DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 13 October 1978, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. VELLODI (India)

- Adoption of report on organizational matters to the General Assembly
  (concluded)

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session.

78-70537
The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ADOPTION OF REPORT ON ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (concluded)

The CHAIRMAN: At the end of yesterday's meeting I said that we would prepare a revised version of our draft report to the General Assembly and make it available in all the languages by this morning. That has been done, and members of the Commission now have the revised draft report before them in Conference Room Paper No. 2, dated 12 October 1978. I should like to indicate a few minor changes in the draft report.

The first change is in paragraph 5 on page 2. As it stands it reads:

"At the 3rd and 4th meetings held on 11 and 12 October ..."

that will have to be changed to include today's meeting, so it will read:

"At the 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings held from 11 to 13 October ..."

Just below that paragraph is the sub-heading: "Date and duration of the substantive session". I should like to suggest that instead of the word "substantive" it should read "second":

"Date and duration of the second session".

That, of course, is without prejudice to any decision that might be taken later in regard to paragraph 13 of the draft report.

At the end of paragraph 6, where it says "should be provided for the second session of the Disarmament Commission" I should like to add the phrase:

"to be convened at United Nations Headquarters in New York".

Those are the only changes I have to indicate. As I said yesterday, I have tried to incorporate in the second version certain changes to respond to some of the views expressed during the discussion yesterday afternoon.

I should like now to submit the draft report for the Commission's consideration, and it is my earnest hope that we shall be able to complete our work in this morning's meeting. I should like to hear observations on the revised version.
Mr. CHAREKHAN (India): Is it your intention, Mr. Chairman, that we should comment on the draft report as a whole, or do you wish to take it paragraph by paragraph or section by section? I would have something to say on paragraph 12.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that we take it section by section.

Mr. BUKAYI (Zaire) (interpretation from French): As I am speaking for the first time in this first session of the Commission, may I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation on your election to preside over the work of the Commission.

The delegation of Zaire has followed very carefully the course of the debate and thus far, at first sight, finds no objection to supporting the draft report.

The present Commission was set up because our Organization felt that due importance should be attached to the problem of disarmament. Before turning to the draft report I should like to make some general comments regarding the length of the forthcoming session. We have no objection to four weeks, but in the course of the statements made in the last few days some delegations have said that we ought to reserve one or two weeks of that period for a general debate. My delegation is tempted to oppose that suggestion, for the very good reason that there are other bodies in the United Nations where a general debate on disarmament can take place - for instance, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the General Assembly itself in its general debate. Those bodies offer each delegation an opportunity of making known its views as generally and widely as it desires, therefore my delegation would rather see the next session devoted to specific questions that the Commission was asked to tackle in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly. The Commission would become a genuine working group.

Since you have just said, in answer to the representative of India, that we should take up the draft report section by section, Mr. Chairman, I shall make the other comments I had in mind in due course.
The CHAIRMAN: May I say that I fully share the views expressed by the representative of Zaire. This is a point that we should keep in mind when we finalize the agenda of the substantive session to be held in May. I think the representative of Zaire is quite right when he says that we should try and avoid duplicating statements which have been made during the general debate at the regular session of the General Assembly and the First Committee and which will continue to be made in the regular sessions of the General Assembly.

The time that we have for deliberations in the Disarmament Commission is limited and I entirely agree that we should use that to the maximum and, if possible, avoid having what is generally referred to as a general debate. The Bureau will certainly take this into account when we have consultations regarding the agenda for the May/June session next year.

If there are no comments on the first part, which is the Introduction and which, by and large, repeats paragraph 118 of the Final Document, we can proceed to section II.

Since no one wishes to make an observation on section II, we can proceed to section III relating to recommendations. Because section III contains a number of paragraphs, I would suggest that we first take up paragraph 5.

There are no comments on paragraph 5. I will then take up paragraphs 6 and 7 together.

Mr. MADADHA (Jordan): It is a small point about the second session. Is it the second or third session? We recommend on page 3 that a session be held in December.

The CHAIRMAN: When I made the suggestion about changing the work of the substantive session I did say that this was without prejudice to paragraph 13. Perhaps the representative of Jordan is right in saying that it does create some confusion in case we decide to have another session later in the year.
Could we say "date and duration of the 1979 session"?

Mr. IMAM (Kuwait): I want to make exactly the same point. Why do we not say "the date and duration of the first substantive session to be held in 1979"?

The CHAIRMAN: I have no objection to that suggestion. Does any other member have any comment on that suggestion?

Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): I have no objection to the suggestion made by the representative of Kuwait, but it seems to me that there is an omission in paragraph 7. The sentence as it reads now is inconclusive. It says "The Disarmament Commission considers that at its session to be held in May/June 1979 it might become necessary to set up a committee of the whole and to allow both the Disarmament Commission and the Committee of the Whole, should one be set up, to meet simultaneously."

I thought that what we had in mind yesterday was that the Commission proposes that arrangements be made to allow both meetings to be held simultaneously. There seems to be an omission of the phrase dealing with the proposal that arrangements be made to make this possible.

The CHAIRMAN: In our earlier draft we had another sentence which said:

"Therefore, the Commission recommends that the appropriate preliminary arrangements be made in order to allow both the Commission and a Committee of the Whole, should one be set up, to meet simultaneously."

The Chair would have no objection to including that sentence in paragraph 7.

Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): I think I recall something like that. Instead of a separate sentence, I think it is possible to include a phrase after "and" in the second line. The sentence would then read:
"... and proposes that preliminary arrangements be made to allow both the Disarmament Commission and the Committee of the Whole, should one be set up, to meet simultaneously."

Mr. WYZNER (Poland): Mr. Chairman, since this is the first time that I have taken the floor here in the Commission permit me belatedly to address my very warm congratulations to you and your colleagues on behalf of my delegation, and to say that your astute handling of our proceedings has proved the correctness of our choice.

