DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 10 December 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MICHAELSEN (Denmark)

- Opening of the session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Election of the Chairman and other officers
- Review of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session relating to the Disarmament Commission
- Provisional agenda for the 1982 session of the Disarmament Commission
- Organizational matters
- Other business

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages, preferably in the same language as the text to which they refer. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also, if possible, incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

81-61593
The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: As representatives are aware, we are meeting today to consider briefly the organization of the work of the Disarmament Commission during 1982.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The CHAIRMAN: In connexion with the provisional agenda contained in document A/CN.10/L.8, I should like to note that item 6 should be "Organizational matters", with "Other business" following as item 7. If I hear no objection I shall take it that the Commission agrees to adopt the agenda as thus revised.

The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS

The CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed to consideration of this agenda item, I should like to recall that during the organizational session of the Commission held in December 1979?

"The Commission decided that the present Bureau should continue to serve for a further year, namely during 1980, with the understanding that a principle of rotation would apply as from 1981 as regards the chairmanship of the Commission." (A/35/42, para. 5)

The current Bureau was elected in accordance with that decision for the 1981 session of the Commission.

Following this principle it is our task today to elect a new Chairman and other officers. First, are there any nominations for the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission?
MR. ULRICHSEN (Denmark): I think that we all recall that the first special session devoted to disarmament emphasized the important role and primary responsibility of the United Nations in the sphere of disarmament. The session also considered how the United Nations system could most effectively fulfil that role and came to the conclusion that both negotiating and deliberating forums were required. To fill the latter function the United Nations Disarmament Commission was re-established in its present form as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly.

Our experience with the United Nations Disarmament Commission now stretches over a period of three years. The Commission has during that period covered a wide and important range of disarmament issues. Although the deliberations have sometimes reflected marked divergences of views, it is our general impression that the Commission has stimulated the international debate on disarmament and thereby contributed to a better understanding of the different positions of member States. In 1982 also, the Disarmament Commission will face a heavy work load. Among other priority issues, the Commission will have to complete its contribution to the second special session devoted to disarmament, to which we all attach great importance.

In light of this I regard it as a privilege and indeed an honour to propose for the chairmanship of the 1982 session our colleague the Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations, Ambassador Eugeniusz Wyzner. Ambassador Wyzner was born in 1931. He received a law degree from the University of Warsaw in 1954. He entered the Polish Foreign Service in 1952 and has participated in numerous international conferences, including 22 sessions of the General Assembly. Ambassador Wyzner served at the Polish Mission to the United Nations in New York from 1961 to 1968, in the latter part of the period as Deputy Permanent Representative. From 1968 to 1973 he directed the Legal Department of the Polish Foreign Ministry and he was Poland's Permanent Representative to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva from 1973 to 1978. From 1978 until he was appointed Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Wyzner directed the Department of International Organizations in the Polish Foreign Ministry. During that period he led his country’s delegation to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.
Ambassador Wyzner has also served as Chairman of the United Nations Committee on Periodic Reports on Human Rights, as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and as President of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof.

Currently Ambassador Wyzner is Chairman of the Legal Sub-Committee of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and Vice-Chairman of the United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament Studies.

I could mention other important responsibilities that Ambassador Wyzner has fulfilled, but we already have a clear picture of his impressive experience and merits.

I should therefore like to submit the nomination of Ambassador Wyzner for the chairmanship of this Commission in 1982 and formally to propose that that nomination be approved by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: Ambassador Eugeniusz Wyzner of Poland has been nominated for the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for its 1982 session. As there appear to be no other nominations, I propose that we proceed to elect him Chairman by acclamation. May I take it that that is the wish of the Commission?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I accordingly declare Ambassador Wyzner, the Permanent Representative of Poland, elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1982 and I extend to him my warmest congratulations and very best wishes.

I now call on Ambassador Wyzner.

Mr. WYZNER (Poland): Mr. Chairman, I should like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to you for your kind words and to all the members of the Disarmament Commission for the honour which they have conferred upon me by electing me to the chairmanship of this important organ of the United Nations for 1982. I owe special thanks to the Ambassador of Denmark for nominating me for this post and for his generous references to me.
I am fully aware, of course, that the diplomatic skill, competence and wisdom of many of my colleagues in this room make them far better qualified than I to hold the office of Chairman of the Commission. I therefore regard the result of the vote as in the first place a recognition of the contribution which Poland by its principled standpoint and initiatives has sought to make in the crucially important area of international security, arms limitation and disarmament.

I realize full well that 1982 will be an exceptionally important time in the work of the Commission.

First of all, it is the year when the Members of the United Nations will meet at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to consider urgently the ways and means of averting the looming dangers of the nuclear era and of the arms race. It will also be a year when, it is to be hoped, the hesitant momentum of disarmament efforts in more specific areas will accelerate again, in response to the yearning of nations for a world free from the fear of nuclear catastrophe.

