DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 1978, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. VELLODI (India)

- Organization of work

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages, preferably in the same language as the text to which they refer. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also, if possible, incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room A-3550.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.
The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: Today we begin consideration of our organization of work. This, as representatives are aware, is the substantive part of our proceedings at this session. I should like to make some preliminary observations at this stage.

Let me first deal with what we are required to do at the present session of the Disarmament Commission. We are required to submit a report to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly. Paragraph 118 (c) of the Final Document states very clearly that the Disarmament Commission "... will submit for consideration by the Assembly at its thirty-third session a report on organizational matters ...". (resolution 8-10/2)

In other words, we should not, I submit, deal with substantive issues at this session. I would appeal to all members to bear this in mind and to refrain from embarking upon a debate on substantive issues.

What are the organizational matters before us? Essentially, they are three. When do we meet for our substantive deliberations, how do we work, and what will we discuss in our first substantive session? I should like to deal with these three questions one by one.

First, when do we meet for our substantive deliberations? Paragraph 118 (c) of the Final Document of the special session states "... in 1979, the Disarmament Commission will meet for a period not exceeding four weeks, the dates to be decided at the thirty-third session of the Assembly". (ibid.)

It is therefore for the thirty-third session of the General Assembly to decide when the Disarmament Commission will meet in 1979. However, it is my view that this session of the Disarmament Commission should make an appropriate recommendation to the General Assembly on this point.

On the basis of consultations I have had with the other officers of the Commission and with the Secretariat, I wish to submit for members' consideration the suggestion that we recommend to the General Assembly that we hold our first substantive session for a period of four weeks beginning Tuesday, 1 May 1979. I
understand from the Secretariat that these dates would fit in well with the calendar of meetings for 1979. The substantive session will have to adopt a report for submission to the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly. If we are not able to complete this task - that is, the finalization of the report - in the session proposed for May, it might become necessary to have a short session later in the year to adopt the report to be submitted to the Assembly. However, I should like to submit that we need not make any specific recommendation at the present time about the need for a second session, but should consider that issue when we get to the substantive session in May.

The second question is, how do we work? I would submit that the answer is quite clearly stated in paragraph 118 (b) of the final document, which reads: "The Disarmament Commission shall function under the rules of procedure relating to the committees of the General Assembly with such modifications as the Commission may deem necessary and shall make every effort to ensure that, in so far as possible, decisions on substantive issues be adopted by consensus." (ibid.) I believe, and I am sure representatives will all agree with me, that this is clear and precise.

During my informal consultations and in the very useful discussion the officers of the Commission had yesterday, two specific issues came up, one relating to the life of the Bureau and the other concerning the records of the Commission's meetings. On the first question I believe that there is general consensus that the principle of rotation should apply to the composition of the Bureau. At the same time, it is obvious that, from the practical point of view, the present officers should continue to serve until the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly has completed consideration of the Commission's report.

It is therefore my submission that the Commission should hold an organizational meeting some time in December 1979, before the conclusion of the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, to consider the question of the composition of the Bureau for the following year, namely, 1980.
On the question of the records of our discussions in the Commission I informed the Commission the day before yesterday, after consulting the Secretariat, that verbatim reports will be provided. The Secretariat had taken this into account when they informed us in the Committee of the Whole of the special session just before the adoption of the Final Document, of the financial implications of the adoption of the decisions and the recommendations contained in that document.

As far as the Disarmament Commission is concerned, this of course relates to this session since the financial implications of our meetings next year will have to be considered at the current session of the General Assembly.

My consultations with my fellow officers of the Commission, however, lead me to suggest that we should recommend to the General Assembly that the Commission should continue to have verbatim records for its meetings in 1979.

The third and perhaps the most important question is: what will be discussed in our first substantive session? Here, I should like to refer to our mandate as clearly defined in paragraph 118 (a) of the Final Document. It says that the Disarmament Commission shall be a deliberative body. It says that the Disarmament Commission is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, and it says that the function of the Disarmament Commission shall be threefold.

First, the Disarmament Commission is to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. Secondly, the Disarmament Commission is to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session; thirdly, the Disarmament Commission will consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament to be submitted as recommendations to the General Assembly and, through it, to the negotiating body, the Committee on Disarmament.

Of these three specific items in the mandate of the Disarmament Commission, the first is general and all-embracing. According to this comprehensive mandate, the Disarmament Commission can, if it chooses, discuss any issue related to disarmament. This is, in my opinion, as it should be for a deliberative body of the United Nations.
The second item of the mandate is the follow-up of the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session. The question of the review of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the special session is an item on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly and the First Committee is due to begin consideration of this item next Monday as the first item on its agenda. In this situation I would submit for your consideration that in carrying out its mandate on the follow-up of the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session the Commission, which is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, should be guided by the decisions of the General Assembly on item 125 of its agenda.

Then we come to the third aspect of our mandate, the one relating to the comprehensive programme for disarmament. The Commission has been asked to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. As all members are aware, the comprehensive programme for disarmament also appears on the agenda of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament as a consequence of General Assembly resolution 2602 E (XXIV) of the twenty-fourth session which requested the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to work out a comprehensive programme of disarmament.

Paragraph 109 of the Final Document also states:
"... the Committee on Disarmament will undertake the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament ...".

It is therefore clear that in the formulation of the comprehensive programme of disarmament both this Commission and the Committee on Disarmament have their respective roles to play. Obviously the sense of paragraph 118 (a) dealing with the comprehensive programme is very clear as to where the consideration of this question should commence because it says that the Commission should:
"... consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament to be submitted as recommendations to the General Assembly and, through it, to the negotiating body, the Committee on Disarmament;".
It is therefore obvious to me that the Disarmament Commission should first deal with this issue and make recommendations which will go to the negotiating through the General Assembly. It is my understanding that this position has also been accepted in the Committee on Disarmament as is clear from paragraph 260 of the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to the current session of the General Assembly, document CCD/576 when it says:

"Following the special session on disarmament, the Ad Hoc Working Group" meaning the Ad Hoc Working Group on the comprehensive programme - "was not reconvened in the course of the summer session, the General Assembly having recommended in paragraph 118 of its Final Document that the Disarmament Commission should consider the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament to be submitted as recommendations to the General Assembly and, through it, to the negotiating body."

In other words, the negotiating body is awaiting our recommendations covering the elements of the comprehensive programme.

Since it was obvious during the general debate at the special session and at earlier regular sessions of the General Assembly that there is a very widespread desire to expedite the formulation of the comprehensive programme, it would seem to me that the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme and the recommendations thereupon must receive top priority in the substantive work of our Commission.

This is naturally without prejudice to any other decision or decisions which the current session of the General Assembly may take and which may have a bearing on the agenda of our substantive session next year.

I have attempted in this somewhat lengthy statement to deal with the issues we have to consider under the item relating to the organization of our work. I would now invite comments. May I once again appeal to members to confine their remarks to organizational matters. We have to complete our work by Friday, with the drafting of the report to the General Assembly and we still have to draft the report. So I would at this point invite your comments on the various suggestions which I have tried to make regarding how we might proceed with our work.
Mr. INAM (Kuwait): I would just like to seek some clarification of one point. This relates to the duty of the Disarmament Commission to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. You said that we shall be meeting to discuss the substantive issues on 1 May 1979 for four weeks and paragraph 118 (b) says that the comprehensive programme for disarmament is to be submitted as recommendations to the General Assembly and through it to the negotiating body, the Committee on Disarmament.