As far as paragraph 7 is concerned, I must say that we are a bit unclear as to the real meaning of what we have discussed here.

The representative of Nigeria has suggested addition of a clause dealing with the preliminary arrangements for the possible convening of a Committee of the Whole. We know that when the Secretariat makes certain arrangements, preliminary though they may be, usually some financial implications are involved because, if you even envisage the possibility of having a Committee of the Whole, in practical terms it probably means another conference room, another set of interpreters, precis-writers and so on. Before taking any decision on that matter, I should be very grateful to the Secretariat for an explanation of what precisely would be involved in the preliminary arrangements and what the financial implications, if any, of such a move would be.
The CHAIRMAN: As I said yesterday, the report of the Disarmament Commission will certainly come before the First Committee and the General Assembly for consideration. Even if we did not have this paragraph about the possibility of setting up a Committee of the Whole, the Secretariat at that time would have to submit a report on the financial implications with respect to 1979 for the meetings of the Disarmament Commission. That is understood. It is not necessary to ask the Secretariat to do it. It must do it.

What we are saying in this paragraph is that it might be necessary to set up a Committee of the Whole. We expect the Secretariat - we do not have to say that in our report - to provide all the necessary information, not here at this stage because we are not taking a decision on this now, but when the First Committee takes up our report. This is only a proposal for further consideration.

Mr. BUKAVI (Zaire)(interpretation from French): I should like to refer to paragraph 7. I do not want to anticipate the results of the consultations with respect to my first statement to the effect that there should be no general debate at the next session of the Commission, which would automatically eliminate the need to set up a Committee of the Whole, because the Commission itself would become a working group.

I do not know whether it would be premature to ask the General Assembly whether it would have any objections to our setting aside, a priori, the idea of holding a general debate at our session next year. In such a case, paragraph 7 would be superfluous and there would be no problem.
Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): The representative of Zaire made some valid points in his first comment on the question whether or not the Commission should have a general debate. But whatever the decision on that may be, I do not believe that it would directly affect the setting up of a Committee of the Whole. The Commission would have three sets of agenda items before it and if, as we have recommended, priority is to be given to a comprehensive programme, and the Commission decided, notwithstanding the fact that there would be no general debate, that some of the other items should be taken up in plenary, then a Committee of the Whole could be set up to consider the question of a comprehensive programme. I would therefore suggest that at this point we do not rule out the possibility of having a Committee of the Whole, whether or not a decision is ultimately taken on having a general debate. The fact remains that there are several items on the agenda and the assigning of various items to the plenary meeting and to a Committee of the Whole is a possibility that we should leave open.

Mr. SEKYI (Ghana): My comments are in support of the views expressed by the representative of Nigeria that it would be advisable to keep our options open so that if the Commission finds itself faced with an agenda which necessitates more than one main committee, it should be possible then to set up a second one. Therefore, we would be in favour of ensuring that at least the financial provision which may be necessary is made to enable the Commission to set up a Committee of the Whole. The option to set up that committee does not necessarily mean a commitment to do so. But we think it is advisable that there should be no financial difficulties in the way of the Commission should it find it necessary to set up a Committee of the Whole.

My other comment refers to paragraph 6. From the stylistic point of view it might be a little better to say that a period of four weeks should be "allocated" rather than "provided" for the second session of the Disarmament Commission. That might be a slightly better formulation, but this is merely a cosmetic change and I leave it entirely to the discretion of the Chairman.
The CHAIRMAN: I see paragraph 7 exactly as the representative of Nigeria sees it, namely, that we are talking about the possibility of the Disarmament Commission deciding to have a Committee of the Whole. Obviously that decision will depend very much on what the Disarmament Commission has to do. It will depend on its agenda, which again will depend on the discussions that take place in the General Assembly and in the First Committee, and on what decisions are taken which could have a bearing on the work of the Disarmament Commission in May/June next year. Therefore, I repeat again that it is not intended by this paragraph to take a decision, even when it requests the Secretariat to make preliminary arrangements. What it really implies is that the Secretariat should examine the implications of this and indicate to the General Assembly, when it considers the report of the Commission, what those implications would be. Obviously - I agree with the other speakers - we cannot take a decision to set up a Committee of the Whole until we have taken a decision on the programme of work and on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission in May next year. But if we do not make any reference to this possibility, the Secretariat would not be bound to look into this possibility and it would not do so. We cannot take a decision until we have all the information. We are here only talking about a possibility, keeping an option open, as two representatives have said, and leaving it to a later stage to decide whether a Committee of the Whole is necessary. Therefore, I sincerely hope that on this understanding there will be no difficulty in keeping paragraph 7, with the addition proposed by the representative of Nigeria.
Mr. PALMA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, might I ask you to be good enough to clarify the suggestion made earlier by the representative of Kuwait?

The CHAIRMAN: I do not quite understand the request of the representative of Peru. The representative of Kuwait suggested that the heading before paragraph 6 might read, "Date and duration of the first substantive session". Does the representative of Peru have any difficulty with that title?

Mr. PALMA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): We would have no objection to accepting that heading. However, we do feel that the suggestion you made, Mr. Chairman, that the heading read, "Date and duration of the second session", might be considered more appropriate, particularly if we bear in mind the fact that in the year to come the sessions will have to be numbered in sequence. I think it would be far more practical to adopt a common numbering system. Whether they were organizational or substantive, the sessions would be numbered.

The CHAIRMAN: The suggestion was made by the representative of Kuwait because 13 of the draft report mentions the possibility of having another meeting in 1978 itself, at the end of the thirty-third session of the Assembly. If circumstances necessitate such a meeting, that will be the second session. It will be an organizational session, because we shall be discussing the organization of our work in 1979, but it will be the second session. It was in order to avoid that confusion that the representative of Kuwait suggested that we refer to the first substantive session in 1979.

