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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FORTY-FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 19 May 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. MICHAELSEN

(Denmark)

- Adoption of the agenda

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed today to the adoption of the agenda, I should like to make some remarks on the items contained in the provisional agenda of the Disarmament Commission as it appears in document A/CN.10/L.7.

Item 4, which is in two parts, is identical to items 4 (a) and 4 (b) of the Commission's agenda at the 1980 session. At that session the Commission considered that item and made recommendations which are contained in paragraph 20 of its report to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/35/42). The inclusion of the item again in the 1981 session of the Commission is in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 35/152 F, which requests the Commission to continue the consideration of the agenda items contained in resolution 34/83 H related to the same subject.

(The Chairman)

Item 5 is also in two parts and is a carryover from the agenda of 1980. While item 5 (a) remains unchanged, item 5 (b) contains in the fifth line an addition emanating from resolution 35/142 A, which reads as follows:

"... taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 34/83 F and 35/142 A and, in particular, to identify and elaborate on the principles which should govern further actions of States in the field of the freezing and reduction of military expenditures, keeping in mind the possibility of embodying such principles into a suitable document at an appropriate stage". (A/CN.10/L.7, para. 5 (b))

Item 6 is entitled "Elaboration of the general approach to the study on all aspects of the conventional arms race and on disarmament relating to conventional weapons and armed forces, as well as its structure and scope". The item is included in the provisional agenda in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/156 A, which, in paras. 2 and 3 states the following:

"Agrees that the Disarmament Commission, at its forthcoming substantive session, should work out the general approach to the study, its structure and scope;

"Requests the Disarmament Commission to convey to the Secretary-General the conclusions of its deliberations, which should constitute the guidelines for the study". (General Assembly resolution 35/156, paras. 2 and 3)

Item 7 is entitled "Preparation of a report of the Disarmament Commission on its work to the General Assembly at its second special session devoted to disarmament". In that connexion, I wish to refer to operative paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 35/152 F, which states:

"Also requests the Disarmament Commission to continue the consideration of the agenda items contained in General Assembly resolution 34/83 H, with emphasis on the preparation of a report to the Assembly at its second special session devoted to disarmament". (General Assembly resolution 35/152 F, para. 3)

Item 8 is entitled "Letter dated 1 February 1979 from the Secretary-General addressed to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission", transmitting the elements contained in paragraph 125 of the Final Document.

(The Chairman)

Item 9 is entitled "Letter dated 8 March 1979 from the Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid addressed to the Secretary-General" and relates to military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa.

Items 10 and 11 are self-explanatory.

In a meeting of the officers of the Commission yesterday there was wide support for the provisional agenda proposed in document A/CN.10/L.7. It was nevertheless the understanding of the Bureau that, in regard to agenda item 7, "Preparation of a report of the Disarmament Commission ... to the second special session ...", the Commission at this session should concentrate its efforts on the initial discussions and postpone the preparation of a report to a later session of the Commission.

Furthermore, the officers of the Commission discussed the organization of work and, on the basis of that discussion, the Commission might wish to decide to begin its work by carrying out a general exchange of views on the agenda items. In that connexion, it was suggested that delegations, in their statements during the general exchange of views, might address one, more, or all items of the agenda. All the delegations which had submitted documents could take that opportunity to introduce them.

In view of the fact that the session this year is shorter than usual, it was the opinion of the officers of the Commission that it would be necessary to end the general exchange of views this week and to devote the other two weeks to dealing with the substance of the items.

It was further the feeling of the officers of the Commission that, when the general exchange of views was concluded, the Commission might wish to consider the establishment of open-ended working groups for such questions as agenda items 5 and 6, in connexion with which the Chairman will conduct continued consultations, including a meeting of the officers of the Commission on Friday, with a view to the establishment of those open-ended working groups. Once the general exchange of views is exhausted and consultations are completed, it will then be possible for the Commission to take a decision on organizational matters, including the establishment of those working groups.

(The Chairman)

Having outlined the thinking of the officers of the Commission, may I take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the draft agenda contained in document A/CN.10/L.7 and, at the same time, agrees to the organization of work which I have just outlined?

Mr. SOUZA e SILVA (Brazil): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of our Commission as well as the other officers of the Commission, and to pledge the full co-operation of my delegation in achieving good results and in the endeavours of the Commission.

I should like to put forward two suggestions concerning the agenda of our Commission, as you have outlined the principal points that concern the items included on the agenda.

My first proposal deals with item 4 (a). As members of this Commission are aware, the formulation of that item has been carried over from previous meetings of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as the Chairman has just stressed.

