dealt this year. Therefore, in logic my delegation feels that it should be possible to complete the work in three weeks in 1989.
Mrs. SECRET (France) (interpretation from French): Mr. Chairman, your proposal is relatively reasonable in that it takes into account a number of constraints. However, I did not quite understand what was said concerning the availability of interpretation services. As will be seen from the last report of the Committee, my delegation was among those which pressed for the restoration of full interpretation and translation services for the Disarmament Commission, and it seems to me all the more important that the rule be respected in the last two days of the work of the Commission since it is precisely during those last two days that we adopt the reports of working groups. Could you, Mr. Chairman, or the Secretariat give me some explanation?
Mr. VIQUEIRA (Spain) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation wishes briefly to support the statement just made by the representative of the United Kingdom. We share the view that our next session could be completed, with the same success as we had at this year's session, in three weeks.

Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America): My delegation is among those that favour having a session limited to three weeks. We feel that the Commission's work could be completed in that time.

Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): You have told us, Mr. Chairman, that there will be new items on our agenda. We have also been told today that the First Committee has adopted various draft resolutions relating to activities of the Commission. Under those draft resolutions, the General Assembly will be giving the Commission many tasks.

The Commission has a rather impressive programme of work. There will be working groups; there will be contact groups on three items, there will be consultative groups, and so forth. All this means that the forthcoming session of the Commission will have much to do.

It is true that the 1988 session of the Disarmament Commission lasted only three weeks. But it met in special circumstances, since we were preparing for the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Indeed, during one week of the session we were the preparatory committee for that special session. Therefore, the duration of the session of the Commission in 1988 should not be taken as a precedent.

Of course, we must try to ensure the best organization of the work of the Disarmament Commission. There is probably no one who would want to delay its work
just for the sake of delay. But the experience of previous sessions of the
Commission shows that we have much work to do and many important problems to solve,
and delegations do need enough time to carry out these complex tasks.

That is why we agree with your proposal, Mr. Chairman, which, as I understand
it, is that the session should start on 8 May 1989 and last up to four weeks.

Mr. FAHMY (Egypt): Frankly, my delegation does not really care very much
whether the session of the Disarmament Commission lasts three weeks or four weeks.
What concerns us is the substance of its work.

From the discussion here, it seems that there is no objection to having the
session start on 8 May. The difference of opinion appears to be on the date when
the session should end. I think the practice has been that we are given up to four
weeks for the session. We do not necessarily have to use four weeks, if we are
able to finish our work before that. Indeed, we did manage to do that in a
particular circumstance. If I remember correctly, that was not to be taken as a
precedent. The fact is, however, that we have succeeded before in finishing the
session in three weeks.

I am not sure whether it is necessary actually to set a final date for the
Commission's session at this time. I know we have to give Conference Services an
indication of the period of time for which it will have to provide services to the
Commission. In that regard, the tradition has been to decide that the session
could last up to four weeks.

Just as a suggestion, I would think that we could set the starting date,
through consultations, and, as the work proceeded, we could then set the final
date - either three weeks or four weeks, or something in between, depending on how
our work was progressing.
Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): I wish merely to place it on record that we would also favour a duration of three weeks for the coming session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

As the representative of the Ukrainian SSR has just rightly pointed out, one week of the 1988 session was set aside for preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. That will not be the case for the forthcoming session.

We think therefore that, in the light of the experience we have had, three weeks would provide ample time to finish successfully the work of the forthcoming session.

Mr. NOREEN (Sweden): If I have understood you correctly, Mr. Chairman, you have proposed neither three weeks nor four weeks: you have in fact proposed three and a half weeks. Given the circumstances and the differences of opinion here, that seems to be a very reasonable proposal. I would therefore support beginning on 8 May and finishing the substantive session on 31 May, as you have proposed, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. REYES (Philippines): My delegation agrees with your proposal, Mr. Chairman, that the session should start on 8 May. We believe, however, that provision should be made for a four-week session. As the representative of the Ukrainian SSR said, there will undoubtedly be enough items on the agenda to keep us busy for a full four weeks. Moreover, the mandate of the Commission is for a session of up to four weeks.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is the representative of Australia, and I shall certainly call on her. I hope, however, that she will say everything that everybody else would wish to say and that, after that, I can make some comments.
Ms. LETTS (Australia): Thank you for your confidence in me, Mr. Chairman.