Mr. BARTON (Canada): Mr. Chairman, why do we not solve the problem by referring in paragraph 13 to the resumption of this session, if necessary? Then there would be no problem.
The CHAIRMAN: I would have no difficulty with that, but quite frankly I do not see why we cannot accept the suggestion made by the representative of Kuwait, because the session in May 1979 will be the first substantive session.

Paragraph 8 is merely a repetition of what is contained in paragraph 118 (b). Are there any comments on paragraph 9? It appears not. We come now to paragraph 10.

Mr. MADADHA (Jordan): I should like to point out that paragraph 10 is repeated almost in paragraph 13. In paragraph 10 we recommend that a second meeting be held in December, and the same recommendation is made in paragraph 13. The subjects are separate, but the redrafting of these paragraphs may be desirable.

The CHAIRMAN: In answer to the representative of Jordan, I might indicate that in paragraph 10, when we talk about a meeting in December, we are speaking of December 1979, before the conclusion of the thirty-fourth session. In paragraph 13 we are talking about the possibility of having a meeting at the end of the thirty-third session - that is, this year. Also, paragraph 10 is important in itself because it relates to the membership of the Bureau. What is being suggested there is that at the end of the thirty-fourth session, in December 1979, there should be an organizational meeting to elect the Bureau for 1980.

Are there any comments on paragraph 11?

Mr. BUKAYI (Zaire) (interpretation from French): May I propose that we merge subparagraphs 11 (b) and (c), since in the Final Document of the special session those items are included in a single small paragraph. Therefore subparagraph 11 (b) of our report might read:

"to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session devoted to disarmament, particularly to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament",

and so on.
The CHAIRMAN: May I tell the representative of Zaire that in my view it would not be appropriate to combine subparagraphs 11 (b) and (c). We have only two possibilities: either to merge all three subparagraphs, in which case we shall just be repeating the first sentence of paragraph 118 (a); or - and I thought there was a fair amount of consensus on this - to put it as we have, under (a), (b) and (c), but follow exactly what is contained in paragraph 118 (a). In my view it would not be appropriate for us to divide the contents of 118 (a) into two. We can divide it into three because there are three specific functions for the Disarmament Commission. It was my impression that there was a consensus here to have it in this form, in which we have not changed any of the wording of 118 (a) but have merely divided it into (a), (b) and (c). So I would request the representative of Zaire not to press for the merging of (b) and (c).

Are there any comments on paragraph 12?

Mr. CHAREKHAN (India): I have a small amendment to propose in the third line of paragraph 12. Perhaps the inclusion of the phrase "at the earliest possible date" might give rise to an interpretation to the effect that we in this Commission are trying to lay down the priorities for the Committee on Disarmament.
This certainly was not the intention behind my amendment, because we would certainly not like to prejudge the priorities which the Committee on Disarmament itself might wish to allocate to various items on its own agenda.

To avoid this possible misinterpretation, I would suggest that we delete the words "at the earliest possible date".

The CHAIRMAN: If I remember rightly, it was the representative of India who suggested we should put in "in order to facilitate the elaboration" and so on. I am in your hands. Of course, we should all like the Committee on Disarmament to try to do this at the earliest possible date, but I think the representative of India is probably right in saying that the priorities within the agenda of the Committee on Disarmament should be left to that Committee.

Mr. KITI (Kenya): Although I agree that we do not really need to set up priorities for the Committee on Disarmament, I think that the argument of the representative of India when he was proposing that amendment was very convincing. It is the wish of the international community that the Committee on Disarmament conclude its work on some of these very important issues at an early stage. I do not think that we are setting up their priorities, we are only emphasizing the fear and the wishes of the international community. I would appeal to him not to delete this phrase because if we do not tell them to work as quickly as possible, they will take a long time, and many people have been complaining about that. I am asking the representative of India not to think we are dictating to the Committee on Disarmament, but to retain it as a wish of the international community on how the Committee on Disarmament should work. I should like it to remain, so that the Committee will work speedily.
Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, I entirely agree with the assessment in your opening remarks, namely, that the Disarmament Commission should work with the Committee on Disarmament in a complementary fashion, and that the work of the two bodies will always dovetail. That is why I wonder — and I should like to address my remark to the representative of India — whether the whole sentence is necessary, and not only the words "at the earliest possible date". We have here a parent body, the General Assembly — and incidentally, through the First Committee, we are the General Assembly. The General Assembly knows full well how the work is to be divided and what it has to do. I do not believe that the Disarmament Commission should tell the Committee on Disarmament to start work early or late or say that it is doing so to facilitate the elaboration of the comprehensive programme. The Committee knows this because there are General Assembly resolutions to that effect.

What I think we ought to do is to make our recommendations to the General Assembly. The paragraph provides for this. The General Assembly in its wisdom will know how to act when it takes up the subject. If the General Assembly deems it necessary it will make a reference to the Committee on Disarmament. If it considers it unnecessary to do so, it will remain silent. I would suggest to the representative of India, although I understand the ideas behind his suggestion, that the amendment he proposed be withdrawn and that the text remain as originally contained in the Chairman's draft.

The CHAIRMAN: I feel that the representative of Argentina has made a very valid point. The General Assembly will certainly have occasion to consider the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and to indicate whatever it wishes regarding the work of the Committee on Disarmament, and therefore I would ask the representative of India whether he would respond to the suggestion made by the representative of Argentina.
Mr. SHAREKHAN (India): I certainly do not suffer from any false pride of parenthood with regard to this amendment, and if it is the wish of the Commission that this phrase should be taken out, I shall certainly not stand in the way of the wish of this august body. I see some merit in it, firstly, because I suggested it and, secondly, because I thought that it clarified the reason why we were trying to accord priority to the question of the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme. But I understand that very often it is better to leave things vague in United Nations documents, and if the deletion of my amendment adds to that vagueness, I shall not stand in the way.

