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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTIETH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 26 May 1981, at 4 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. MICHAELSEN

(Denmark)

- General exchange of views (concluded)
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS (concluded)

Mr. MOUSSAOUI (Algeria) (interpretation from French): The Algerian delegation was much saddened and dismayed to learn of the aeroplane accident which led to the sudden death of the Chief of State of Ecuador and we should like, on this sad occasion, to express our condolences to the delegation of that friendly country and to assure it of our sympathy.

We should like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other officers of the Commission, the warm congratulations of the Algerian delegation on your assumption of office in the Disarmament Commission. Your personal qualities, Sir, which have been universally recognized, your extensive experience in international affairs and your great familiarity with the background of this work certainly augur well for our labours and make it extremely likely that this will be a fruitful session.

You have taken over from Ambassador Velodi of India, who conducted the work of the Commission with exceptional qualities of heart and mind, for which he deserves a special tribute.

The Algerian delegation accords special importance to the work of the Disarmament Commission. The role it plays in the institutional framework established by the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, and the fact that the Commission is a universal forum on disarmament, confer on it a special role in the difficult process of multilateral disarmament.

Its working methods, based on consensus and taking into account the various concerns of all States, are appropriate to the fundamental requirement - the indivisibility of international peace and security. That requirement is not unrelated to the fact that the results of the Commission's two preceding sessions represent rare achievements in the field of disarmament since 1978. The debate which is concluding today, by its quality and its fullness, bears further witness to this fact.

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

In addition to the variety of approaches taken and the points of view expressed, this debate has confirmed, in the form of a general consensus, the collective concern and the unanimous condemnation to which the arms race, and particularly the nuclear arms race, have given rise.

A special effort is required to speak once again of the horror of the nuclear arms race, the scandal that it represents and the danger it creates. It has been denounced and condemned often enough, its every facet has been fully exposed and there is therefore no need for me to dwell on it today.

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

The international community today is especially concerned at the critical deterioration in the international situation, as a result of which certain theories of intervention and the "limited use" of nuclear weapons are gaining ground. There have been threats to the sovereignty of States and their territorial integrity, interference in their internal affairs, and denial of peoples' rights to self-determination, to the free choice of a political system and to the exercise of permanent sovereignty over natural rights. There has also been a redeployment of forces and, in the name of alleged vital interests, those forces now arrogate to themselves the right to intervene anywhere in the world.

In this constantly deteriorating climate, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons is clearly very much like a desire for collective suicide. It is quite clear, as is amply demonstrated today, that nuclear warfare means that there will be no winners and no losers but simply the end - the end of everything - annihilation. On the basis of that truth, the Final Document states:

"the accumulation of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, today constitutes much more a threat than a protection for the future of mankind." (resolution S-10/2, para. 1)

That means that effective security cannot be based on the stockpiling of weapons. The general study on nuclear weapons presented by the United Nations last year reached the same conclusion and stated that the concept of security based on the deterrent effect of weapons was the most dangerous collective sophism that exists.

Notwithstanding these facts, the arms race, particularly in the nuclear field, is accelerating in its qualitative and quantitative aspects, as a result of the constant improvements in existing weapons and the perfecting of new kinds of weapons, the stockpiling of such weapons and the frantic quest for an illusory superiority. With every passing day, it is more and more likely

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

that a world-wide catastrophe will occur, because such a catastrophe could be caused by mere miscalculation or malfunction, and indeed such errors have actually occurred in the past.

For this threat to its own survival mankind is paying the heavy price of \$500 billion per year. This waste is scandalous, in view of the hunger, sickness and illiteracy, that is, the chronic structural underdevelopment of most of the population of the world.

The combination of the Second Disarmament Decade and the Third Development Decade called for a salutary breakthrough and bold action to bring about man's reconciliation with man, to divert man's genius from this destructive folly and to develop the human and natural wealth of the earth in the exclusive service of peace and development.