Now, if we are to meet on 1 May for four weeks and we formulate a comprehensive programme for disarmament, would that mean that we have to hold a special session of the General Assembly to consider our comprehensive programme. Or does it mean that we wait until during the regular session of the General Assembly and during the interval the Committee on Disarmament will meet without any guidelines from us as to the comprehensive programme it should discuss. I should be very grateful if I could receive some clarification on this point.
The CHAIRMAN: Before calling on the next speaker I shall try to answer the point raised by the representative of Kuwait. He is quite right in saying that the Final Document implies that the Disarmament Commission would make recommendations on the elements of the comprehensive programme and that those recommendations should go, through the General Assembly, to the negotiating forum. He asked whether that would mean that there would be a special session of the General Assembly immediately after the Disarmament Commission had concluded its work.

That was not my suggestion. In the ordinary course of events, assuming that we are able to complete our work on the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme at the May session, the recommendations of the Disarmament Commission would go to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session. The General Assembly would then consider the recommendations and pass them on.

It is true that this would mean that, essentially, the Geneva Committee on Disarmament would not be able to take up work on the comprehensive programme until 1980. That is why, since we all attach importance to the comprehensive programme, I suggested that in our recommendations to the General Assembly we should indicate that the work on the comprehensive programme, as far as the Disarmament Commission is concerned, should have high priority, because even though it is item 1 on our agenda, and even if we are able to complete consideration of the item at the May session, it will be only in 1980 that the Committee on Disarmament will be able to take it up.

One advantage in our making a recommendation that the Commission should give high priority to this issue at the May session is that Governments will henceforth know that the May session of the Disarmament Commission will take it up. We could perhaps even consider the possibility of inviting Governments to send their suggestions or proposals concerning the comprehensive programme in good time between this session of the General Assembly and the session of the Disarmament Commission. We could set a time-limit - say 15 February - which would enable the members of the Disarmament Commission to study the proposals and be ready to discuss the problem when we meet in May 1979.
Mr. FONSECA (Sri Lanka): I listened with interest to your statement, Mr. Chairman. Without prejudice to whatever final decision is reached regarding the recommendations which the officers of the Commission have made, through you, concerning the form of the records that are to be maintained—I believe it is to be summary records—I may I suggest that in the interests of all delegations the statement you have just made, which I found very useful and interesting, should be reproduced verbatim and, above all, be made available to us as soon as possible by the Secretariat. I believe it will form the basis for the discussions we are to have in the course of the next two or three meetings we are scheduled to hold. May I therefore request that the Secretariat make every effort to make that statement available to us as early as possible.

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of Sri Lanka has asked that copies of my statement be made available to members of the Commission as soon as possible. If that is generally acceptable, I would request the Secretariat to arrange that. I understand that while every effort will be made to have it distributed at tomorrow morning’s meeting, it will depend very much on how long this morning’s meeting lasts.

Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): May I say, Mr. Chairman, how very much my delegation appreciates your most illuminating statement of this morning. Before going into its substance, may I, since this is the first time that I have had the opportunity of speaking in the Disarmament Commission, convey to you and the officers of the Commission the happiness of my delegation at your election and a promise that we shall do our utmost to assist and co-operate with you and the officers of the Commission in the discharge of your high responsibilities.

I think that the officers have taken, at your behest, a very wise step in making concrete suggestions to the Commission on the issues before us. I had been rather concerned that unless something of this nature happened we might find ourselves lapsing into a general debate, for which we really have no time.
Coming to the three points you raised, on the question of the date I think one basic principle we would have to establish for the work of the Commission is, of course, that it should not meet simultaneously with the Committee on Disarmament.

If that is acceptable as a basic principle, I think we ought annually to fix the dates for the meetings of the Disarmament Commission, leaving — for want of a better word — a decent interval between the end of the spring session of the Committee on Disarmament and the meeting of the Disarmament Commission. The period beginning 1 May could be considered.
I hope that the Bureau will still leave the door open for the consideration of alternative dates, because it seems to me that if the Disarmament Commission is going to commence its work on 1 May then of course there will be a need to ensure that there is some co-ordination between the end of the spring session of the Committee on Disarmament and 1 May. Otherwise, it may be very difficult for those who are going to participate in the work of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva to have sufficient time to prepare for the session of the Disarmament Commission. That is my first point.

On your second point, Sir, as to how we are going to work - which is the way you put it - I agree with you entirely, of course, that the present Bureau would have to be in office at least up to the beginning of and during the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, next year. But that leads us to another principle that I think you may establish, which is to consider recommending to the General Assembly that the life of the Bureau of the Disarmament Commission should extend from one General Assembly to the end of the next. In other words, I think it would be possible, say as from next year, to have organizational meetings of the Disarmament Commission towards the end of the session of the General Assembly with a view to electing a Bureau that would succeed the one that had been in office for the previous year. That would make it possible for the officers then to prepare for the substantive session of the Commission which would be held in the subsequent year.

As far as the agenda is concerned, I think that your recommendation, particularly as far as the comprehensive programme for disarmament is concerned, is most appropriate. As you rightly pointed out, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament did, during the summer session, basically accept the fact that it could not proceed with work on this subject because of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its special session, which had also charged the Disarmament Commission with consideration of the elements. Now, if that was accepted, I think it is incumbent upon the Disarmament Commission also to ensure that, because of the importance we all attach to the comprehensive programme, work is not unduly delayed. As you stated so correctly, and as our colleague from Kuwait has also mentioned, there is no way in which the Committee on Disarmament can consider the comprehensive programme in 1979. That will not be possible.
No, if the Committee on Disarmament is to be in a position to do so, even in 1980, then it will be essential for the Disarmament Commission, in accordance with its mandate, as decided upon by the special session, to have given consideration to the elements and to have made recommendations to the General Assembly, which can be made only at the thirty-fourth session, and for the General Assembly to have pronounced itself on those recommendations, which could then be taken up by the Committee on Disarmament in 1980. So my delegation completely agrees with you, Mr. Chairman, that it would be necessary for the Commission to take up as a matter of priority consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme. And in order to assist in the taking up of this item as a matter of priority, I again agree with you that it will be necessary for the Commission, in making its report to the General Assembly, to recommend that the General Assembly decide to invite Governments to submit their views and proposals to the Secretariat on the comprehensive programme, perhaps at a date that could be set, so that those views and proposals again can be circulated in advance since the Commission has only four weeks, of which I am sure it will have to reserve perhaps the first week or so for a general debate on the whole question of disarmament. It certainly will not have more than two weeks at the most to devote to the comprehensive programme, and those two weeks can be utilized to the maximum only if, before the Commission itself meets, various proposals have been submitted and circulated and if Governments have had the opportunity to reflect upon them so that they can deal with them straight away and make their comments. The Commission will then be in a position to put forward a most reasoned and effective set of recommendations that will be quite helpful to the Committee on Disarmament when it ultimately takes up the issue.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Nigeria. If I may refer to one point he made, a very important point regarding the co-ordination between the Disarmament Commission and the Committee on Disarmament in fixing the schedule of meetings, this presents us with one difficulty. As far as concerns the Disarmament Commission, which is a commission of the whole that is to meet for a rather lengthy session of four weeks, we have to take into account the availability of conference facilities at Headquarters. It was with that in mind that I consulted the Secretariat. The Secretariat had already looked
into the matter and discussed it with the other concerned departments of the Secretariat, and it came up with this time, the four weeks in May. It is my assumption that it took into account the calendar of meetings at Headquarters in 1979. At the moment we have no way of knowing what the schedule of the Committee on Disarmament will be. All we know is that the Committee is required to begin its work by the end of January 1979. One can assume that, as has been the practice in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, the Committee on Disarmament also will work perhaps in two sessions with a recess at some time in the spring. But that too is only an assumption.