Mr. SEKYI (Ghana): My delegation has listened carefully to the exchanges on this particular point, but we should like to counsel a little less haste in excising the whole limb, as it were, from this paragraph because I think it is vital to its sense. There was some discussion, I believe, as to whether the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme of disarmament should be accorded "the highest priority" or "high priority" or whether it should merely be accorded "priority". As I see it, the formula that it should be accorded "priority" goes along with the reasons for the need for that priority. The reason is that the Commission should carry out certain deliberations before a certain time in order to enable the Committee to carry out certain negotiations, also by a certain time.

It is true that the Committee on Disarmament will establish its own priorities, as arranged. But if the Commission does not conclude its deliberations on certain items, it does not help the Committee to do its work, if the Committee were to have decided to take that particular item early. It may decide, in its wisdom, to take it late, but if the Committee were to decide to take that item early, then the failure of the Commission to accord high priority to that particular item would mean that the Committee on Disarmament would then proceed to do its part, the negotiating part, of the work without having had the benefit of the deliberations in the Commission. We therefore think there is merit in pointing out that the Commission itself is under a certain urgency to complete its own work early.
So, if we are merely going to say that the consideration of the elements of a comprehensive programme should be accorded merely "priority", which is rather vague, we think the other side of the coin is that we should explain that this is for the specific purpose of enabling the Committee on Disarmament to elaborate that comprehensive programme at an early date - unless that Committee should have decided in its scale of priorities to do so at a much later date. We do not know that the Committee is going to do that.

We therefore do not see why we should pre-empt from the Committee the option - if it wishes - of elaborating its comprehensive programme having had the benefit of the deliberations over it in the Disarmament Commission.

If the words between "and in order" and "earliest possible date" are to be deleted, then I would suggest that we re-introduce into the text the following wording so that the latter part of the paragraph would read, "that the consideration of the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament should be accorded the highest priority at its session in May-June 1979".

That is a proposal. We either retain the text as it is or, if those words are excised, we suggest that the words "high priority" or "highest priority" should be re-introduced into the text of paragraph 12.

Mr. PFEIFFER (Federal Republic of Germany): I should like to appeal to our colleague from India not to withdraw what he yesterday proposed should be introduced in the draft report. I myself found it to be a very useful clarification that gave this whole sentence the right balance. I would therefore support what my colleague from Ghana has just said, which is, this would make it clear that we have to come to an early conclusion in the United Nations Disarmament Commission in order to facilitate the taking up of this point also by the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva.

I should like briefly to recall what has been debated here in the past few days with regard to the comprehensive programme. It was said that we should have to face a delay of more than one year before it could be taken up by the Committee in Geneva. When it was a question of the reconvening this summer of the Working Group in Geneva dealing with the comprehensive programme, it was said that this should not be done because we should expect to have to wait for the elements to come from the United Nations Disarmament Commission.
Therefore, it is all the more important that the United Nations Disarmament Commission come very soon to the consideration of the elements, so as to enable the Working Group of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva to reconvene. So I think that this sentence is in itself carefully balanced. It gives priority to the discussion of the items, which is very good. It also says that priority is being given because it is essential to facilitate the further deliberations in the Committee in Geneva. This Committee is under the obligation, pursuant to a General Assembly resolution, to negotiate a comprehensive programme on disarmament.

I therefore can only appeal to our Indian colleague not to withdraw what he introduced yesterday. I see his point when he proposed withdrawing the words "at the earliest possible date". In our interpretation of this sentence, these words could of course be deleted, but to come back to the very balanced meaning of the sentence, it should be kept as it is.

Mr. WYZMER (Poland): It seems to me that there are very valid reasons for not insisting on at least part of the proposal originally formulated by the representative of India, as he himself explained earlier at this meeting. I fully share his opinion that it would indeed be redundant to offer the directions of the Commission to the Committee on Disarmament, now taking into account that the Committee has not even come into being yet, but, as we all know, it is to meet in January, when it will of course itself set its order of priorities.

The second element is that it appears to my delegation that there is a lack of logical co-ordination between the first part of this paragraph - if we retain the phrase "at the earliest possible date" - and its latter part. What I have in mind is that we say that "in order to facilitate the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament by the Committee on Disarmament at the earliest possible date" priority should be accorded to that question at our session in May/June 1979.
If we are to take "at the earliest possible date" literally— as we should—the earliest possible date for the Committee on Disarmament means January, because that is when it is going to meet, while our session will take place only in May/June 1979. So may I ask how we are "to facilitate the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament by the Committee on Disarmament at the earliest possible date" if we are going to take up that issue only in May/June 1979?

I am afraid that this formulation lacks logic, and I am sure that that had also been detected by my friend from India when he suggested the deletion of that particular phrase—which, to my mind, is quite logical.

I do not wish to comment much further on the particular issue of the beginning of the paragraph as it is now and as it was originally proposed by India. I frankly have no strong feelings about that. If some of my colleagues felt it necessary to maintain it without the words "at the earliest possible date", I would not mind, particularly taking into account that it is based on paragraph 109 of the Final Document, which says that "the Committee on Disarmament will undertake the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament", and so on. So, there is, if I may say so, some history of that in paragraph 109 of the Final Document of the special session.