On 12 September 1980, however, the United Nations issued a very important document entitled "Comprehensive study on nuclear weapons" undertaken by a group of international experts pursuant to resolution 33/91 D. The study, which appeared in document A/35/392, was considered by the First Committee of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session last year. The General Assembly then adopted resolution 35/156 F, which states, among other things, that the report constitutes

"... a highly significant statement on present nuclear arsenals, the trends in their technological development and the effects of their use ..." as well as on

"... the security implications of the continued quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear-weapon systems". (General Assembly resolution 35/156 F, para. 1)

Resolution 35/156 F further expressed the hope that States would consider carefully the conclusions of the report and request the Committee on Disarmament to take both the report and its conclusions into account in its efforts towards general and complete disarmament under effective international control, in particular in the field of nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Souza e Silva, Brazil)

It seems to my delegation that a study of such magnitude can hardly be ignored by the Disarmament Commission in its consideration of

"various aspects of the arms race, particularly the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament".

The present wording of item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda dates, as I have noted, from previous sessions of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, when the study was still under preparation.

I should first like to propose that the words

"taking into account the report of the Group of Experts on a Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons and in particular its conclusion"

be added to the present formulation of item 4 (a). My delegation is confident that this proposal will meet with the approval of the Commission.

My second proposal on the agenda for this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission stems from operative paragraph 5 of resolution 35/152 F, which was adopted by consensus at the last session of the General Assembly. That paragraph requests the Secretary-General to transmit to the Disarmament Commission the report of the Committee on Disarmament.

My delegation believes that the report of the multilateral negotiating body should be considered by the deliberative body and that to that effect an appropriate item should be inserted in our agenda for this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Such a new item could be formulated as follows: "Consideration of the report of the Committee on Disarmament". It could appear as item 7 of the agenda of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the remaining items being renumbered accordingly.

My delegation would be grateful to the Commission for its consideration and, I hope, approval of those proposals.

Mr. PEREZ NOVOA (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish):

Mr. Chairman, I should like to congratulate you most sincerely on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for 1981. We are certain that under your guidance we shall successfully complete our work.

(Mr. Perez Novoa, Cuba)

I should like also to congratulate the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur on their election. We are fully prepared to contribute to the proper conduct of our work.

We should like to make some comments on the need to wait for the end of the general debate before we determine the content of the items to be taken up in the working groups. By that we mean that we should not agree on or define in advance the membership of the working groups without awaiting the results of the general debate. The Bureau has said that it would be a good idea to set up two working groups to deal with two items, but really we are not in a position to decide in accordance with the provisional agenda before us whether there would be two items or more. We hope that the general debate will make it possible for us to ascertain exactly how many groups will need to be set up and what items will have to be taken up by them.

That is what we wished to say at this point, when the Commission is discussing its working methods.

Mr. ESPECHE GIL (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, my delegation had the pleasure and the honour of congratulating you at the last session of the Commission, in December last. We should like to renew that expression of congratulation, and we should like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, whom the Commission elected yesterday unanimously.

Mr. Chairman, we consider that the report that you have just submitted to us on the work of the Bureau constitutes significant progress in our work. We think that the Bureau's report and the suggestions it contains are positive. Perhaps the suggestions should be divided into two parts.

The first part concerns about the agenda. My delegation listened with great interest to the suggestion just made about the possibility of having item 4(a) reworded so that we could include in it the important study finished last year on nuclear weapons. We support that suggestion, which is timely, and we certainly hope that the Commission will endorse it.

(Mr. Espeche Gil, Argentina)

As regards the organization of our work, my delegation believes that we should first have a general exchange of views, a kind of general debate, as a result of which we should be able to determine how to tackle our work next week, that is by the creation of, for example, one, two or more working groups.

Mr. NAMBIAR (India): Mr. Chairman, at the outset I should like on behalf of my delegation to extend our felicitations to you and to the other members of the Bureau and to pledge my delegation's co-operation in the work that lies before us.

You, Sir, have of course explained very clearly the organization of work as suggested by the Bureau in the course of its meeting yesterday. By and large we find that the Bureau's suggestions constitute a good basis for agreement. We feel that, by and large, the provisional agenda as suggested in document A/CN.10/L.7 is acceptable. The representative of Brazil has just suggested an addition to agenda item 4 (a), and my delegation would support that suggestion. We do not see it as an introduction of any radically different ideas. We think it fits into the over-all structure of the agenda item as mentioned here. We also support the suggestion relating to the insertion of an additional item relating to the consideration of the report of the Committee on Disarmament.

As regards the question of the organization of work in terms of timing, we agree with you, Mr. Chairman, that the first week could be spent on a general exchange of views on the various substantive items on the agenda. As to the question of the constitution of working groups, you yourself, Sir, have said that it would be the subject of some consultations in the course of the week, and that the Commission itself would be faced with the problem of actually setting up working groups on Friday. We agree with that suggestion. We are not sure how the working groups, if any, should be set up or what they would specifically consider - whether they would take up separately one or the other item or whether there would be a mix of agenda items to be considered by one or another of the working groups. We are



(Mr. Nambiar, India)

flexible and we ourselves should like to undertake some consultations with a view to formulating our ideas. We shall have to follow the course of the debate to see how and if working groups will have to be set up.

(Mr. Hambiar, India)

A second point relates to the question of the resources available within individual delegations in case more than one working group is set up. We have, of course, in the past had more than one working group functioning simultaneously. That has resulted also in a certain amount of inconvenience for delegations.