Therefore, in this particular year, when the Committee on Disarmament has yet to start its work, I feel that there is no alternative but to take a tentative decision - I am talking about the General Assembly; this Commission can only make recommendations - as regards the meeting of the Disarmament Commission in May. I have wondered whether, instead of starting on 1 May, our work could commence on 2 May, since 1 May has some importance. Then the Committee on Disarmament could take into account the particular situation this year. Perhaps next year it will be easier because when it adjourns in, say, August or September, it will probably have fixed its schedule of meetings for 1980. But this year we are in some difficulty because the Committee on Disarmament has yet to begin its work. Therefore I would suggest that we do make a recommendation regarding our meetings in May and hope and expect that the Committee on Disarmament will take it into account when it schedules its meetings for 1979.
Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): Listening very carefully to the programme that you have proposed after having duly consulted the other officers of the Commission, I feel that it meets all the necessary conditions for the Disarmament Commission to be able to start its work in the intersessional period. I think that the proposals made by our officers are extremely wise.

Regarding the opening date for next year's session, I think that the comments just made by the representative of Nigeria were very much to the point but, as you yourself pointed out, Sir, I too feel that these should be valid and applicable for 1980 rather than next year, and for the very reasons that you yourself adduced.

We are confronted here by a situation where both the Disarmament Commission and the Committee on Disarmament are ostensibly for the first time beginning their work, so some period of adjustment will be called for. I am sure that when the Committee on Disarmament meets in Geneva it will bear in mind the fact that the Disarmament Commission will be meeting in May next year and that, since the tasks of the two organs are going to complement one another, so too will they do so in the synchronizing of their dates. As far as this coming year is concerned, if the Secretariat can make the arrangements, it would be helpful if the recommendation could tentatively be set for May. For next year, I think that both the Disarmament Commission and the Committee on Disarmament will have to take into account the extremely apposite remarks made by the representative of Nigeria.

May I now turn to a different aspect of the matter. When he spoke of the mandate that the Disarmament Commission received, the Chairman very clearly referred to paragraph 118(a) of the Final Document of the Conference and, inter alia, he mentioned the follow-up of the decisions adopted at the special session of the General Assembly and, again quite correctly, he pointed out that this should be carried out in the light of the decisions and resolutions to be adopted at the thirty-third regular session of the General Assembly.

What I should like to ask is whether that follow-up also includes proposals that are listed in paragraph 125 of that Final Document. You will note that in that paragraph mention is made of a series of suggestions and proposals that were not duly considered by the special session due to lack of time, and at the special session of the General Assembly the Secretary-General was asked to refer those proposals either to the deliberative or the negotiating body of the
Disarmament Commission. So some of the proposals listed here will go to the Disarmament Commission and some will be addressed to the Committee on Disarmament. My question is whether the Chairman also considers that this will be part of the work that will have to be tackled by the Disarmament Commission when it meets in 1979.

Finally, another point of clarification that I would ask for. The current meetings of the Commission are organizational, but are we expected to give opinions on what we imagine are to be the methods of work at the May session of the Commission? Or are we to wait until that session, before we give our views? What I have in mind was in part referred to by the representative of Nigeria when he said that perhaps there might be a general debate that would take two weeks. Since the Commission will only have four weeks for its session and if – as appears inevitable at all United Nations organs – we do have a general debate, we should then already start to consider setting up a sub-commission or a working group – whatever title we want to give it – but a sub-organ of the Commission to start getting ahead on the work and trying to take the best advantage of the four weeks that we are going to be given for the session. Four weeks, after all, is not very long for that sort of session. We should consider these possibilities now and allow the Secretariat to start making plans. But perhaps the Chairman and the other officers of the Commission may consider that it would be better to postpone consideration of these aspects until the Commission meets in May. That is the clarification I should like.

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of Argentina has raised two points. One was about the proposals contained in paragraph 125 of the Final Document. It seems to me that the situation regarding paragraph 125 must be understood very clearly; we must understand what is its status and what is to come of these various proposals. As I read it – and I would certainly appreciate comments on this from others – the Final Document is fairly clear on how to proceed with this. What it says here is:

"Since a number of those proposals and suggestions, which have become an integral part of the work of the special session of the General Assembly, deserve to be studied further and more thoroughly, taking into consideration the many relevant comments and observations made in both the general debate of the plenary and the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Tenth
Special Session, the Secretary-General is requested to transmit, together with this Final Document, to the appropriate deliberative and negotiating organs dealing with the questions of disarmament all the official records of the special session”

and this is important, the last part of it says:

"... in accordance with the recommendations which the Assembly may adopt at its thirty-third session." (A/RES/8-10/2, para. 125)

I have understood this to mean that as regards these proposals - 32 or 33 of them - it is for their sponsors to revive them and to press their consideration at the thirty-third session. Presumably when the First Committee takes up item 125 it is likely that some of these proposals - depending on the wishes of the sponsors, and I must make that clear - will be taken up by the First Committee. The Secretary-General cannot transmit any of these proposals either to the Disarmament Commission or to the Committee on Disarmament except in accordance with the recommendations of the thirty-third session. So I imagine that that is one reason why the Secretary-General has not done anything so far. The way I see it is that, as regards the proposals in paragraph 125, some of them may be revived by the sponsors, either in terms of specific proposals or draft resolutions, and the General Assembly will have to take decisions on that, at which time presumably the General Assembly will also indicate where they should be followed up, whether it should be done in the Disarmament Commission or in the Committee on Disarmament.

These proposals form an integral part of the Final Document. I think that is quite clear, but to some extent they are different from the proposals contained in the Programme of Action, because here it does say that the proposals require further study, and also implies that the thirty-third session of the General Assembly may make some recommendations on this.
Regarding the other point made by the representative of Argentina, I would certainly welcome comments on aspects of our work in May 1979. When I suggested at the beginning that we not get involved in substantive debate, I really meant that we should not have a debate on the arms race, and the like.

But the point made by the representative of Argentina is well taken. It is inevitable that there should be some sort of general debate - at least at the first substantive session of the Disarmament Commission - and since we have important work to do, it might be necessary - as he rightly said - for the Commission to have a second forum to get on with substantive work.

However, before we take any decision to make any recommendation in this regard, I would certainly like to invite others also to comment on this or similar proposals referring to our conduct of work in the substantive session.

**Mr. Perez** (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, as this is the first time that I have spoken in the Disarmament Commission, I should like to offer you the congratulations of my delegation on your election to preside over the work of this important body.

Relations between Cuba and India have become more extensive year by year. This leads me to believe that there exists an excellent possibility for close co-operation in our work.

I should also like to congratulate the other officers of the Commission on their election.

I should like first to refer to the statement made by the representative of Nigeria. I feel that his comments were extremely wise, particularly with regard to the need for a genuine co-ordination of our activities.

I believe that this is very important for the year 1979, for we shall during the months of January and February hold a first meeting of the Committee on Disarmament and, immediately afterwards, through the decision of the meeting just held in Geneva, another preparatory conference to discuss specific conventional weapons, which is to take place at a date falling if not simultaneous with, at least immediately after, that meeting.
It has also been decided that we should have only one preparatory conference, so that during September we should be able to hold the final meeting of that conference devoted to specific conventional weapons. In this connexion it seems to me that it is very important to know the dates that we must set for our activities.

I therefore agree with the opinion that attention must be given to this particular circumstance. I believe that the officers of the Commission have to some extent already taken this into account but, in any case, I should like to emphasize the need to consider the other two meetings that we shall be holding next year, in 1979, devoted to disarmament or to conventional weapons.