However, I would personally be very much against any addition to the word "priority" at our session, also for reasons of simple logic. In my opinion "priority" means exactly what it says—priority. A priority item is considered first on the agenda, and as long as there is no other priority item—and for the time being we do not foresee any—"high priority" or "highest priority" are devoid of any meaning. They just constitute a certain decoration, so to speak.
Mr. YANKOV (Bulgaria): I should like to make some brief comments on this paragraph and to refer to the suggestion made by the representative of Argentina, which to my delegation seems to be most reasonable and to follow the lines of the provisions of the Final Document where the United Nations and the General Assembly are given the central role and the primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament. More explicitly it is in line with paragraph 120 (e), which stipulates that the Committee on Disarmament will "adopt its own agenda taking into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly ...".

It is very correct, factually and also legally, that it is up to the General Assembly to assign the priorities for the different bodies within the framework of the machinery established in the field of disarmament. Hence the proposed additions either are redundant, or may even be confusing if at this stage in our Commission we try to anticipate what the General Assembly may or may not do. The paragraph as it reads without the addition - "and in order to facilitate the elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament by the Committee on Disarmament at the earliest possible date" - would damage neither the mandate of the Disarmament Commission nor that of the Committee on Disarmament. We would prefer the representative of India to be kind enough not to insist on his proposal.

With regard to the question of priority, it seems to me that sometimes in the United Nations we are very much fascinated by adjectives, and the more we use them the more sometimes we encourage different interpretations or confusion. As the representative of Poland pointed out when we say the item should be accorded priority at the session in May/June that is very explicit. Whether we say the "highest" priority, or that it is "very important", or "very urgent" - whatever adjectives we use - what we mean here is that when we meet in May/June the item which will have the priority, that is the first important item, will be the item on the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament.
(Mr. Yankov, Bulgaria)

Therefore, my delegation would prefer, as a first choice, to adopt the amendment proposed by the representative of Argentina. If however there are difficulties for some delegations in subscribing to a consensus on this, we would, in a spirit of compromise and in order to avoid further confusion, agree to delete from the third line the five words "at the earliest possible date". I should not state here the obvious fact that even the expression "and in order to facilitate the elaboration" may give rise to different interpretations, and is not needed here. We are a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, independent from other organs and from the Disarmament Committee, and we should not try to elaborate on things other than co-ordination between those bodies. The word "facilitate" here may give rise to the interpretation that the Disarmament Commission will come as a body which will help and would in some way or the other be second to the Committee on Disarmament.

That is not the view of my delegation, but I would like to avoid any confusion as to the interpretation that might be given. That is why I should like to repeat that the proposal submitted by the representative of Argentina is well taken and is along the lines of the Final Document and our understanding here. I would suggest that we ponder that proposal, and I hope that it can be accepted by the entire membership of the Commission.

Mr. VELISSAROPOULOS (Greece) (interpretation from French): First of all I would congratulate you Mr. Chairman on being elected to preside over this Commission.

I have the impression that we are beginning to quibble about things here and drawing out our discussion on the paragraph and on the text in general that we have before us. I propose that paragraph 12 be accepted as it stands, for the following reasons which, moreover, have been mentioned by other speakers as well.
First of all I think the phrase "at the earliest possible date" has some justification because it makes more specific the meaning of the word "facilitate". Why have we to "facilitate"? In order that the work on disarmament and on our programme of work may be concluded as quickly as possible. So I believe that the phrase is quite useful, and I do not think it constitutes infringement on the competence or authority of the General Assembly.

Secondly, I would agree with those who have mentioned the idea that "priority" itself implies that special importance is attached to certain issues, so that there is no need to qualify it with an adjective. In any case we all know that adjectives are to be avoided. In anything we write, we should not use an adjective unless it adds something. Where it adds nothing to the actual meaning of the sentence it is always better to simplify our style and omit it. Accordingly, I propose that paragraph 12 be accepted as it stands.
Mr. SEKVI (Ghana): Perhaps a further clarification of what I said earlier is required. As I see it, the Disarmament Commission will have a substantive meeting in May/June 1979. It will have an organizational meeting possibly towards the end of 1979 in order to elect the Bureau for the following year. This leads one to infer that there will not be another substantive meeting of the Commission until possibly the middle of 1980. If the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme is not given enough priority in May of next year, and therefore not concluded, we may not expect it to be concluded until about the middle of 1980.

Now, it is true that the Committee on Disarmament will determine its own priorities. We cannot determine priorities for that Committee. For all we know, the Committee might decide to take up the elaboration of the comprehensive programme first or it may decide to take it last. We do not know what it will do. If it happens that it should decide to take it up first this means that it will have to wait until the middle of 1980 before it would have before it the results of the consideration of its elements by the Disarmament Commission. This certainly does not facilitate the work of the Committee on Disarmament. As we interpret it, retention of the wording of paragraph 12 is not an attempt to dictate to the Committee on Disarmament. It could be interpreted, quite reasonably we submit, as meaning that we do not wish to impede the work of the Committee on Disarmament in case it decides to act at once on the comprehensive programme.

The Disarmament Commission should give, I dare not say "high priority", since it is suggested that there might be a certain ideologicality in using such a phrase but I may say it is a phrase which I have come across quite often in the text of the Final Document of the special session on disarmament. I think I will pluck up courage and say that in order not to impede the work of the Committee on Disarmament it would not be unreasonable for the Disarmament Commission in its substantive session in 1979 to accord the very highest priority to the consideration of the elements of the comprehensive programme of disarmament.

I would therefore insist that as far as my delegation is concerned the paragraph be either retained in its present form or, since we all know
that the amendment of the Indian delegation was introduced subsequent to 
the original form of this paragraph in which the wording was 
"highest priority", if the Indian amendment is deleted then 
we should revert to the original form of the paragraph before 
the Indian amendment was introduced.

So we maintain, as some delegations have suggested, that paragraph 12 
be kept as it is, but if it is not going to be kept as it is and if that 
very vital amendment is deleted then we would suggest that the words 
"high priority" be retained in the paragraph.