While we do see the need for working expeditiously in the working groups, we hope that this element also will be taken into consideration and that there will not be too many working groups functioning simultaneously -- even though an outside timeframe, as it were, is given to all or any of the working groups.

Mr. MARSHALL (United Kingdom): My delegation supports the proposal from the Bureau that we take the suggested agenda appearing in document A/CN.10/L.7 as it stands, subject to the comments that the Chairman made in introducing it.

I listened carefully to the suggestion from the representative of Brazil that we might make an amendment out of item 4. I think it is worth recalling that item 4 as it now appears was not included at all in the first draft of the agenda, which came to the organizational meeting of the Commission in December last. I believe that the thinking at the time was that this subject had already been dealt with quite fully at last year's session. Indeed, there are three pages devoted to the discussion of that item in the report from last year's Commission session.

Some other delegations, however, felt that these were important subjects and that, formally speaking, because of the way the resolutions had been drafted, this item should be on our agenda again this year. Those of us who might have felt differently did not challenge this.

My own delegation certainly would be content that, for the reasons given, item 4 should appear on the agenda as it has been read out. But I think that the proposal to amend it or refine it puts a slightly different cast on the subject.

(Mr. Marshall, United Kingdom)

I do not disagree with the statement by the representative of Brazil, and those who have supported him, that the report of the Secretary-General is obviously an important document that many members will feel should be before this session of the Commission. But I do not think it would be helpful to amend our agenda - which is simply an indication of what we are going to talk about, and not necessarily what we are going to say, if I may draw that distinction - in order to make a specific reference to the report. I fear somewhat that if we were to consider such an amendment, there would be a number of other amendments which delegations here might wish to suggest. I think that that would open up the whole structure of the agenda, and that would be unfortunate. My delegation would like to get on with the work.

To a lesser extent, that comment would go for the second suggestion that was made - that is, to include a reference to the report of the Committee on Disarmament. Again, it is obviously sensible that the Commission should have before it the report of the Committee on Disarmament. There are many things in that report that we shall want to bear in mind, that delegations will want to refer to in their statements. But, again, I do not think that this makes it necessary to have a separate item.

So I should like, through you, Mr. Chairman, to suggest gently to those who favour amending this agenda that this might start a process that would be better avoided. I should like to recommend that we adopt the agenda as the Bureau has suggested it to us.

Mr. SHUSTOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)(interpretation from Russian): On behalf of our delegation I should like to join in the congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to your respective posts. I wish you every success in your work. Our delegation pledges you its full co-operation towards the achievement of constructive results.

We believe that the Bureau has prepared a draft provisional agenda that should be acceptable to the Commission. The representative of Brazil has made two proposals by way of additions to the agenda. I should like to make some comments on those proposals.

As a whole, the proposals give rise to no objection of principle on our part. We do, however, have rather serious doubts about the desirability of including the items in question in the agenda.

In the first place, in regard to item 4(a), the report on nuclear weapons that was mentioned by the representative of Brazil was already considered by the General Assembly at its last session. As we know, delegations had an opportunity then to express their various views on the report. Hence, to have a reference to this report in our agenda might very well complicate the work of this Commission and of some delegations. In the circumstances, I do not believe it is indispensable or even necessary to accept that proposal. But it goes without saying that during the discussion of item 4 delegations that agree with the conclusions of the report and wish to support it will be able to say so. They can be guided by the report to the extent they deem that necessary. Of course, other delegations will also be able to express their opinion.

Moreover, on the subject of the nuclear arms race, we know that a whole series of other important documents have been adopted by the General Assembly and by the special session devoted to disarmament -- in particular, the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament.

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

Now, in that document there are many paragraphs which have a bearing on the limitation of the arms race, and if we mention one particular document in this area, we might as well mention others, which could overload the agenda item, so to speak. We ought to give some thought to this.

I would say that within the general framework of the agenda presented to us by the Bureau all delegations can mention any documents of the United Nations on the nuclear arms race and on nuclear disarmament. The present text would not prevent anyone from mentioning any document on the question of nuclear disarmament, including the report referred to by Brazil.

As regards the proposal by the representative of Brazil having to do with the report of the United Nations Committee on Disarmament, we have this question: If this item is put on our agenda, are we going to discuss the report of the Disarmament Committee? As you know, this report has already been thoroughly considered by the thirty-fifth session, and various delegations have already had an opportunity to comment at considerable length and to present draft resolutions on it and so on. The draft agenda before us contains various important items which the Commission must discuss, and, given the limited time available, as you said, Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether it is really desirable to consider matters that were discussed at the thirty-fifth session, such as the report of the Disarmament Committee.

I do not think it desirable, in the circumstances, as I have said, to add an agenda item on this subject. As we are well aware, the report of the Disarmament Committee is known and familiar to all delegations, and all delegations will clearly use it and be guided by it as they discuss one agenda item or another at the present session of the Commission. So even if this item is not officially on the agenda, in no way does that mean we will be disregarding the report of the Disarmament Committee. Indeed, every delegation will be guided by it, and we attribute considerable importance to it.