Secondly, I should like also to refer to the proposals or ideas and comments made by the representative of Argentina, Mr. Ortiz de Rozas, regarding the possibility of our setting up a subgroup or subcommission to take into account all those important proposals on which for one reason or another a final decision could not be taken during the special session. I believe that this is important, although the Chairman has said that paragraph 125 is very clear on this point, since the proponents of various motions should themselves be the ones to set the discussion in motion. Nevertheless, I believe that we should bear in mind the suggestion of Ambassador Ortiz de Rozas that those issues that were not considered for various reasons at the special session could be properly prepared, which would allow us to make greater progress, so that by 1980 our work could be much more complete.
Mr. BARTON (Canada): Mr. Chairman, I should like first of all to join others in congratulating you and the other officers of the Commission for having been elected to important positions on the Commission.

Secondly, I should like to apologize for having missed your opening statement, Sir, and I shall be making my comments on the basis of what I have heard since then. I hope that I shall not be duplicating anything.

It strikes me, as I am listening to this discussion, that we are on the right track, that we are moving in the right direction. But we are about to enter a discussion which is going to take place under the auspices of the First Committee on very much the same subject. I think that this means that by the time we finish this session, where many of the same people that will be participating in the Disarmament Commission will also be taking part, our ideas will have developed further.

It seems to me that we have, I suppose, three options. The first option is to use the period of the general debate when the Commission meets to decide how it wants to proceed. The second option would be, I suppose, to try to have a brief meeting of this Commission again at the end of this session in order to take stock of where we got to in the light of what took place and to try to reach further conclusions. The third option — and I must admit that this is the one which appeals to me — is to rely heavily on the officers of our Commission to try to organize our work, recognizing that what they might do would be conditional upon the agreement of the Commission when it meets.

For instance, I have in mind that the officers of the Commission should be authorized this week to commission papers at the end of the session, if they think that that would be useful for the Commission as a whole. I think that they should come forward with a plan of discussion of the main item of business, which is the comprehensive disarmament programme, because we could thresh around for two or three weeks trying to figure out the best way of approaching the problem whereas if the small group of the officers of the Commission had focused on it and come up with a tentative plan of organization — whether it included subcommittees or whatever — and put this to us in the spring, we would be in a much better position to function when the time comes.

Those are my thoughts at this point, and I commend them to the Commission.
Mr. PFEIFFER (Federal Republic of Germany): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time that I have spoken in this Commission on behalf of the nine member countries of the European Community, for which I am privileged to speak, I should like to address to you and the other officers of the Commission our warmest congratulations for your unanimous elections to office. I am confident that your experience, Sir, both in disarmament and in the United Nations will provide the Commission with the wise and careful guidance necessary for the successful beginning of its work.

I should like in this connexion to make a personal remark too. I am very happy to meet our Chairman in his new capacity, because that gives me a chance to continue very good co-operation with a personality with whom I have had the privilege to enjoy very close contacts during my last assignment in his country.
The Nine strongly supported the idea of a special session on disarmament. They took an active part in it and joined in the consensus on its Final Document which provided for the establishment of this Commission. They are looking forward to contributing actively to the Commission's work and to co-operation with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all members of this body in a constructive manner. Election of our Danish friend and colleague, Ambassador Boel, as an officer of the Commission testifies to our commitment in this regard.

We share the view expressed by you, Mr. Chairman, that the efforts of the Commission should be complementary to those of other bodies dealing with disarmament. In our view this applies to disarmament efforts either inside or outside the United Nations system on a bilateral, regional or international basis. Disarmament is a global undertaking and should have a broad and solid foundation in the various forums and none should be exclusive of others.

We see an important role for the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, by which it will be entrusted with specific tasks. In accordance with the provisions of the Final Document of the special session, the work of the Commission will play its part in the wider disarmament discussions and will, so we hope, make its impact and its contributions to the sometimes elusive but crucially necessary progress towards effective measures for disarmament and arms control.

We realize full well that at this point a detailed programme of work for the session next spring cannot be elaborated. We therefore look forward to the discussions of the thirty-third General Assembly and to appropriate consultations in order to clear the ground for productive meetings next year.

Mr. RASON (Madagascar): Mr. Chairman, my delegation wants to congratulate you on the very complete presentation which you have made with regard to the organization of our work.
We listened with much attention to the statements which were made by the delegation of Nigeria. We also heard the statement of the representative of Argentina. These remarks indicate that our Commission should make an extra effort to prepare the next session substantively. In accordance with the proposal of the representative of Argentina, the creation of sub-committees or working groups within this commission would be necessary. We believe it is necessary because, as you explained yourself, some elements of our mandate and of our work will depend on the work of the First Committee in respect of the implementation of the provisions of the comprehensive programme for disarmament and of the Final Document.

My delegation wished to speak again in order to say that we believe that our officers should indeed be authorized to work during this session, to do so after the work of the First Committee is completed, in order to draft a list of all the recommendations to the General Assembly, and then to submit them to the Commission before the end of this session. This would mean that a short session of the Disarmament Commission should be held before the end of the thirty-third session so that our officers can submit to the Commission a draft programme on working procedures for the meeting in May 1979.

That is why I think that our Commission should meet in order to study the proposal which was made by Argentina, which my delegation wishes to support.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I give to the next speaker, may I make some brief comments on two suggestions.

The first comment is related to the setting up of sub-commissions or working groups when we meet in May next year. This is permitted under our Rules of Procedure. Rule 102 of the Rules of Procedure permits us to set up sub-commissions or working groups so there is no difficulty from the standpoint of the rules of procedure.

With regard to the question of whether we should at this session make a recommendation to the effect that a subsidiary body should be established we should bear in mind one rather important point, which is that when the decision was taken to establish the United Nations Disarmament Commission
and that the Commission should be composed of the whole membership of the United Nations, presumably it was done because it was felt that there was need to have a forum where all Members may participate.

I am sure that when the representative of Argentina suggested the setting up of a subsidiary body - this suggestion also has been followed by others - I presume that he was not suggesting that straightaway we have a body composed of a smaller number of members but that he was thinking in terms of having two forums in the Disarmament Commission in 1979, that is, to have meetings in plenary where delegations will make their statements and at the same time or in parallel have what we might call a sub-committee or committee of the whole. It is important, whatever the issues are - whether it is a comprehensive programme or whatever it is - that there should be a forum available for all members to participate. But the point he made is important. If we are to take two weeks for a general debate in the Disarmament Commission, it is quite inevitable that we shall need to have another forum in the Disarmament Commission where we can proceed with substantive work.

The other suggestion made is that the Disarmament Commission might have a second session, however brief, towards the end of the thirty-third session of the General Assembly to consider the decisions taken at that session, which might help the Commission in preparing for the May session in terms of deciding upon the priorities. I personally feel that this is a suggestion that merits attention because, if we are able before the end of the thirty-third session to have some clearer indication as to what are the issues that the substantive session will take up, and more importantly, the order of priority, it would certainly help the members of the Disarmament Commission to be better prepared when they come here in May.

But that, again, is a suggestion that is being made, and I would appeal to members to comment on it.
Mr. ENF (Romania): I should like to join preceding speakers by expressing the special satisfaction of the Romanian delegation at taking part in the work of this Commission under your Chairmanship, Sir. In view of the outstanding role played by India, and personally by you, in the United Nations special session devoted to disarmament it would seem to us only natural that the first session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission should be presided over by you. I want to assure you of the full support and co-operation of the Romanian delegation.

The present session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission represents the beginning of the work of the new deliberative and negotiating machinery in the field of disarmament established by the recent special session of the General Assembly, and, although each body will organize its work in accordance with its own specifics and its terms of reference, since the new machinery in the field of disarmament has a unitary concept it seems to us especially important that our Commission, which is the first to start its work, should have a good beginning in strict conformity with the provisions and the spirit of the Final Document.