That goal gave rise to great expectations; but today it seems that it is farther away than ever before. The arms race, far from slowing down, is accelerating. Negotiations that got off to a slow start are now bogged down. Even agreements painstakingly reached are called in question directly after their signature. The results since 1978 have been meagre. Little progress has been made, and this progress is not significant in relation to the task and the final objective, which is general and complete disarmament.

Such a state of affairs requires today more than ever before greater determination and a new kind of lucidity, if we are to set aside traditional approaches. Only this breakthrough can lead to a global vision and a specific approach to the disarmament process. It requires real political will on the part of States, especially those possessing the most sizeable arsenals. It requires specific and imperative objectives. It must also fit into a precise, binding time-table within which intermediary steps will necessarily lead eventually to general and complete disarmament.

This objective requires: the destruction of existing arsenals; the dissolution of blocs and the ending of the bloc policy; the dismantling of foreign bases and the final renunciation of intervention policies; the ending of the arms race and the reassignment of the released resources to development, particularly of the developing countries; the complete cessation of all nuclear tests, pending the conclusion of a general test-ban treaty. This transitional measure must be accompanied by specific

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

commitments to protect the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use the threat of use of such weapons, and consistent action to promote denuclearized zones and zones of peace.

This approach requires that we go beyond the outward manifestations of evil and attack its underlying causes, that we put an end to domination and exploitation and promote the objective conditions which are required for the emergence of international relations of a new kind, based on peace, justice, equality and freedom. It also requires the ending of the present scourges, in particular the following: the efforts to obstruct the exercise of the peoples' right to self-determination and independence; the failure to respect peoples' right to choose freely their political, economic and social systems; the plundering of the wealth of the countries of the third world and the aggravation of their underdevelopment; the violation of their independence and territorial integrity; and the challenge to their permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.

The Disarmament Commission has adopted a very heavy agenda, considering the limited amount of time available. In addition, certain items on the agenda are now on the agenda for the third time and for that reason require urgent consideration.

The arms race and disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and the preparation of a general approach to disarmament negotiations - items 4 (a) and (b) of the agenda - have been a source of special concern to us. Considering the established order of priorities in the Final Document of 1978, first of all, in view of its importance and its decisive influence on other aspects of disarmament, and also because it has been placed on the agenda for the third consecutive year, this question should, in the opinion of my delegation, be a subject for priority consideration.

Item 5, on the reduction of military budgets, has also appeared on the agenda for the third consecutive year. Its importance is due to the fact that any real progress on this question would lead to specific disarmament measures. Notwithstanding a consensus on the importance of this question and on the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States and the most powerfully-armed States, the Commission has made little progress.

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

Technical problems - which are certainly important - concerning verification, control and comparability of budgets seem to render any progress impossible and doom us to an impasse. Although there is a will to succeed, in this area as in others, the practical difficulties of implementation must be transcended.

The document presented jointly by Romania and Sweden - document A/CN.10/26 - is aimed at getting around the difficulties which have so far made it impossible to achieve substantial progress in the reduction of military budgets and proposes an approach that would make it possible for the Commission to move forward, provided the political will really exists and is expressed.

Item 6 of the agenda relates to a study on conventional weapons and armed forces and it is also a concern to us. It is on the agenda of the Commission for the first time, and it calls for the following preliminary comments from my delegation.

It is a fact that since the Second World War conventional weapons have been practically the only ones that have been used in armed conflicts throughout the world. While that is true, the fact remains nevertheless that conventional weapons and armed forces cannot be viewed in isolation from general international security and the objective of general and complete disarmament. Because a realistic and creditable approach to conventional weapons cannot ignore the priority that should be given to nuclear weapons and their decisive effect on the other questions, because the nuclear States produce and have the largest stockpiles of conventional weapons, and, finally, because at the world level the possession of nuclear weapons considerably increases the importance of conventional weapons and armed forces, any approach that would artificially isolate conventional weapons and armed forces from their natural context must be avoided. It is only in the light of this global context that we must try to approach the general problem of the arms race, particularly in the nuclear field.