Mr. Gharekhani (India): I am somewhat torn between conflicting 
sets of appeals addressed to my delegation. It is my feeling that in order 
to facilitate our own task in this Commission we must try to reach a 
consensus, and so far I have not heard any delegation objecting to 
at least the first part of the Indian amendment.

The representative of Argentina, when he made his appeal 
to me, did not express any specific objection to the amendment. I am 
talking about the first part of the amendment minus the words "at the earliest 
possible date" and several delegations have expressed a positive preference 
to retain this part of the amendment, and not a single delegation has 
expressed my specific objection to that.

We might therefore think along the lines of retaining the first part of 
the Indian amendment.

Strong views have been expressed on the phrase "at the earliest possible 
date". The representative of Kenya has expressed a very definite 
preference to retain this phrase in this paragraph for the reasons that he 
mentioned in his statement. Some other delegations, particularly the 
delegations of Poland and Bulgaria, have expressed equally strong objections 
to this phrase. Now, I had already earlier suggested deletion of 
these words and now I would like to address myself specifically to the 
delegation of Kenya and also of Ghana as regards these words "at the earliest 
possible date".
The reason I suggested deletion of these words was, as I explained earlier, that we should leave it to the Committee on Disarmament to decide on its own priorities. I agree with the representative of Kenya that the question of the comprehensive programme is an important one and deserves to be taken up as early as possible in the Committee on Disarmament. But then we have the option in the General Assembly itself and in the First Committee, when these questions are considered, to take a decision recommending to the Committee on Disarmament that it take up this question at the earliest possible date. As you will recall, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions in the past calling upon the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament at that time to give high priority to particular questions. Hence it would perhaps be more appropriate for delegations which have views on this question to state them in the First Committee and indeed in the Committee on Disarmament itself. Kenya is a member of the Committee on Disarmament, as are India, Argentina and some other countries. It would be up to the delegations of these countries to insist that appropriate priority be accorded to this question by the Committee on Disarmament.
I feel that we would not lose anything by deleting the words "at the earliest possible date" from this paragraph. If in the process we help to obtain a consensus in the Commission I feel we might accommodate the views of those delegations which have strong objections to those words, particularly as we would not be sacrificing the substance of our position on the question of a comprehensive programme. I would therefore suggest that we might reach a consensus on the Indian amendment with deletion of the words "at the earliest possible date". If that amendment, thus revised, is retained, I am sure the representative of Ghana will not insist on his amendment concerning the words "highest priority". As some delegations have explained, this would be the only item which would be accorded priority at the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission next year and would automatically be taken up first.

The CHAIRMAN: We have spent much time on what, certainly as far as I am concerned, does not appear to be a very controversial issue. I still have more speakers on my list. I sincerely hope we can complete consideration of this draft report at this morning's meeting.

Mr. ADENIJIT (Nigeria): I can accept any of the possibilities suggested by the representative of India, either his original suggestion as contained in the document or with the deletion of the words "at the earliest possible date", if that would ensure a consensus. If we have a consensus on either of the alternatives it will not be necessary for me to speak.

If we cannot get a consensus, perhaps we could get around this by adhering strictly to the wording of the Final Document of the special session, on which there was a consensus. That would imply the Commission giving early priority, or priority, to the question in order to enable the Commission to submit — "at the earliest possible date", if we are to use the formulation of the representative of India — its recommendations to the General Assembly and through the General Assembly to the Committee on Disarmament.
Mr. ORTIZ de ROZAS (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): I agree that we have been discussing this subject, which ought not to have given rise to any difficulty, far too long, therefore I shall not press the appeal I made to the representative of India regarding the paragraph as a whole; but I believe it is important that we delete the words "at the earliest possible date", because we must in any way appear, as a Commission, to be giving instructions to the Committee on Disarmament. A very careful and perfect balance must be maintained if we are to ensure the co-operation that we hope will produce a text from the two bodies.

I cannot resist the temptation to endorse what the representatives of Poland and Bulgaria have said regarding priority. There is a comparative element in the word: you give priority to something over something else. If there is only one element it does not need priority, since it is the only element. When one speaks of priority to be given to the elements of a comprehensive programme over the other aspects of the Commission's mandate, then it is more than sufficient. Of course, in times of inflation I suppose one can give high, higher, or highest priority, but it makes no difference. Priority is priority; it comes first.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to suggest that we consider accepting paragraph 12 without the words "at the earliest possible date". I must confess I could not really understand what the difficulty would be if that phrase were deleted, because quite obviously the Committee on Disarmament will elaborate a comprehensive programme of disarmament at the earliest possible date. We are not asking that it should be given priority. To me, merely saying "at the earliest possible date" does not add anything. I would therefore appeal to the representatives of Kenya and Ghana to accept paragraph 12 as it appears in the revised version of the draft report but without the words "at the earliest possible date".
Mr. KITT (Kenya): When an appeal comes from the Chairman, it is very difficult to resist. I shall defer to his wish.

I should like to say one thing only: the reason why the Disarmament Commission was established was because many people felt they were being debarred from consideration of important disarmament issues. That is why this Commission was established, so that it could report to the General Assembly and its recommendations could be transmitted to the Committee on Disarmament. One of the concerns of the whole international community is to achieve a comprehensive programme of disarmament as early as possible. We do not say that the Committee on Disarmament should do that in 1978. "As early as possible" could, I submit, be when all of us are dead and some other people are sitting here. All we are doing is expressing the concern of the international community, as transmitted through this deliberative organ, which was set up because many people felt they were being kept out of the substantive discussions.

I shall therefore respond to your appeal, Mr. Chairman, but I am not convinced that we would be tying the hands of the Committee on Disarmament or giving it any instructions.