We have in mind particularly the provisions in paragraph 10 of the Final Document which refer to the requirement that:

"... the deliberative and the negotiating organs should have the appropriate organization and procedures that would be most conducive to obtaining constructive results." (Resolution 3-10/2)

As is known, Romania was the first country in the Preparatory Committee of the special session which proposed the creation of the United Nations Disarmament Commission open to the participation of all States, and this explains the particular interest of my delegation in the successful start of this Commission.
Mr. Chairman, I have listened with great attention to the thoughtful ideas put forward by you as to the manner in which one could envisage the organization of our work, and I am happy to say that I am in sympathy with your suggestion. I am also in sympathy with the comments made by the representative of Nigeria and the representative of Argentina. I am sure that the ideas put forward by the officers of the Commission, together with the views which will be expressed by the rest of us, could constitute a rich source and the basis on which we should be able to build up our final decision. It is in this spirit that my delegation would like to express some views as to how we see the work of this Commission.

The first point which I want to make concerns the question of the constitution of the Bureau. My delegation subscribes to the view that you put forward that the Bureau of the Commission should be re-elected at each annual substantive session. By that, we understand that the regional groups will abide strictly by the principle of rotation in nominating their candidates from among countries which express interest in becoming members of the Bureau.

My second point relates to the question of the Commission's programme of work. My delegation is of the opinion that in this respect the Final Document is quite explicit, but we do not object, of course, to the idea of having it confirmed by the General Assembly, provided that no revision of the Final Document is involved in such an operation.

In our view, during its 1979 session the Commission will have to take up the task entrusted to it by the special session. In accordance with paragraph 118 (a) of the Final Document the Disarmament Commission will have to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for Disarmament, an important task meant to mobilize the efforts of all States for negotiation of concrete and effective measures of disarmament and give the process of negotiation a most needed perspective.

It will have also, in accordance with this same paragraph, which relates closely to paragraph 125 in our view, to consider and make recommendations on various programmes in the field of disarmament including the opinions, suggestions and proposals submitted by States during the special session and which, as the Final Document says, deserve further and more thorough study.
Thirdly, of course, it will have to follow-up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session.

With regard to the second component, I should like to say that in our view the United Nations Disarmament Commission as a deliberative body in the field of disarmament has been entrusted by the special session to examine further with utmost care those opinions, suggestions and proposals submitted by States during the special session, among them the proposals contained in the document submitted by my country.

I believe that the decision to be taken by the General Assembly in this respect, to which paragraph 125 refers, has basically in mind the transmission of the various records, materials, and so on, which have been accumulated during this special session.

The third point which I would like to make refers to the question raised by the representative of Argentina. We believe that in order to discharge its mandate the Commission may need to establish working groups or any other subsidiary bodies on specific subjects. In keeping with its democratic nature, whatever bodies are to be created will have in our view to be open-ended in order to permit the access of all interested delegations to their work. My delegation also supports the initiation by the United Nations Disarmament Commission of studies and research on issues pertaining to the implementation of the decisions and the recommendations of the special session to be entrusted either to the United Nations Centre for Disarmament or accomplished in any other way.

The first point which I would like to make for our further consideration concerns the nature of the report to be submitted by the Commission to the General Assembly. We believe that both the General Assembly and other disarmament organs could benefit more from the work of this Commission if the Commission concentrated on the adoption of concrete, action-oriented recommendations rather than on resolutions, which in our view should remain the prerogative of the General Assembly in the field of disarmament.
In conclusion, I should like to make a more general comment on the question of the organization of the Commission's work. In addition to such precise arrangements as the one we are now discussing, the work of any international body is very much influenced by the general atmosphere prevailing in its proceedings and the current methods of work which emerge from day-to-day practice. If the United Nations Disarmament Commission is to preserve the spirit in which it was conceived by the special session, the conduct of its current work should reflect the requirements of the democratization of international life and the participation of all States on an equal footing in the solution of international problems. The conduct of the work of the Commission on such a basis will depend, of course, to a great extent on the officers of the Commission themselves, but it will derive above all from the political attitude and behaviour of each and every one of its members. That attitude is reflected in the way in which a Member State listens to the views of others, respects the right of all interested parties to participate in consultations and in the consideration of problems of general concern and takes into account on an equal footing the proposals and points of view of all. I am happy to say that the way in which we have started this debate - and this is thanks to a great extent to you, Mr. Chairman - reflects such a requirement.

Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to ask for clarification of some of the points that I raised in my last statement.

First of all, could I ask you, Mr. Chairman, to be good enough to explain to us the status of the proposals in paragraph 125 of the Final Document. You gave a very clear answer to one aspect of that question earlier, and I entirely agree with that answer, namely, that it will be the responsibility of the present session of the General Assembly to decide on the most appropriate fate of those proposals. There can be no doubt regarding that. However, after that I asked you whether at this organizational session of the Disarmament Commission we were to be allowed to discuss the possibility of creating subsidiary bodies of the Disarmament Commission - sub-commissions, working groups and so on - or should we wait until the substantive session in May?
When I asked that question I added that it might be appropriate and timely to discuss that matter now, because if the Disarmament Commission were to decide now to set up sub-commissions or working groups the Secretariat could then start planning and preparing for them. Otherwise, we might meet in May, decide to set up one or two working groups, and discover that there were no facilities available for holding such meetings of sub-commissions. That is why I wanted to know whether we could discuss that now. In weighing the possibilities of creating one or two subsidiary bodies, I was not referring to their nature - whether they should be of small membership, limited membership, open-ended or anything like that - and I avoided doing so for the very simple reason that we have to wait until the thirty-third session of the General Assembly has decided precisely what is to be done as a follow-up to some of the proposals adopted at the special session.

We know for a fact that the Disarmament Commission will have to weigh the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament, but, apart from that clear mandate, the Commission may be called upon to follow up or to continue consideration of many other aspects of the discussions held at the special session, either those already mentioned in paragraph 125 or others which are in the Programme of Action and on which a decision is required at the present session.

It would therefore appear logical that one of the alternatives, as proposed by the representative of Canada and taken up by the representative of Madagascar, would be for this Commission to hold one or two meetings towards the end of the present session, because by that time we will know what proposals the General Assembly is going to refer to the Disarmament Commission for its consideration - either those that are already mentioned in paragraph 125 of the Final Document or those in the Programme of Action. At that time we will be in a position to decide whether we want to set up a working group to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament, perhaps, and another working group to follow up on the discussion of the proposals whose consideration was not concluded at the special session, or those in the Programme of Action on which the General Assembly decides.
If we have such meetings at the end of the session, we shall know much more clearly what the nature of those working groups will be. We may decide to create only one, or none, but only at that time will we be able to gauge the type of group we want to set up. We will have all the elements of judgement.

The CHAIRMAN: Before calling on the next speaker, I shall try to reply to the two points made by the representative of Argentina.

He asked me for my own interpretation of the status of the proposals mentioned in paragraph 125. I believed that I had made it fairly clear earlier this morning that, as I see it, paragraph 125 is quite explicit. It refers to various proposals made during the special session which were not discussed fully - in some cases hardly any discussion took place - and some of us who were involved will remember how some of the proposals did not appear to have consensus agreement at that time and therefore could not be included. So, as I see it, the proposals in paragraph 125 vary from one to another. There are some which were certainly discussed but on which a consensus could not be reached, and therefore they could not go into the section on the Programme of Action. There were other proposals, draft resolutions and so on, which were not really discussed in depth. It is therefore my understanding that the decision was that, in accordance with the recommendations which the Assembly may make at its thirty-third regular session, those issues, or at least some of them, will be referred to the appropriate deliberative and negotiating bodies.