As a matter of principle, my delegation usually prefers a shorter working time to a longer one, if we can achieve what we wish to achieve substantively within a shorter time.

However, my delegation agrees with the delegation of Sweden that what you have in fact proposed, Mr. Chairman, is a session of three and a half weeks. In view of the difference of opinion here, that seems to my delegation to be an admirable compromise.

I should like some clarification on this point: It is my delegation's understanding that unless we are able to tell Conference Services now that we have taken a decision to cut the session to three weeks - which, in my view, is not possible at this stage - we might in fact be in the position of having to pay for the four full weeks.

The CHAIRMAN: I knew there was a good reason for calling on the representative of Australia.

I would simply say this: The information we have in the paper that I have just read out with respect to the organization of work is certainly the best part of it. I do have something else to say on the matter, but I shall first call on the Secretary to explain why it has been necessary for us to take the position we have taken.

I would say in reply to the representative of Australia that it is true that we must tell Conference Services now how much time we shall need, so that we can be sure that we shall have services available once we have made the decision.
Incidentally, I know that many members are interested in statistics, so I shall give the Commission the following information: From 1979 through 1988, we have had four sessions of three weeks, five sessions of four weeks, and one session of two weeks. The Commission can therefore see that a session of three and a half weeks fits into the pattern very well.

I now call on the Secretary of the Commission.
The SECRETARY: I should like to make the following observation in response to the questions raised by the representatives of France and Austria. The Committee on Conferences has scheduled four weeks for the Disarmament Commission, as usual, from 1 to 26 May, and therefore all conference services will be available for that period, including interpretation, whenever required. The postponement to 8 May creates an unexpected situation. If it is decided to start the session on 8 May and continue until 2 June, for the last week there will only be one team of interpreters available. However, if we use only two days during the last week for plenary meetings, one team of interpreters will be enough.

I have also been requested by the Department of Conference Services to give the members of the Commission information regarding the utilization of Conference Services by the Commission during its last substantive session, held from 2 to 20 May 1988. The statistics regarding the utilization of Conference Services are as follows:

A total of 60 meetings was planned. Three hours were allocated for each meeting, making a total of 180 hours. A total of 10 meetings was cancelled during that period. The total time unutilized was 66 hours 55 minutes. Late starts accounted for 33 hours 20 minutes unutilized time; early ending of meetings during the three weeks accounted for 33 hours 35 minutes.

At the beginning of the session, only one team of interpreters was required in the plenary meeting, and therefore four meetings were cancelled. On the last two days of the session, only one team of interpreters was needed in the plenary meeting, and therefore five meetings were cancelled.

I have consulted with the Department of Conference Services and have tried to be flexible by scheduling more meetings for the second and third weeks for the work of the subsidiary bodies, because that is the busiest time for the Commission. However, it is not possible.
(The Secretary)

It is important that in future we should pay attention to the situation regarding late starting and early ending of meetings.

The CHAIRMAN: The statistics given by the Secretary will have given you an understanding of the kinds of difficulties we face. However, I must say, with regard to previous meetings, that some of the time allocated for them was taken up with consultations. But it is not a responsibility of the Secretariat to determine whether or not time allocated for a meeting has been used for consultations. The consultations have been very effective. I think we should be happy with that policy and not worry too much about losing time because of it, if that is what is happening.

I felt that these further explanations were necessary, in view of the discussion we have had.

Mrs. SECRET (France) (interpretation from French): I should like to thank the Secretariat for his very clear explanation. The statistics which we have been given are very telling. We must try to be on time next year in May, and it is certainly not you, Sir, who opposes that.