Mr. RODRIGO (Sri Lanka): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to offer you my warmest felicitations and wish you all success in the work before us. I would also like to thank you for bringing to the attention of this Commission the substance of the discussions that took place within the Bureau, particularly on the matters of the agenda and the general organization of work. As far as my delegation is concerned, basically we have no problem with the feelings of the Bureau as explained by you a while ago, Sir.

With regard to the agenda, there has been a proposal by the representative of Brazil for two amendments to the agenda as it stands now. My delegation has no difficulties with either of those proposed amendments, but has also listened to the views expressed by the representatives of the Soviet Union and by the representative of the United Kingdom about the need to keep the agenda as it is.

With regard to the organization of work, it was not really quite clear to me about the timing of the setting up of the working groups. If your suggestion, Sir, was that we continue our consultations informally on this question all this week with a view to taking a decision on these working groups on Thursday and Friday, that would certainly pose no difficulties for us. For the time being, we would, however, prefer to keep this whole issue a bit open - not only the composition of the groups, their leadership and the number of groups that would be formed, but also the items which would be considered in those groups. To a small delegation like mine, this is of some practical importance, as we have very limited manpower, and the servicing of more than one meeting or working group at the same time would cause us some difficulties. However, we are certainly quite agreeable to having some informal discussions, or even discussions within the Commission, on this issue, with a view to taking a final decision on them on Thursday or Friday.

Mr. MARINESCU (Romania) (interpretation from French): Allow me, Sir, to extend the congratulations of the Romanian delegation to you on your election as Chairman of our Commission this year, when it has some particularly important tasks before it.

I wish now to make a few brief comments on the organization of our work.

The way in which the Bureau has suggested that we organize our work seems suitable to us and should fit in nicely with the tasks before us at this session. However, we feel that more concrete thought should be given here and now to questions having to do with the organization of our work. This is necessary, we believe, considering the general scope of the agenda and the amount of time available to us, which is less than we had last year.

Both of these circumstances require that we organize our work very well, and we believe that a decision of the Commission in this respect should be adopted without delay. We would suggest that a timetable be set for the exchange of views which has been provided for. In the opinion of my delegation, that exchange could easily be concluded by the end of this week, by which time all delegations would have had an opportunity to express their views on all agenda items.

At the same time, we feel that during the course of the consultations you expect to conduct this week, Sir, we should profit by this Commission's experience. I am thinking in particular of our experience last year when we were faced with an agenda comparable in scope to this one; yet the Commission was able to organize its work in such a way as to conclude it successfully and to prepare its report and recommendations for submission to the General Assembly. I recall that last year, after the general debate was over, we worked in the plenary Commission and two working groups. I mention that because I consider it useful and desirable for delegations members of the Commission to participate in all the activities of the two working groups. By the same token, it is perfectly possible for us to pursue activities in the plenary Commission and that, we are convinced, would allow us to dispose of all the tasks before the Disarmament Commission by the closing date of this session.

Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure for my delegation to see you as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. I should therefore like to express the felicitations of my delegation to you and to the other members of the Bureau who were elected yesterday.

I should also like to express to you my delegation's appreciation for presenting the main substance of the Bureau's discussion on the organization of work and, in particular, on the agenda for this session of the Disarmament Commission.

My delegation agrees by and large with the substance of the report dealing with the organization of work. We have also noted the question regarding the possibility of having two open-ended working groups, particularly on items 5 and 6. We certainly would like to be associated with the substance of the exchange of views on those two very important items, but my delegation would like to remind you, Mr. Chairman, that, as has been very aptly stated by some of the previous speakers, the small size of most of the delegations on the Commission should be taken into consideration when fixing a meeting or two meetings for the next two weeks. My delegation would very much like to be present and to make an effective contribution to the exchange of views and the debates in the working group or groups, as the case may be. But if two meetings or more are taking place concurrently, it may be difficult and may pose some problem for smaller delegations like mine.

The provisional agenda presented to us does not pose any problem for us. As a matter of fact, we agree with it and we feel that it could very well be the basis for conducting our exchange of views and debates on matters of substance during the next two weeks. But we have also taken note of the two amendments presented by the representative of Brazil. My delegation does not have any particular difficulty with regard to them. We have also noted the views expressed by the representatives of the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom.

The Chairman referred very rightly to the constraint of the time factor. We are not going to have as many weeks as we had last year. Therefore, while having the general exchange of views which the Chairman suggested for this week and then going into negotiations the next two weeks, we should bear



(Mr. Rahman, Bangladesh)

in mind the time factor. Aside from this, as I said at the beginning, we look forward to having a very fruitful session of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation will co-operate with you fully, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NORBERG (Sweden): Mr. Chairman, I wish to congratulate you most sincerely on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission this year. We wish you all success in your work. We wish also to congratulate the Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur.