It is also my understanding - and I may say that this is in conformity with the views of several persons with whom I had informal consultations before the Commission met - that the authors of specific proposals will find that when the First Committee discusses item 125 of the General Assembly's agenda it will cover the whole of the Final Document, including this paragraph 125. So the General Assembly will at that time, we hope, give the necessary guidance on how we should deal not only with what is in the Programme of Action but also with what is in paragraph 125.
But the proposals under paragraph 125 will, in my opinion, have to be looked at in a little more detail than is contained in the Programme of Action.

The second point referred to by the representative of Argentina, which the representative of Madagascar also mentioned, concerned the possibility of the Disarmament Commission having what it is to be hoped would be a brief meeting towards the end of the session, presumably after the First Committee has completed its consideration of the disarmament items and has made specific recommendations. As I said earlier, I can see some merit in this, and we shall certainly keep the possibility in mind and even follow it up, provided we do not hear any objections between now and the time we finish the meetings of the Commission. In other words, I am suggesting that if there are no objections or reservations then we might consider including that suggestion in our report to the General Assembly.

Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, may I begin by offering you my delegation's congratulations on your well earned selection to preside over our work. Having had the privilege of being present during the decade, to which someone referred yesterday, when you were contributing so valuably to the work of the First Committee as its Secretary, from 1960 on, I can certainly say that we should congratulate ourselves on placing you in a position in which your skill and your guidance will be even more decisive for the achievement of our aims.

Regarding the matters that have been discussed today, I should like to begin by saying a few words on one that is doubtless not the most important but one that I do think could be clarified and disposed of. I am referring to paragraph 125 of the Final Document.

Perhaps my delegation was involved in genesis of this paragraph. If I am not mistaken, at one of the last meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee, a number of delegations expressed difficulties and found themselves unable to agree with the majority of their colleagues on the consensus we were seeking if the proposals they had submitted were not only to be excluded from the Final Document but were to be lost for ever and swept away under the mountain of documents accumulated by the United Nations. Confronted by that difficulty, and knowing that we could not possibly list them all, my delegation
suggested that one of the last paragraphs of the final document specifically mention that the Secretary-General would be requested to refer to the appropriate bodies all the official documents of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. At that point my delegation felt it had done enough. We were sure that in any of those organs the delegation most interested in a continued examination of a specific document merely had to ask for such a study to be made and cite the final document, in which all the official documents of the Conference were referred to this Commission.

As is usual in these cases, there was still a number of delegations - at the beginning a very small number, but the number grew - that felt that a mere referral en bloc was not enough. They wanted the proposals they had sponsored to be specifically spelled out.

As a result of the initial talks on the subject, one of the first ideas had been that there might be a maximum of five or six proposals that would fall into this category, because what we were trying to do was to apply an objective criterion. But there were many objective criteria, and in those talks all those that appeared acceptable to us were discussed one after the other. The first objective criterion to be fallen back on was proposals submitted by Heads of State and Government. That added up to about five or six. But those who participated in the work of the special session will no doubt recall that there were a number of delegations to which that objective criterion was objectionable. Therefore, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, who is present here, Ambassador Ortiz de Rozas, as a result of the conversations we had held with those delegations most directly concerned in the matter - conversations that took place between midnight and 1 a.m. - mentioned the other objective criterion that had emerged from the talks, that was that any delegation - I stress, any delegation - that wanted specific mention to be made of the title of its proposal in the final document should make that desire known to the Secretariat either before the end of that night's meeting or by a certain time the next day, but on condition that the proposal it was pressing already appeared among the documents that had been submitted to us by the plenary Assembly or had been mentioned in one of the statements made in the plenary Assembly, or had been circulated as a document of the Ad Hoc Committee or as a conference room paper and not necessarily an official document. I think the relevant conference room paper was numbered 17 or 37.
That, again, was a very objective criterion, and this list was born of that objective criterion. It is, we know, an excessively long list, and we know that the appetite grows by what it feeds on. In the talks between midnight and 1 a.m., in response to questions I addressed to them, representatives themselves said they did not want any of their delegations' documents to appear in the list. Later they weighed the matter, took counsel with their pillows, and before the deadline struck they did insist that two or three of the proposals they had submitted should be included.
I do not think that we should be unduly alarmed at the number of these proposals. I think that in the majority of cases the sponsors of the proposals themselves will not unduly press the Disarmament Commission to consider them. That is my view as far as these proposals are concerned, and I believe that that is the standpoint from which those proposals should be considered. I think the wisest view was that expressed yesterday by you, Sir, when you discussed this matter with the officers of the Commission - and I think I am quoting you correctly - when you said that it was up to the sponsors of each proposal to decide whether they wanted the Commission to include it among those to be listed for possible study, or whether they preferred it, shall I say, to gather dust among the rest of the official documents of the Assembly.

As far as the official documents as a whole are concerned, I really do not know the position or the actions taken by the Secretariat on the matter. To judge from what I have heard this morning, it may well be that the Secretariat feels it would be more appropriate to await the end of our meetings at this session, so that at the end of the session those official documents can be sent, not separately but together with any other recommendations that the General Assembly may ultimately adopt. I think that the referral of the official documents of the special session is something that is required of the Secretariat. The only decision to be adopted is whether those documents are to be accompanied by recommendations or sent without any. I think that is all I have to say on paragraph 125.

I should like to refer to another matter which I believe is more important. I feel that, generally speaking, proverbs are the distillation of popular wisdom and are worth thinking about. As far as the substantive work of the Disarmament Commission is concerned - and I am thinking now of 1979 - I believe that there are two proverbs that should be borne in mind and perhaps taken as the lodestars of our work: there is one that says "Grasp all, lose all" and another to the effect that one should make haste slowly.
Anyone who has glanced at the work entailed in preparing a comprehensive disarmament programme must have been struck by the fact that if the Disarmament Commission hopes or wants to submit to the thirty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly the necessary elements that the Final Document asks it to prepare, it will then have to devote that meagre month of its session to that work and, even if it does so, I do not think it can succeed in covering the entire matter.

Secondly, it is a matter of the greatest urgency that those elements be presented to the next session of the General Assembly. I do not believe that we can reasonably hope to ask the Committee on Disarmament to postpone indefinitely the consideration of those matters that it is expressly expected to perform, according to the terms of the Programme of Action.

So I would venture to suggest that in the report that we are called upon to present to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly we consider recommending that the Assembly adopt a resolution, either that our report contain a draft resolution as an annex or a recommendation regarding the possible contents of that draft resolution, wherein it must be clearly stated that the Disarmament Commission is to give the highest priority to the formulation of the elements of a comprehensive disarmament programme at its substantive session of 1979. Obviously, if other items arise of equal importance, they can also be included in that programme. But I would suggest that those subjects be preceded by or followed by an indication that they will be examined only so far as the requirements of maximum priority dictate.

Secondly, the draft resolution should request the Governments of Member States, particularly the Governments of the nuclear-weapon States which in 1962 presented to the then Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) a comprehensive draft treaty on general and complete disarmament, to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations their proposals, opinions, comments and remarks on a possible comprehensive disarmament programme. The resolution would not only
contain that request, but would also set a deadline so that the Secretary-
General would receive those proposals, opinions, remarks and comments in
good time. The deadline must not be either too generous or too short. It
must not be too generous because the Disarmament Commission is to start work in
May. Therefore, I think that the members of the Commission should be given
at least one month's grace before that session in order to weigh and study
those proposals and thus come to the May session fully aware of the opinions
of Governments and of the suggestions and proposals of those Governments which
replied to the Secretary-General's request. Assuming that the Secretariat of
the United Nations distributed those answers as they came in and, with the
effectiveness that the United Nations Centre for Disarmament has always shown,
that they start drafting some sort of table of contents, a request in the
Commission for any document could be met within 48 hours.