The second and third weeks of the session are mainly taken up with meetings of contact, working or consultation groups. The division into three groups is in any case more or less formal; in fact, there is not much difference between them. I should like to remind the Secretariat that, during the last session, great improvements were made following remarks made by my delegation and others. As a result, during the second and third week, work in the various groups was such that we had Rooms 5, 6, 7 and sometimes even 8 where we could have less formal meetings than in this room, Room 4. There could be smaller meetings, but meetings at which all delegations wishing to be present could be present, and delegations had
interpretation services reserved for the Commission. Therefore, in order to ensure better use of interpretation services, we should, as we did last year, reserve Rooms 5, 6, 7 and possibly 8 for meetings of working, consultation or contact groups.

Mr. Morrison (Canada): My delegation listened with great interest, and at times fascination, to our distinguished Secretary as he gave us the statistics on the number of meetings planned, held, started late and ended early.

With regard to the point raised by the representative of France concerning translation and interpretation facilities, it is my understanding that, if we agree to be displaced by the other meeting which is tentatively scheduled for 1 to 5 May, during the last week of our deliberations we shall have only one team of interpreters. If that is so, it is my delegation's understanding that, during that week, we shall only be able to have one meeting at a time because, of course, meetings of subsidiary organs of this Commission cannot take place without adequate interpretation and translation facilities.

Ms. Taylor (United Kingdom): I have found the discussion which I seem to have set off illuminating. I feel somewhat clearer in my own mind as a result of it and should like to share that with you.

Certainly, the resolution that is traditionally adopted speaks of a length of session not exceeding four weeks, but, in practice, because of the particular problems with interpretation services there will be in 1989 in the fourth week of the session, it would seem to me that, from a practical point of view, to think of meeting for more than two days in order to have our final plenary meetings is somewhat unrealistic.
While the statistics which have been given to us do not, of course, entirely convey the true picture, because there are informal consultations to be taken into account, they nevertheless seem to reveal that a three week period will be adequate for what will be a shorter agenda in 1989 than in 1988.
(Ms. Taylor, United Kingdom)

But I also hear the remark made by the representative of Egypt that it is of course the substance that is the important thing and that maybe we should not let the tail wag the dog and try to pin down the dates finally at this particular point.

I also hear the representative of Australia, who has pointed out that if we do not make some kind of decision now, then I think I am right in saying that we would be committing ourselves to an allocation of resources for four weeks with the consequent expenditure, whatever the length of our meeting next year. So in other words it is important at this stage to reach some kind of conclusions.

I think the conclusions of my own delegation are that it would not be practical to think of meeting for longer than three weeks and two days next year and that maybe one cannot make an absolutely final decision at this particular point, and I would hope that within those parameters the view of my delegation that it ought to be possible to complete the work in three weeks should be borne in mind as developments unfold.

Mr. FAHMY (Egypt): The information given is of course valid, and in particular the reference to our starting late and finishing early. But again I always look with great hesitation at statistics without considering the matter of substance, and I think that you quite correctly indicated that it was not lost time; it was used in a different way.

I would like to emphasize one point, which I raised last year as well. One of the reasons that we all start late occasionally and that delegations are sometimes
not prepared to make comments at a particular time, and hence we end early owing to a lack of speakers, is the fact that sometimes, in scheduling the contact groups, working groups and consultative groups, we keep switching the sequence of these groups so that on a particular day we have groups A, B and C, and another day groups B, C and D, and in delegations that have one, two or three persons and have to organize a pattern for their work and attendance every time the sequence changes we have a person being torn into two or three pieces, which makes him late to meetings or not ready to contribute.

This may not be the case with larger delegations, but it is for ours and I am sure it also is for other delegations. I simply wanted to make this point at this stage because you asked me to, Mr. President. In making it, I know how difficult it is to arrange the sequence and to keep it fixed because of the difference in the amount of work being done and the fact that it has to be co-ordinated by the chairmen of those groups and the Secretariat. I appreciate that, but if I could just appeal, through you, to the incoming Chairman and to the Secretariat to see to it that, in so far as possible, we have a fixed pattern of meetings for the different groups, I am sure we would get a better statistical record as to attendance and the amount of work we produce. That is the point I wanted to make at this stage.