With respect to the agenda, we have listened with great attention to the two proposals made by the delegation of Brazil to amend item 4 and to add another item. We have no objection in principle to those proposals. However, as you, Mr. Chairman, have stressed, we are concerned about the limited time available to the Commission this year. We think it would be very unfortunate if our work were to be delayed by lengthy discussions on the agenda. We are therefore inclined to support your proposal, after consultation with the Bureau, to adopt the agenda which you have presented to us.

Mr. ANDRESEN (Portugal): Mr. Chairman, I should like at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the important post of Chairman of the Commission.

I think that for some of the smaller delegations, a subject which has been referred to by others, it would be very important to know at the outset - today, if possible - the matters on which the working groups would be working next week. The decision to leave that open until after the general debate has ended would make it much more difficult than to make that decision now. It is my understanding that when we speak of two working groups they would not be meeting at the same time, in other words as you proposed, Mr. Chairman, if we have two different working groups working on agenda items 5 and 6, one could meet in the morning and one in the afternoon, or some other arrangement of that type. While working during the same week, they would not be meeting at the same time. I think it is important to realize that and to make a decision on it as soon as possible.

With regard to the Chairmen of those groups, I think that can be decided only towards the end of this week, on Friday, as the Chairman proposed. But I think it would be useful to take the decision regarding the constitution of the groups as soon as possible.

Mr. SHELDON (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic)(interpretation from Russian): First of all, I should like to join in the expressions of congratulation addressed to you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau and to wish you every success in this responsible task so that our work will yield positive results. My delegation intends to co-operate with you to achieve that.

We listened with some interest to the information that you provided at the beginning of today's meeting about the meeting of the Bureau that has taken place and the points made there on matters on the agenda. Our delegation has no difficulty with anything that was said, but we should like to say something about the proposals made by the representative of Brazil during today's meeting.

With reference to the substance, it must be admitted that those proposals do not give us cause for negative feelings; but, as has been stated by a number of delegations which have spoken before us, those proposals give rise to some doubts. First, as has quite aptly been pointed out, those of us who participated in the work of the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and especially those who were present in the First Committee, will undoubtedly recall that the relevant report on questions of the nuclear arms race and the report of the Committee on Disarmament were not only before delegations during the work of the First Committee at the thirty-fifth session but were also considered in some detail at that time.

As regards the time factor to which practically all delegations referred this morning, is there such a pressing need? First, there would be no difficulty in utilizing those documents like other United Nations documentation on this range of issues in the general exchange which we intend to hold at the initial stage of the Commission's work during its present session. On the other hand, to overburden the agenda with an additional item and to expand the contents of item 4 may be less desirable.

(Mr. Sheldov, Byelorussian SSR)

In view of that, we agree with the points that have been made by a number of previous speakers that obviously this should not be done.

Secondly, in view of the tasks that must be performed by the present session of the Commission, the constructive spirit in which this work should be tackled and efforts to achieve the most positive and fruitful results, obviously we should not from the very outset of our work create any additional - I would not say difficulties but inconveniences - as has been suggested by a number of other delegations, in the light of the proposals which have been put forward.

Mr. SILOVIC (Yugoslavia): First, I should like to join in the expressions addressed to you by previous speakers, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Commission and to the other members of the Bureau. We will, like others, do our utmost to help you in the proceedings of this Commission.

I turn now to the first thing discussed here, the Commission's agenda. We have listened carefully to all the views expressed and, in our opinion, the first amendment suggested by the representative of Brazil would be a welcome one. As has been pointed out, item 4 (a) has been carried over from previous sessions of the Commission because it has been felt that discussions on it have not been conclusive and that there is a need for the Commission to study this matter further in this range and we think that the inclusion of this particularly important study would help the members of the Commission in streamlining their discussions.

We would also welcome the inclusion of a separate item dealing with the report of the Committee on Disarmament, and we feel that the Commission, as a deliberative body and a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, should be seized of this report, although it has already been discussed in the General Assembly. As was pointed out, we think that there should be some latitude in the Commission also for discussing that report.

(Mr. Silovic, Yugoslavia)

As far as the working groups are concerned, we could go along with the suggestion, made by the Chairman and widely supported here, that we approach this problem towards the end of the general exchange of views. But we would like to do so on the understanding that the composition of the working groups and the subjects with which they will deal are also matters for discussion and that we should not at this stage prejudge the work of the working groups but rather wait for the results of the general exchange and then approach this matter at a later stage.

Mr. PFEIFFER (Federal Republic of Germany): Mr. Chairman, I should like to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of your high office. We wish you every success in your difficult task and I pledge the full support of my delegation as you conduct the affairs of this Commission during the coming weeks. At the same time, I should like to extend congratulations to the Vice-Chairmen and to the Rapporteur. We are confident, Sir, that under your guidance and that of your colleagues we shall manage to make the next three weeks altogether successful.