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

Similarly, we should avoid any fragmentary or partial approach that would over-emphasize regional questions, no matter how tempting that might be. We must realize that the question of international security is essentially a world-wide problem.

The study in question cannot be confined to a mere description of the problem, which would hardly reveal the profound nature and true dimensions of the question.

As the Final Document of 1978 says, the purpose of these studies has been that of

"Taking further steps in the field of disarmament and other measures aimed at promoting international peace and security"

(General Assembly resolution S-10/2, para. 96).

In this study, then, our purpose will be to use all data available and to understand their implications and their relationship to the other aspects of disarmament.

In order to make a concrete contribution to the promotion of conditions necessary for effective disarmament measures, this study must try to bring out the causes of the arms race in order to eliminate them.

Two important ideas here need to be stressed. The first has to do with the distinction that must be drawn between the acquisition of conventional weapons for the purpose of defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, on the one hand, and the manufacture, improvement and stockpiling of weapons for the purpose of aggression and domination, on the other hand. The second has to do with the transfer of armaments that has been taken up by a number of delegations in the course of debate. In the opinion of my delegation, this is a matter which should be viewed in conjunction with the general international situation. It cannot be viewed in isolation from the exportation of conflict from the North to the South and, still less, from sources of tension and aggression, actual or potential, being fostered in various places in southern Africa and in the Middle East.

In dealing with this agenda item, the delegation of Denmark submitted in document A/CN.10/25 certain elements that deserve careful thought. Document A/CN.10/27, submitted by the delegation of India, also contains a number of ideas which serve as a useful complement to the former document. These two documents, in the opinion of my delegation, constitute a sound working basis that should be expanded upon.

(Mr. Moussaoui, Algeria)

The Disarmament Commission has had before it since 1979 a question regarding the nuclear capacity of South Africa. For at least three reasons, this question deserves careful consideration at the present session of the Commission.

First of all, possession of nuclear weapons by a racist régime, which has been condemned by the international community through the United Nations General Assembly, is in itself reason enough for serious concern.

Next, the introduction of nuclear weapons into Africa, where States have unanimously and solemnly pledged since 1964 to protect their continent from this kind of weapon, by an aggressive, racist régime which, under the terms of United Nations resolutions, constitutes a permanent threat to international peace and security, creates a particularly dangerous situation which cannot escape the attention of the Disarmament Commission.

Then, and on another level, the acquisition of nuclear technology and the development of nuclear weapons by the Pretoria régime undeniably pose a crucial problem, in terms of both the effectiveness and the credibility of principles which govern the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at present. For while countries that have an urgent need to obtain nuclear energy in order to promote their economic and social development find their access to this technology blocked, it is amazing to see that a racist régime which is by its nature aggressive, can so easily acquire nuclear technology and so swiftly develop its own nuclear weapon.

It is clear that this fact runs counter to the provisions of our collective credo in the area of disarmament, as contained in the 1978 Final Document, which clearly stipulates that

"It is clear that the massive accumulation of armaments and the acquisition of armaments technology by racist régimes, as well as their possible acquisition of nuclear weapons, present a challenging and increasingly dangerous obstacle to a world community faced with the urgent need to disarm". (ibid., para. 12)

These were the few observations which my delegation wished to put forward at the present stage of our work in the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: We have thus ended the general exchange of views.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. KLINGLER (Federal Republic of Germany): My delegation has followed with great interest this morning's deliberations as well as the statement which has just been delivered by the representative of Algeria.

We share the view expressed in this Commission to the effect that the further substantive work of this year's session should be taken up in working groups. In your introductory statement, Mr. Chairman, before the adoption of the agenda, the broad understanding of the Commission was correctly reflected, namely that two working groups would eventually be set up, on items 5 and 6 of our agenda. This represents also the view of my delegation.