Bearing all this in mind, the deadline might be set at 15 March for the
Secretary-General to receive those remarks and comments from Governments. That
is the specific suggestion that my delegation wishes to make, and that is the
point that we consider to be most important.
Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus): At the outset, I should like, Sir, to reiterate here in this forum my delegation's congratulations and best wishes on your election to the chairmanship of this important Commission. We believe that you are best qualified to make this Disarmament Commission an instrument that will proceed towards effective disarmament in every way.

We have listened with great attention to the very constructive statements of previous speakers, and we should like to make a few remarks on the coming session of this Commission in May.

As you very rightly pointed out, Mr. Chairman, the Commission has first to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament, which is a wide mandate, secondly, to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session, and, thirdly, to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. You also pointed out very rightly that as the recommendations of the Commission on the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament have to be completed before the Committee on Disarmament can proceed with its task as the negotiating body, they should be given first priority in the work of the Commission in May.

Of course, we are well aware that -- as was pointed out by the representative of Mexico -- this is a very complex question, and the time available may run out without our being able to make the necessary recommendations regarding the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament, for these elements surely include the important element of halting the arms race. We cannot proceed to the mechanics of disarmament without halting the arms race, and this is a very serious problem which requires going into it in depth to see how we could stop the arms race in order to allow for effective progress in the consideration of the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament.

Therefore, the problem becomes involved in the first priority given in paragraph 118, that is, the priority of dealing with various problems in the field of disarmament, and one of these problems, which is also an element for any progress in the comprehensive programme, is the halting of the arms race.

The point that I am raising here is that we should apportion the period of four weeks for examining the elements in a broad spirit, regarding the halting of the arms race as a first consideration, and then proceed to the mechanics of the comprehensive programme.
In any case, this question of the halting of the arms race should have priority in our considerations, because the whole structure of the work on disarmament depends upon it, and also because it is coupled with developments in the world in every sphere. And we all know and all agree, including the two super-Powers, that the most urgent need is to halt the arms race, because of its far-reaching repercussions, as generally recognized.

The purpose of my statement, therefore, is to see to it that the question of the halting of the arms race should assume its due proportions in the consideration of the elements of a comprehensive programme.

Mr. LENNUYEUX-CONNENNE (France) (interpretation from French):
I should like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of my Government, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of this new Disarmament Commission, and I am convinced that your experience in United Nations affairs as well as in disarmament will enable this Commission to proceed with its work in the most favourable conditions. I should like also to extend my congratulations to those that have already been expressed to all the other officers of the Commission. In this connexion my delegation can only express its deep satisfaction at seeing this equitable representation among the officers of the Commission of all the geographical groups recognized by the United Nations.

The French delegation has been second to none in its support for the creation of the Disarmament Commission. The setting up of this subsidiary organ of our Organization is indeed justified recognition of the pre-eminent role of the Organization in disarmament matters. In that context I should like to recall that, in a statement before the special session of the General Assembly, the President of the French Republic advocated that at the level of deliberations it was important to respect the principle of universality, which implied that a specific commission of the General Assembly should be entrusted to attend to disarmament matters on a permanent basis and with the participation of all States.

You may rest assured, Mr. Chairman, that you will always have the support of France, so that our Commission can quickly give proof of its usefulness and effectiveness.
However, we must not fail to ensure that we do not run the risk of the criticism of overlapping with other organs of our Organization which will also be entrusted with the problem of disarmament from other angles. In that regard, for the time being I reserve my delegation's position on the need, which was mentioned earlier, to devote two weeks of our spring session to a general debate, which traditionally takes place in the First Committee. That is why I do not believe that we should take a decision at this time on the possible setting up of sub-committees of our Commission.

I do not believe that it would be fitting at this organizational session to open a debate on the mandate of our Commission. We are aware that the Final Document of the tenth special session has determined its main lines. It is obvious -- and this is normal -- that for a deliberative organ such as the Disarmament Commission a mandate can only be a framework. It will be up to us to fill it in. However, I do not believe that we shall be in a position to do so at this session, for the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, of which, there is no need to recall, this Commission is a subsidiary body, will be adopting recommendations on entrusting to this or that deliberative or negotiating body numerous proposals made last June. And this, in the view of my delegation, is equally valid for all the proposals enumerated in paragraph 125 of the Final Document. In this regard I share the view which you have expressed, Sir, in responding to a question put by Ambassador Ortiz de Rozas with regard to the fate of those proposals enumerated in paragraph 125.
The French delegation therefore reserves its right to wait for the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly. Subsequently, we may submit certain proposals which could be of relevance to the organization of the work of this Commission. I believe that it will not be before our session in 1979 that this Commission will be in a position to discuss matters of substance within its purview. In that regard, I think that it is difficult today to determine orders of priorities.

We again offer our congratulations. We certainly hope that our future work will make a definite contribution to disarmament in conformity with the main lines of the programme of work which you have explained to us in your introductory statement.

Mr. FULLER (United Kingdom): May I join other delegations in congratulating you and the other officers of the Commission on your election. The rebirth of the Disarmament Commission was not entirely without its moments of anxiety but that is quite normal with all births. I think that there was never any doubt, if I may say so, about the paternity of the infant body, and in this sense it is entirely appropriate that you should be presiding over our activities.

I think that all speakers are agreed that we cannot develop a detailed programme of work for the session next spring at this meeting because we have to await various decisions of the thirty-third session of the General Assembly. For example, it will be up to the General Assembly to give us guidance on which of the decisions and recommendations of the special session are relevant for discussion in this body. I think that we can also expect guidance from the General Assembly on the question of the priority of items to be addressed by this body next May.

You, Sir, and various representatives have argued persuasively that the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme for disarmament should be accorded the highest priority. Without wishing to dispute the strength of those arguments, I still think that it would be inappropriate for us at this organizational meeting to prejudge the decisions and the guidance of the General Assembly.
For the moment, the mandate is quite clear. It is the function of the Disarmament Commission
"... to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session ..." (A/RES/S-10/2, pp. 23-24) and
"... inter alia, consider the elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament ..." (Ibid.)
I do not think that it would be appropriate either to take any firm decisions of principle here on whether to establish sub-bodies of the Disarmament Commission. I think that logically that sort of decision must await the elaboration of a detailed agenda, a detailed programme of work.

It is, of course, open to the Commission under Rule 102 of the Rules of Procedure to decide to set up drafting groups or sub-committees, but my delegation would be against any decision in principle at this stage. I fully accept the arguments of the representative of Argentina that there will be need for some careful preparation before the spring meeting, but for the moment I think that this could best be done, as suggested I believe by the representative of Canada, by the officers of the Commission in consultation with their own groups.

Lastly, a small but important point. You have suggested that the first substantive meeting of the Disarmament Commission should take place in May of next year. That is entirely acceptable to my delegation but you have specified that it should meet for four weeks. I do not need to draw your attention to paragraph 118 (c) of the Final Document which says that "the Disarmament Commission will meet for a period not exceeding four weeks ..." (A/RES/S-10/2, p. 24). If, as I believe, we accept the need for a further meeting in 1979 in order to elect the officers, perhaps at the end of the 1979 General Assembly, then this does argue, according to our mandate, that the meeting in May of next year will have to be shortened. I would suggest therefore that we consider the possibility of recommending that the meeting in May should last for three weeks only.
The CHAIRMAN: During my own consultations, and this was also the case among the officers of the Commission, the unanimous view was that the substantive session in May must be for at least four weeks. The representative of the United Kingdom is quite right when he says that the Final Document does say that the Commission will meet for a period not exceeding four weeks. That is a constraint, but I think it was the general view, certainly among the officers of the Commission, that, given the work that we have, it would not only be desirable but also necessary to have the four-week session. I think that here one has to look at this pragmatically. I do not believe that, when the Final Document speaks about the session being for not more than four weeks, it necessarily precludes the possibility of one meeting for half a day at the end of the 1979 session for the election of the officers for 1980.
I do not think one should make such a narrow interpretation and say that if the Commission meets for one day in December 1979 one day should be deducted from the four weeks of the May session. I hope that on this we can have a more flexible attitude.