In our present discussion of the agenda we should not overlook the fact that we have at our disposal only three weeks. It may be a temptation now to proceed to add this or that item to the agenda, which, taking into account the three-week period we have, is already somewhat overloaded. I was tempted to introduce a proposal that the agenda be reduced, because I felt that an agenda just gives structure to a debate, not its results. We are now trying to add to the agenda formulations which could indicate the way that the debate should proceed and I think that we are somewhat burdening the agenda with tasks that it has just not had before.

But to return to what I was going to propose initially, I should just like to appeal to my colleagues that, after having listened to statements and good arguments for making a change here and adding an item there, they should seriously consider refraining from changing the agenda as you had proposed to us this morning. We share the view expressed by the representative of Sweden. We think that the agenda is a carefully prepared one that has been proposed by the officers of the Commission, and I suggest that we work with it unchanged. Any delegation has, of course, the right to stress particular points in which it is interested, but I think this is always possible, and the agenda of course makes allowance for it.

Mr. MENZIES (Canada): Sir, I should like to begin by expressing the satisfaction of the Canadian delegation on your election as Chairman of this relatively brief session and also to express our satisfaction with the composition of the Bureau that will be supporting you in your work.

(Mr. Menzies, Canada)

I should like to say that we support the provisional agenda as it is, without further embellishments, but taking into account that delegations are quite at liberty to refer to the important matters that have been raised by a number of speakers here.

I should also like to refer to item 7 of the agenda and to state that from the point of view of the Canadian delegation there may be some pressures next year which will impose time restraints on the holding of a further meeting of the Disarmament Commission before the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and we would therefore favour preparation of the report at this session of the Commission.

Mr. ZAKI (Egypt): Mr. Chairman, I should like at the outset to express our pleasure at seeing you presiding over this Committee and also to congratulate the other officers on their election.

My delegation sees no difficulty in the proposed plan for our work during the meetings of this Committee. We also agree with your proposal to defer the taking of any decision on the question of setting up working groups so long as we have not gotten down to the substance of our work. Therefore, we believe that such a decision could be taken by the end of this week at which time we would be in a better position to form an opinion as to whether the creation of working groups would be required.

As for the items of the provisional agenda, we have no difficulty with the proposal put forward by the representative of Brazil. However, we also take note of the comments made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the USSR.

Mr. LEHNE (Austria): Like the preceding speakers, I should first of all like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of your office and, through you, to congratulate the other officers of the Committee.

With regard to the agenda, I wish to associate myself with those speakers who have said that while there are a lot of things to be said in favour of the substantive amendments suggested by the representative of Brazil, on the basis of the discussion we have had so far it seems that it might be easier

(Mr. Lehne, Austria)

to reach an understanding on the agenda as it stands, so as to avoid opening the whole question to a lot of other suggestions.

With regard to the organization of work, I should only like to point out that we agree with your suggestion that we defer the final decision on setting up working groups until the end of this week; but I should like to associate myself with those speakers who have mentioned that there are many countries with small delegations and that we should proceed on the understanding that we avoid many simultaneous meetings of different working groups.

Mr. OKAWA (Japan): Mr. Chairman, my delegation also would like to congratulate you and the other officers of the Commission on your assumption of your respective duties.

My delegation would favour the adoption of the provisional agenda as proposed by the officers of the Commission. We would also favour the early creation, if possible, of two working groups, to enable us in the limited time that is available to us at this session to concentrate on the items on military budgets and the elaboration of the study on conventional weapons.

Mr. FLOWERREE (United States of America): Mr. Chairman, it is indeed a pleasure to see you presiding over our meetings. My delegation looks forward to working under your leadership and it will give its full co-operation to you and the other officers of the Commission during the coming weeks.

After listening to this debate, I think that it is pertinent to make two remarks. First, no one has spoken against the agenda that was presented by the Bureau and, secondly, no one has denied that the important subject-matter that was suggested by the representative of Brazil can be addressed in our general debate or other discussions during the coming weeks.

We therefore suggest that, on that basis, the Commission adopt the agenda that has been proposed by the Bureau. In this connexion a point which we should all bear in mind is that, when the Disarmament Commission was established, it was the original idea to make it a body where subjects could be debated and conclusions drawn under circumstances different from those that prevail in the First Committee, where there are as many as 40 or more draft resolutions in play at a particular time. Hence, we should focus our work in this meeting, and I think that we have an agenda which does focus that work. I trust that we shall adopt it.

The CHAIRMAN: I have naturally listened with great interest to the statements concerning the proposed agenda and, for my part, I can say that I understand the proposal put forward by the representative of Brazil and the suggestions to elaborate on agenda item 4 by referring to the comprehensive study that has been made. I also understand that this proposal is based on the view that this study is of great importance in connexion with the question under this agenda item.

However, having heard the statements of representatives underlining that the agenda as it stands is a big one and that this year we have less time than has normally been the case, and as I understand that subjects contained in the comprehensive study, for instance, and those contained in the report of the Committee on Disarmament could be debated and brought into the discussion without their being specifically mentioned in the agenda, I should like to propose



(The Chairman)

that the Commission should adopt the provisional agenda, which received the full support of the Commission's Bureau at its first meeting yesterday.