Mr. SEKYI (Ghana): In a spirit of compromise, I would be inclined to accept the deletion of the words "at the earliest possible date", but I should like to make one suggestion - which need not be accepted; if it does not command immediate acceptance, it is withdrawn. It is a compromise on a compromise. I suggest we merely insert the word "early" before "elaboration" and delete "at the earliest possible date", so that it would read:

"... in order to facilitate the early elaboration of a comprehensive programme of disarmament by the Committee on Disarmament ...". I suppose that Committee itself will want to carry out an early elaboration so the addition of the word "early" before "elaboration" would not, I hope, carry any strong connotation of trying to dictate to the Committee on Disarmament.

This is, as I say, a compromise on a compromise; but if it is not accepted then we revert to the simple compromise.
The CHAIRMAN: The representative of Ghana has made a suggestion but states that if his suggestion is not accepted he would be quite prepared to delete the words "at the earliest possible date". I should like to put to the Commission the suggestion he made.

Mr. YANKOV (Bulgaria): I appreciate the representative of Ghana's efforts and spirit of accommodation, but at first glance his suggestion does not change in substance the meaning of the expression "at the earliest possible date" and could even be given a more rigid interpretation. "The earliest possible date" is more flexible and takes into account the realities and the situation in the development of the negotiations. When he says "the early elaboration", this is even a stronger direction or order than the expression "at the earliest possible date". I would appreciate it very much if he would not insist on his last proposal.

The CHAIRMAN: Since the representative of Bulgaria has expressed some reservation, I wish to thank the representative of Ghana for his co-operation.

We will adopt paragraph 12 as it is without the words "at the earliest possible date".

Mr. OGISO (Japan): My delegation has no objection at all to the deletion of the words "at the earliest possible date", but before completing consideration of that paragraph I should like to make two small comments on the last sentence.

In the last sentence of paragraph 12 it states:
"...invite Member States to communicate to him their views and suggestions on the comprehensive programme of disarmament..."

I think the comprehensive programme is referred to in the Final Document as "the elements of a comprehensive programme of disarmament", a wording which appears also in the preceding paragraph, 11 (c). It might be better to use the same wording in paragraph 12 too.
The next point concerns the target date of 15 March. Although my delegation has no strong views on this, there is too short an interval between the end of the General Assembly session and 15 March. Since the date of 15 March was chosen when it was expected that the Disarmament Commission's substantive session would start on 2 May, rather than 14 May as has now been decided, I am wondering whether the date of 15 March could be changed to 31 March. I have no strong views on this and if there is any difficulty I would not press it.

The CHAIRMAN: May I appeal to the representative of Japan on both points. His first suggestion was that we should say "the views and suggestions on the elements of a comprehensive programme ..."

As I am sure the representative of Japan is fully aware, I do not think that at the moment any of us have a clear idea as to what is meant by "the elements of a comprehensive programme." The Disarmament Commission is required to consider the elements and make recommendations. This is absolutely true, but I dare say that if a communication was sent from the Secretary-General to Member States asking them to give their views and suggestions on the elements of a comprehensive programme, I think they would have the same difficulty we have as to what is meant by "elements". Our mandate is very clear; we are to consider the elements of a comprehensive programme and submit proposals. I feel that when the communication is sent to Member States it would be much better for us to ask for their views and suggestions on the comprehensive programme and then for the Commission itself to identify what the elements are and make recommendations.

As regards the suggestion about 15 March, I have no objection to the suggestion by the representative of Japan that it be changed to 31 March. We have no clear idea now as to when the First Committee and the General Assembly will adopt the report of the Disarmament Commission. It may be early or it may be late. If other Members feel that we should give more time to Governments, I would see no difficulty in agreeing to 31 March.
Are there specific comments on the suggestion made by the representative of Japan? If not, I should like to include the second change, that is, to put the date at 31 March, but omit the first change suggested. We now proceed to paragraph 13.

Mr. YANKOV (Bulgaria): I wish to make a minor drafting suggestion. As it stands now, paragraph 13 states:

"The Disarmament Commission further recommends that in the light of the decisions taken at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly which may have a bearing on the agenda of the 1979 session of the Commission, it might be useful for the Commission ..."

The recommendation as worded is not quite clear. Either we say that the Disarmament Commission "further considers that it might be useful for the Commission to meet towards the end of the thirty-third session in the light of decisions taken...", or we say that the Disarmament Commission "further recommends that the Commission should meet towards the end of the thirty-third session". Either formula would be satisfactory in order to avoid this double condition which makes the recommendation to the General Assembly not very clear and explicit.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the representative of Bulgaria has made a valid point. Essentially what he said is that if it is a recommendation, then we should not say that it might be useful but specifically that the Commission should meet towards the end of the thirty-third session.

I should like to ask other representatives whether they have any comments on this.
Mr. IMAM (Kuwait): Although the representative of Bulgaria seems to be right to object to the words "it might be useful", we note that paragraph 12 mentions the decisions which the thirty-third session of the General Assembly may take and which may have a bearing on the agenda of the Commission's session in 1979. That implies that those decisions may or may not require an additional organizational session to be held. In view of that uncertainty, I do not think that we can give an imperative direction that we should meet in any case. If we were to accept the suggestion of the representative of Bulgaria, we would have to change the text of the preceding paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN: May I then suggest that we accept the other suggestion of the representative of Bulgaria, and say:

"The Disarmament Commission further considers that in the light of ...".