In the meanwhile, suggestions have been put forward by several delegations with reference to the importance of agenda item 4, to the effect that it should be combined with agenda item 6. While fully recognizing the priorities set out in the Final Document, we hold the view that this session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission received from the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly a clear mandate as laid down in item 6 of our agenda. The General Assembly agreed in operative paragraph 2 of resolution 35/156 A that

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

To our understanding, we would not be following the clear mandate given by the General Assembly to this Commission if we followed the approach suggested by some delegations this morning. We can fulfil the mandate only by taking up the subject as defined in item 6 of our agenda in a working group. Any change in this definition or any addition would therefore not be in keeping with the clear request as formulated in resolution 35/156 A.

If delegations consider it essential that the United Nations Disarmament Commission at its current session take up also item 4 of the agenda in more detail, the question arises whether that item would justify a working group of its own. Taking into account the very limited time available for substantive work,

(Mr. Klingler, Federal Republic of
Germany)

my delegation would certainly not favour the establishment of such a third working group.

What could be considered, nevertheless, is a continuation of our deliberations in the plenary Commission. This would enable us to take up independently in this Commission the items on our agenda which need to be studied in greater depth.

The CHAIRMAN: As the statement just made related to the organization of work, I should like at this time to outline in brief my own thinking on this question. We have heard the general views on the disarmament question of all delegations that wished to speak. We have now reached a point in our work where we must decide in which way the Commission should proceed in dealing with the substantive items of our agenda.

During the general exchange of views, many delegations spoke on procedural matters. Several delegations have proposed the following: (a) that a working group be established to consider item 5 (a) and (b), on reduction of military budgets; (b) that a working group be established to consider item 6, on the elaboration of the general approach to the study on all aspects of the conventional arms race; (c) that a working group consider item 4 (a) and (b) on the elaboration of a general approach to negotiations on nuclear and conventional disarmament; and (d) that a working group be established to deal with both items 4 and 6. In addition, some delegations touched upon the question of item 7, preparation of a report of the Disarmament Commission to the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, as well as item 9, relating to the letter from the Special Committee against Apartheid.

Furthermore, I realize that intensive consultations among delegations on the question of setting up working groups have taken place.

At a meeting of the officers of the Commission this afternoon, there was broad agreement on the advisability of establishing two working groups, although the opinion was also expressed that one possible solution might be to establish more than two working groups, provided they did not meet simultaneously. Furthermore, there was wide agreement that agenda item 5, reduction of military budgets, should be dealt with in a working group but, at the same time, there were differing views on the advisability of combining agenda items 4 and 6 in one working group. Some officers of the Commission advocated such a combination, considering the interrelationship between nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament. Without in any way questioning the urgency of nuclear disarmament, the point was also raised that the concrete mandate for the

(The Chairman)

Commission laid down in General Assembly resolution 35/156 A concerning the elaboration of the general approach to the study on all aspects of the conventional arms race should be referred to a working group for that purpose alone.

Finally, the officers were in agreement that a solution to those procedural questions was of vital importance for the successful outcome of this third substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Consequently, it was suggested that this matter be dealt with by various groups that would hold consultations this afternoon.

I therefore propose that we adjourn our meeting to allow for such consultations and that we meet again tomorrow at 11 a.m.

Mr. FONSEKA (Sri Lanka): I have asked to speak, Mr. Chairman, in order to congratulate you on your summing up of the proceedings thus far, which I hope means that all delegations regard matters as not closed. I take it that as a result of your consultations and as a result of the views expressed among the officers of the Commission there is still time for delegations to give some thought to what the Commission could do during the next few days. I should also like to express the hope - and I trust that this expression of hope is not only that of my delegation - that the views just expressed by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany do not amount to a closing of the door. I should like to think that we ended our proceedings today with the statement that the Chairman has just made and that delegations are still open-minded.

The CHAIRMAN: I would just like to say to members of the Commission that I hope everyone will feel a sense of responsibility in this matter and that the outcome of the deliberations and of the thinking this afternoon will lead to a fruitful solution of these procedural questions so that we can proceed to deal with the substantive items on our agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.