May I take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the provisional agenda?

The agenda is adopted.

Mrs. SOUZA e SILVA (Brazil): I am sorry, Sir, but I did not think that you would go so fast, since the subject has been so controversial in this Commission. There were many representatives who spoke against my proposal; but there were also a great many who spoke in favour of it.

I should like to say that the intention of my delegation was by no means to delay the Commission's deliberations. The United Nations has sometimes been accused of being a very monotonous institution where discussions are repeated over and over again and nothing happens and nothing new comes up. But sometimes we see that that is different; and I have been surprised by the objections that were raised to the proposal put forward by my delegation.

I never thought that with regard to the nuclear arms race there would be objections to mentioning a report that has been considered one of the most important documents prepared by the United Nations on the subject. We have heard objections especially from the representatives of the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. The representative of the United Kingdom insisted especially that this provisional agenda had been prepared by our organizational meetings last December. I think that we are entering upon our fourth year of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and we all hope that progress can be made year after year. It would only be natural for the agenda of the Commission to follow and reflect the progress that has been made.

The document of the Secretary-General - the comprehensive study on the nuclear arms race - was prepared at the end of last year and this Commission has had no opportunity to discuss it. I do not suppose that my proposal was taken to mean that we should have a special discussion of that report; it is just to complement the item on our agenda dealing with the arms race which we consider a very important priority item. That is why no argument that has been put forth against our proposal has convinced my delegation that a reference should not be made to that document.

(Mr. Souza e Silva, Brazil)

Secondly, we heard the argument that the document was controversial. My delegation is quite aware that it is a controversial document, because we have had it discussed already in two forums. The first was the First Committee last year and the other was the spring session of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. Different views were expressed on the document and that, I think, makes it all the more important to have it referred to explicitly in this provisional agenda and in our final agenda in order to know why there are different views on it and, if there is anything wrong in it, I believe that that could be corrected during the debate on the document that might ensue.

With regard to my second proposal about the submission of the report of the Committee on Disarmament to this Disarmament Commission, the representative of the Soviet Union put the question as to why that should be included here, as every delegation could refer to it. I think that that question also has already been answered by the General Assembly itself, because, if the General Assembly has decided by consensus and, naturally, with the concurrence of the Soviet Union that the Secretary-General should submit that report to the Commission, then my impression is that it should already have come before the Commission in its provisional agenda, that the matter was simply overlooked in the preparation of the provisional agenda and that not to have that report mentioned explicitly in our provisional agenda could only be considered as disregarding that decision of the General Assembly.

(Mrs. Souza e Silva, Brazil)

Finally, we have heard several arguments to the effect that what can be referred to need not necessarily be included in the agenda. I think that that French saying, "ce qui va sans dire va mieux si on le dit", has been interpreted in the opposite way - "ce qui va sans dire va mieux si on ne le dit" - and if we follow that reasoning, I wonder whether we should have an agenda at all, because if we have an agenda it is to know what are the main subjects that are to be discussed in our deliberations.

Those are the reasons for my surprise at the objections raised to my two proposals. I think that proposals that have the support of a large number of delegations should not be overlooked and that further consideration should be given to them.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) (interpretation from Spanish):

After congratulating you, Sir, very warmly on your election as Chairman of this Commission and pledging the co-operation of my delegation, I should like to state that, although I was not present when the representative of Brazil made his statement, it is my impression that if I had heard his statement I should have supported his proposals most enthusiastically because, if there is no mention in the agenda of the document to which reference was just made and which is of such importance, delegations might then not have access to it if they wanted to consult or refer to it.

For that reason, it appears to me that the reference in the agenda to the document is quite important, in the event of someone's wanting to refer to it or to obtain it immediately from the documents officer.

With regard to his remark about the report of the Committee on Disarmament, I think his proposal is very timely and I have difficulty in conceiving of a difficulty in referring to it since no one is obliged to refer to the document if he does not wish to do so, while those who wish to speak about it may do so.

The CHAIRMAN: It is my understanding that the Commission has now accepted the adoption of the agenda, as proposed by the officers of the Commission, with the understanding that all delegations are completely free to raise any question they might wish in regard to disarmament.

Furthermore, I am convinced from the many positive interventions I have heard that many delegations intend to give the fullest attention in the course of the debate to the questions raised by the representative of Brazil.

On that understanding, I wish to continue with the reference I made this morning to the organization of work.

I wish to refer to the question of documentation and bring to the attention of the Commission the fact that we have the following documents available in the documents room:

- A/CN.10/23, being a report by the Secretary-General prepared in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 35/142 A, inviting views and suggestions from Member States on the principles which should govern their actions in the field of the freezing and reduction of military expenditures. Up to 14 May, 21 replies had been received and they have been issued in addenda to that document.

- A/CN.10/24, which is a background paper prepared by the Secretariat listing all proposals made by Member States, resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and studies undertaken within the United Nations framework concerning the question of military budgets. This background paper was prepared at the request of the Disarmament Commission in its recommendations contained in paragraph 21 of its report, document A/35/42.