Mr. FIGUEIREDO-MACHADO (Brazil): On the question of the issues that are being discussed here - three weeks, four weeks, interpretation or no interpretation, the opening date and other matters - I should like to say that we have no specific position in principle on the question of three or four weeks. But what we should all remember is the fact that, whenever we curtail our time, what usually happens is that we have more simultaneous meetings and consequently more problems with the lack of interpretation. So if we are going to curtail our work
in principle to three weeks, it would be highly detrimental to the smooth conduct of our business here.

Another problem is the starting date. My delegation sees no problem in starting our work on 1 May and we fail to see the need to begin our work one week later because of other business that will be done in that first week. I think it would be unfortunate if it entailed prejudice to our work in terms of interpretation or conference services. We have no difficulties in principle with starting on 8 May on the understanding that it will not be detrimental to our work in terms of conference services. If this can be done, excellent. If not, we would have to see how it can be accommodated.

Ms. LETTS (Australia): My delegation, by the way, fully shares the concerns expressed by our colleague from Egypt about the shunting around of meetings and the often seemingly illogical change of sequence. My delegation is not one of the smallest, but it has experienced considerable problems, certainly at this year's session, in that regard.

I think we should be able to bring this to a relatively quick conclusion. I have heard no objections in principle to beginning on 8 May, and there has also been no objection in principle to the timetable as set up by you, Mr. Chairman, in addition to which, unless I have completely misunderstood the problem, we will have all the conference services we need for 30 and 31 May because we will be holding plenary meetings and will therefore need only one team of interpreters anyway.

On that understanding my delegation would propose that we seek to adopt the timing and programme of work you have proposed.

Mr. LAY (Italy): My delegation feels that it is the substance that matters, so the number of weeks is not so important. What is important are the results we shall have next year.
On balance, Mr. President, my delegation feels that your proposal, namely to hold the session from 8 May to 31 May, is one that could perhaps meet with general agreement on the understanding that every effort will be made to complete the work within three weeks.

Mr. NOREEN (Sweden): I have very little to add at this stage. I would just want to support what the representative of Australia said, and I think I understood the representative of the United Kingdom correctly when she indicated that she was willing to go along with the decision to have a substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 1989 of a duration of not more than three weeks and two days, which is precisely what you suggested, Mr. President. So I would very much support the proposal that we take a decision on it now.
The CHAIRMAN: Yes, what is provided for here would be three weeks and two days if we use it to the maximum. I see no other delegation wishing to speak. I have taken into consideration all the comments you have made and they have all been extremely valid and helpful. I assure you that the Chairman will do everything in his power to see about the shifting of meetings as much as possible. However, I should like to say from my own personal point of view that representatives acquire even more experience when they are able to do things out of sequence, when it is not just a case of closing your eyes and, because you are programmed to do so, going to Room 4 at 2 p.m. If you have to go at 3 p.m., and you have to adjust to the change, that gives you more credibility and it looks good on your curriculum vitae. So I do not think you should worry too much about that. But we shall do everything that we can to make sure that we proceed as planned, especially from the point of view of helping the smaller delegations to meet the requirements.

If I hear no objection, I think it is agreed as far as the organizational part of our work is concerned, that we begin on 8 May and the substantive work will end on 31 May, and that two days will be used for dealing with the final aspects of our work. I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: All of the organization of work for the substantive session should be concluded at the first plenary meeting, because, as we have all said, we cannot afford to have very lengthy discussions on such matters, in the light of time restraints and the number of items we have on the agenda.

To facilitate this task, as in past years, I am convinced - and that conviction is confirmed by what the Chairman-elect, the Ambassador of Zaire, has said - that every effort will be made to conduct intensive consultations on all
related matters with all the members of the Commission, here and in Geneva. If that is done, we can look forward to a very productive 1989 substantive session.

I think members have exhausted all their comments on organizational matters.

Mr. MORRISON (Canada): A number of delegations this morning have made the comment— which is very true, of course— that what really matters is substance. But my delegation would like to think, Sir, that there is room for a certain modicum of style. Without in any way wanting to start an obligatory avalanche, my delegation would like to thank you for the style you have brought to the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission. It has made our work not only more educational but infinitely more enjoyable.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. If there is no other business, I declare the 1988 organizational session closed.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.