Mr. MADADHA (Jordan): I have only one remark to make. It was understood that when the Disarmament Commission met it would have before it as its agenda the three basic guidelines issued by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. The Disarmament Commission would make recommendations to the General Assembly, and the General Assembly would adopt resolutions that would be passed to the Committee on Disarmament. Thus the link between the two bodies, the Committee on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, is through the General Assembly. The question I should like to raise is whether this is the only link or whether there is any direct or other way to connect the work of these two bodies so as to avoid the wastage of time or the repetition of the mandate.

The CHAIRMAN: If I may reply very briefly, when one considers the question of the link between the Disarmament Commission and the Committee on Disarmament, in a formal sense the link is through the General Assembly because we are a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly we make recommendations to the General Assembly and the General Assembly then transmits them to the Committee. But the Committee on Disarmament is a body whose members now number nearly 40, and it is our intention and our hope that those - even the individual representatives - who participate in its work will be able to participate also in the work of the Disarmament Commission.

The point was made about avoiding a clash as far as the dates of the sessions are concerned, but, as of now, and in accordance with the mandate, my interpretation would be that the Disarmament Commission is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and should make recommendations to it.
Mr. BLOMBERG (Finland): On behalf of the delegation of Finland let me first congratulate you, Sir, and the other officers of the Commission on your election.

The decisions on the international disarmament machinery were the most tangible results of the special session on disarmament. They are also the results that can most readily be implemented. After a thorough discussion on the disarmament system of the international community the General Assembly decided as a part of a comprehensive reform to revive the United Nations Disarmament Commission as its subsidiary organ and gave it a specific mandate.

As a provision of the Final Document, adopted without a vote, the decision to establish the Commission was thus taken unanimously. Consensus about the need for this body and about its past augurs well for its future work.

In the light of the Final Document there are two principal deliberative bodies with an all-inclusive membership, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission.

The First Committee, as a Main Committee of the General Assembly, has a central position in the international disarmament machinery. The profile of the First Committee in this respect was further heightened by the special session in that the First Committee will from now on exclusively deal with disarmament and security matters. The position of the Disarmament Commission, on the other hand is clear. It is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and reports annually to it.

My delegation finds it important that every effort be made to ensure that the revised disarmament machinery shall in fact lead to greater efficiency in the consideration of disarmament issues. That is the thrust of the Final Document. Greater efficiency can only be achieved if unnecessary duplication and overlapping of functions can be avoided.

As the special session decided the Commission will work under the rules of procedure relating to the Main Committees of the General Assembly with the modifications that the Commission might deem necessary. An important additional provision is that the substantive decisions should be adopted as far as possible by consensus. My delegation finds the principle of consensus an important guideline for the future of the work of the Commission, as it is indeed essential to any progress in the field of disarmament.
Finally, I wish to make a brief comment on the question of how to proceed in the organization and preparation of the future work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The Commission's mandate was adequately analysed by you, Mr. Chairman, in your introduction to this debate. Translation of that mandate into a specific working plan could best be carried out in the session to be held next year, and my delegation fully agrees with the date proposed by you and your fellow officers. At that point we will have the instructions of the General Assembly that deal with the follow-up of the special session on disarmament, and we trust that those instructions will take into account the need to expedite the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as well as other requirements of division of labour and co-ordination among the various bodies. My delegation welcomes an active role of the Bureau in an elaboration of the specific scenario for the May session.

The CHAIRMAN: No other member has indicated a desire to speak at this stage of our work. That being so, I should like to propose for the Commission's consideration that we hold no meeting either this afternoon or tomorrow morning, but convene again tomorrow at 3 p.m., by which time we shall try to produce the draft of a report taking into account the discussions we have had this morning. Of course, if there are indeed representatives who wish to speak at this stage we can meet this afternoon.

Mr. MESHRAPA (Egypt): It was in fact my intention to make a statement this afternoon, but since you have proposed that we should not hold a meeting then I wish at this time to join with other representatives in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and your fellow officers of the Commission.

I should like to offer my comments on the proposal presented by the representative of Nigeria and the representatives of Argentina. The view of my delegation is that it will be necessary to elect the officers annually after every substantive session. Also there should be some kind of co-ordination between the work of our Commission and the work of the
Committee on Disarmament, especially on the question of the convening of meetings. Concerning the point of view presented by the representative of Argentina, I support his idea of having a sub-group in order to submit recommendations to us during the next session which would be passed on to the General Assembly.
I should like to state that I believe our work should be based on consensus and our report and recommendations to be submitted to the next session of the General Assembly should also be based on consensus.

I should like to raise another point that is of concern to the Arab delegations present here. We should like to request that Arabic be made an official working language of the Commission. That would facilitate the work of the Arab delegations here in the United Nations and of Arab member States. I hope that the Commission will give consideration to this request.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to refer to the point made by the representative of Egypt at the end of his statement concerning the use of Arabic.

The resolution dealing with the use of Arabic as an official working language is resolution 3190 (XXVIII), adopted on 18 December 1973, according to which the General Assembly decided to include Arabic among the official and working languages of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. Therefore, if Arabic is to be included as an official working language of the Disarmament Commission a specific decision to that effect would have to be taken, as was done in the case of certain other organs - in particular I have in mind the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and various working groups.

The General Assembly will certainly have to look into the financial implications, particularly if it is the intention not merely to have interpretation but also verbatim records in Arabic.

What I would suggest - if there is no objection - is that we include in our report to the General Assembly a recommendation to that effect. But it is for the General Assembly, after taking into account the financial implications, to take a final decision in the matter.

I assume, therefore, that representatives agree that we do not meet this afternoon or tomorrow morning to allow time for the preparation of the draft report in which we would certainly take into account the various
suggestions, proposals and ideas that have been put forward this morning, and to reconvene the Commission tomorrow afternoon, by which time we shall try to have the draft report ready. Thus we shall have the possibility of holding three meetings: one tomorrow afternoon and two on Friday.

Mr. YAHKOV (Bulgaria): This is not an objection, but an inquiry as to whether your best anticipation is that the report will be available in all languages in good time before the afternoon meeting.

My delegation could go along with your suggestion, but I have been wondering whether it would be a wiser decision to hold the meeting on Friday morning to allow time to receive the report and consider it. We may well dispose of the report in shorter time than if the report were distributed at the last moment before the meeting. This is not a formal proposal, I will not press this point. It is a point of pragmatic consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: I am certainly in representatives' hands on this issue. It is quite clear that the draft of the report will not be available in all the languages if we are to meet tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock. We have to work on it and I do not think we will be able to complete the work before tomorrow morning. So if at 3 p.m. the draft would be available only in the English language. Certainly if we met on Friday morning it could be made available in all other languages. But I wonder whether we would not be cutting it a bit too fine by leaving it until the very last day.

Perhaps if representatives would agree - and I know I can always count on your co-operation - that we try and meet tomorrow afternoon when we would have only the English text but the draft will be available in the other languages on Friday morning, we ought not to wait until Friday to consider it.

If I hear no objection, we shall reconvene tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.