- A/CN.10/25, which is a working paper from Denmark on agenda item 6.

- A/CN.10/26, a working paper from Romania and Sweden on agenda item 5.

(The Chairman)

I wish also to raise the question of the participation of non-governmental organizations. At previous sessions non-governmental organizations have been permitted to participate in the work of the Disarmament Commission. It has been agreed that certain facilities could be extended to the non-governmental organizations, including their attending the plenary meetings of the Commission; their having access to official documents; the submission of material related to disarmament or the agenda items; the publishing of an information document listing the non-governmental organizations' contributions; and, finally, making their contributions available to members of the Commission.

Such arrangements are similar to those extended to the non-governmental organizations in the past. I believe the Commission might at this session wish to follow the same practice.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Concerning the conference facilities, the Secretariat has informed me that there will be full conference facilities for two meetings a day. That means that there will be verbatim records of the meetings, and that there will be interpretation. If the Commission decides to establish two working groups which will work simultaneously, that will mean that full conference facilities, and in particular interpretation, will be available for one meeting in the morning and another in the afternoon. Those conference facilities might be used for either plenary meetings or one working group. Furthermore, meetings could not go beyond 1 p.m. for a morning meeting and 6 p.m. for an afternoon meeting.

I should like to mention the tentative time-table for the Commission's work. As I have already said, the session's duration is from 18 May to 5 June. Monday, 25 May, is a holiday, and conference services will not be available. The general debate, or the exchange of views on general questions, is expected to last from today through Friday, 22 May. The following week, beginning 26 May, the working groups - if the Commission decides to set them up - will meet until completion of their work. The last week, 1 to 5 June, should be reserved for plenary meetings and the discussion and adoption of the reports of the working groups that are established as well as the adoption of

(The Chairman)

the report of the Commission to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

Finally, the Secretariat has asked me to remind the members of the Commission to submit the lists of their delegations to this session as soon as possible to allow the Secretariat to publish them.

There are no speakers listed for this meeting, and none are listed for this afternoon, which means that we shall have to cancel the meeting scheduled for this afternoon.

The first speakers have inscribed their names for tomorrow's meetings. I should like to urge the members of the Commission to visit the Secretary to have their names inscribed so that the Commission can have enough speakers not to have to cancel further meetings, taking into consideration the spare time that we have at our disposal.

Before I adjourn the meeting I must say that I have listened with interest to the comments on the outline I gave of the organization of the Commission's work and that I will bear them in mind. I would confirm that on Friday next, after the meeting of the Bureau, I hope to be able to give a more precise outline of questions concerning the organization of our work for the coming weeks.

Mr. SOUZA e SILVA (Brazil): I am sorry to speak again, but it is not clear in my mind how the Commission has disposed of the question of the agenda, in view of my formal proposal, which I have not withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry but after the discussion, when there were no further speakers, I proposed that, having heard the statements in favour of the suggestions and the proposals made by the representative of Brazil, and the arguments from other sides, the Commission should adopt the agenda put forward by the Bureau. I did not realize that there were objections, and I said that the matter had been decided by the Commission.

Mr. SOUZA e SILVA (Brazil): I am sorry, but that was not my understanding, Sir. I made a formal proposal. When you made your proposal I did not withdraw mine. I must say that it is my understanding that this Commission works by consensus, and my delegation cannot concur in the consensus on your proposal. So the matter remains to be discussed.

The CHAIRMAN: Does any delegation wish to comment on the question that has just been raised?

Mr. ECONOMIDES (Italy): Mr. Chairman, I must say that I fully support the conclusions you reached in summing up the discussions we have had on this question of the agenda. It seems to me that, though reasonable in some respects, the proposal of the representative of Brazil raised some objections from some delegations, and I must say that my delegation also has had some problems with it. I am taking into account also the fact that the draft agenda had been approved and, if I understood correctly, endorsed by the Bureau. Again, taking into account the discussion we have had here, I would appeal to the representative of Brazil not to insist on this question. It does not seem to me that there is agreement, but we should conclude our consideration of agenda item 2, "Adoption of the agenda" - it was my understanding that it had already been adopted - so as to permit us to go on with our work.

(Mr. Economides, Italy)

I should like to take this opportunity to express to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission. You can be certain of my delegation's full co-operation.

Mr. NAMBIAR (India): I wish to make only one comment at this stage.

It is not for the Bureau to take a final decision on the agenda; that was referred to by the representative of Italy as a point in favour of the agenda's having been adopted. We feel that it should be left to the Commission to decide. If there are delegations that have these objections to the agenda, that should be given fuller consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: Naturally, the Bureau does not have the final word in the adoption of the agenda. The Commission will have to adopt its agenda. Since the Commission works under the rule of consensus, it is for the Commission to find a solution in regard to the differing views expressed on the proposed agenda.

It is my view that the Commission has adopted this agenda that is set forth in document A/CN.10/L.7. I am aware that the representative of Brazil has stated his reservations in that regard.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.