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): The point I wish to raise does not involve the suggestion made by the representative of Bulgaria, with which I agree. It concerns the last part of the paragraph, which states that the Commission might meet at "the end of the thirty-third session to consider the relevant decisions" of that session "in an effort to draw up a draft agenda for consideration" at its next session in 1979. I believe that the utility of the meeting that we may hold at the end of this regular session of the General Assembly may go beyond drafting a provisional agenda - and, incidentally, I believe we should use the words "provisional agenda" instead of "draft agenda". For instance, we might wish to consider the question of organizational arrangements for the substantive session next year. We already have a suggestion that it might be necessary to set up a committee of the whole, and we might wish to make a recommendation at the session in December about the possibility of setting up a committee of the whole, a working group or a drafting group. That would have to be done well beforehand in order to allow
Governments sufficient time to determine the size of delegations to the substantive session. I think it might be better to have a little more flexibility here and to say "in an effort to draw up a provisional agenda for consideration at its session in May/June 1979, and make organizational arrangements for that session". I would suggest some wording along those lines to give it a broader perspective.

Mr. BARTON (Canada): I am most anxious to ensure, whether or not this Commission meets in December, that the Bureau has the appropriate authority to proceed with action that it might consider necessary between now and May - the preparation of documents, the distribution of draft agendas for our consideration, or anything else. If you are satisfied, Sir, that the Bureau already has that authority, then I am satisfied. However, if you feel that it would be useful to include a provision specifically giving the Bureau the authority it needs, then I would be glad to support that.

The CHAIRMAN: As I indicated yesterday - and here I speak only as Chairman of the Commission, I cannot speak for the entire Bureau - I personally would not like to take on that task or take on matters relating to the agenda or to priorities. It was in that context that I clearly indicated that if something has to be done it would have to be done in the whole Commission.

The representative of Pakistan has suggested that we change the last part of the paragraph to read:

"... in an effort to draw up a provisional agenda for consideration at its session in May/June 1979, and make organizational arrangements for that session."

Is there any objection to that change?
Mr. PFEIFFER (Federal Republic of Germany): I do not see the point of the suggestion of the representative of Pakistan. The matter is already covered by the present formulation. We state "to consider the relevant decisions of the thirty-third session", and then we add "in an effort to draw up a provisional agenda". I do not see any need to add the phrase concerning organizational arrangements. I am not convinced of the merits of that addition. I think this matter will develop when we have the meeting as envisaged here. We can decide on this question then.

The CHAIRMAN: I personally see great merit in the suggestion made by the representative of Pakistan, particularly because of the point he made regarding the opportunity to decide early enough on the possibility of setting up a Committee of the Whole. If there is to be another meeting of the Commission at the end of the thirty-third session, we do not want to preclude the possibility of that meeting considering one or two organizational matters in addition to merely drafting the agenda. I think that is all that the representative of Pakistan meant.

Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): Bearing in mind the very pertinent point made by the representative of Pakistan, I feel nevertheless that by adding the phrase that he suggested we are merely extending what seems to me to be the unnecessary last three lines of paragraph 13. Since we mention in the first four lines of the paragraph that it is in the light of the decisions of the thirty-third session that we are considering this possibility, perhaps it might be sufficient to end the paragraph at the end of the fourth line with the words, "the end of the thirty-third session." The session we are holding now is referred to as an organizational session, even in the Final Document of the special session, and what we envisage is another organizational session where we can discuss both the agenda and, in accordance with the suggestion of the representative of Pakistan, some other organizational items. It therefore seems to me that this would take care of the matter.
The representative of Canada did make a point about the authority of the Bureau. I interpret this whole paragraph as indicating that it is the Bureau that will decide whether or not the session will take place at the end of the year.

The CHAIRMAN: We have two suggestions. One, by the representative of Pakistan, is to add the phrase, "and make organizational arrangements for that session". The representative of Nigeria has suggested a briefer wording for paragraph 13, namely:

"The Disarmament Commission further considers that in the light of the decisions taken at the thirty-third session of the General Assembly which may have a bearing on the agenda of the 1979 session of the Commission, it might be useful for the Commission to hold another organizational session at the end of the thirty-third session of the General Assembly."

Do members wish to express any preference for either of these suggestions?
Mr. FLOWERREE (United States): I would support the suggestion made by the representative of Nigeria, on the understanding that another organizational meeting would not be a full-scale session but would be as brief as possible, perhaps lasting not more than a day or two. I think we need not write this into our report, but I hope we can avoid having another session. Perhaps the word "meeting" would be better than "session". I do not want us to imply that we will duplicate the kind of session we have had this week.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps, then, we can go along with the suggestion made by the representative of Nigeria.

I should also like to react to his point regarding the Bureau. It will certainly be the hope – especially as far as I am concerned – that the Bureau will be able to have meetings and consultations before the brief organizational session to which the representative of the United States has referred. On that understanding, can we accept paragraph 13, with the change suggested by the representative of Nigeria and, of course, the replacement of the word "recommends" by the word "considers".

Mr. PFEIFFER (Federal Republic of Germany): I understand two proposals have been made, one using the words "organizational meeting" and the other using the words "organizational session". I have not understood what you finally decided upon, Mr. Chairman. What is the wording concerning the meeting we are now discussing?

The CHAIRMAN: We shall have to use the word "session" and not "meeting" because we may have to have more than one meeting. But we shall certainly take fully into account the point made by the representative of the United States to ensure that we do not have more than a minimum number of meetings. The word "session" will be used, then, but the number of meetings will be minimal.

Mr. MADADHA (Jordan): My point concerns what was said by the representative of Bulgaria as to whether we could use the word "necessary" instead of "useful". If it remains as it is, that will be agreeable to me. But after he spoke it occurred to me that we could use the word "necessary".
The CHAIRMAN: Personally, I think we can leave it as it is. It will depend upon what the General Assembly does.

If there are no other comments, may I take it that the Commission adopts the report with the various amendments and modifications to which we have agreed?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I would express my very deep appreciation and gratitude to all members for the assistance and co-operation they have extended to me.

I declare the session of the Disarmament Commission closed.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.