It is therefore only fair to anticipate that the Disarmament Commission will also be called upon in 1982 to deal effectively with an agenda of complex and difficult problems. First, we shall need to conclude our consideration of matters related to elaborating a general approach to negotiations on nuclear and conventional disarmament and to complete other pending business. The Commission will also have to be ready to make its own input to the second special session. The fact that the international community expects the session to pave the way to meaningful and tangible disarmament also adds significance and weight to our common endeavours in the Commission. Indeed, following on its formal report and substantive contribution to the second special session, the United Nations Disarmament Commission might also wish to consider the results that the session obtains.

I want to assure the members of the Commission that in my role as Chairman and in the discharge of my duties I intend to act with dedication and impartiality. In our common endeavour to arrive at positive solutions and find constructive answers to the difficult questions that lie ahead, it is also my intention to draw on the collective wisdom and experience of the Commission, as well as on the support and understanding of all its members.
I should like at this juncture to pay a particular tribute to you, Mr. Chairman, for your diplomatic experience and the many qualities that you have displayed while leading the Commission's deliberations and that are so well known to my colleagues gathered around this table.
I am confident that I can rely on the unfailing goodwill, co-operation and indulgence of the members of the Commission, especially since I see with pleasure in this room many good friends and colleagues, whose friendship and wisdom I have come to cherish over the years not only here in the United Nations but also in the Geneva Committee on Disarmament and within the context of some of the Review Conferences concerned with arms limitation agreements.

Of course, I look forward to close co-operation with other officers of the Commission who are yet to be elected. I shall also count on the support and assistance of the Under-Secretary for Political and Security Council Affairs, Mr. Ustinov, and the Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament, Mr. Martinson, as well as on the co-operation of the able Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Alem, and their fellow staff members.

The CHAIRMAN: Regarding the election of the other officers of the Committee, namely, eight Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, for the year 1982, I should like to point out that consultations are still under way between some Regional Groups for the selection of their candidates. Therefore, pending the conclusion of those consultations, I suggest that we put off the election of the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur to a later stage, if that is agreeable to the Commission.

It was so decided.

REVIEW OF THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION RELATING TO THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: As members of the Commission are aware, at the current session the General Assembly has adopted three resolutions which have a direct relevance to the work of the Commission. For the sake of clarity and the benefit of members of the Commission, I shall refer to them one by one.
The first resolution is 36/97 A, under General Assembly agenda item 55, entitled 'General and complete disarmament', and relates to the study on conventional disarmament. The draft resolution was contained in First Committee document A/C.1/36/L.3/Rev.1. Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of the resolution, inter alia, read as follows:

"2. Requests the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session in 1982 to complete its consideration of the general approach to the study, its structure and scope, and to transmit the conclusions of its deliberations to the Expert Group;

3. Agrees that the Expert Group should pursue its work after the above mentioned session of the Disarmament Commission, taking into consideration such conclusions as the Commission may submit to it and, if necessary, the deliberations at the 1981 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, in particular reflected in paragraph 21 and annex III of the report of that session." (General Assembly resolution 36/97 A, paras. 2 and 3)

The second relevant resolution is 36/92 B; it relates to the report of the Disarmament Commission on General Assembly agenda item 51 (a). The draft resolution was contained in First Committee document A/C.1/36/L.4. Operative paragraphs 1 to 4 of the resolution outline the general framework of the Commission's work during 1982 and read as follows:

"1. Takes note of the report of the Disarmament Commission;
2. Takes note also that the Commission was not able to conclude its consideration of the items on its agenda;
3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly and to continue consideration of the items included in its agenda at its 1981 session, and to that end to meet for a period not exceeding four weeks during 1982;
4. Requests the Commission to submit a substantive report on its work to the second special session devoted to disarmament." (General Assembly resolution 36/92 B, paras. 1-4)
The third relevant resolution, 36/82 A, concerns the question of reduction of military budgets, under General Assembly agenda item 40 (a). The draft resolution was contained in First Committee document A/C.1/36/L.38. Operative paragraph 3 of the resolution, inter alia, reads as follows:

"3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue at its session to be held in 1982 the consideration of the item entitled 'Reduction of military budgets' taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 35/142 A as well as those of the present resolution and other relevant proposals and ideas, with a view to identifying and elaborating 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". (General Assembly resolution 36/82 A, para. 3)

I believe that I have now indicated in some detail the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly which have relevance to the work of the Disarmament Commission.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 1982 SESSION OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: Under General Assembly resolution 36/92 B, the Commission is requested to continue consideration of the items included in its agenda at its 1981 session. Accordingly, the provisional agenda contained in Conference Room Paper 19 was drafted to reflect the General Assembly's request taking also into account the three General Assembly resolutions relating to the work of the Commission.

Accordingly, a tentative draft provisional agenda for the 1982 session of the Disarmament Commission has been circulated in document A/CN.10/CRP.19.
ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to emphasize that the points I am about to mention regarding the method of work of the 1982 session are merely ideas for preliminary discussion. It goes without saying that, as always, the Commission, when it meets in 1982, will have to decide on these matters itself.

The first question I should like to refer to is the date of the Commission's session. The resolution on the Disarmament Commission says that the Commission should meet in 1982 for a period not exceeding four weeks. The schedule for disarmament negotiations in 1982 is, as members are aware, a very heavy one. There are three weeks available, from 17 May to 4 June - that is, the period between the session of the Preparatory Committee and the opening of the special session. This period has been booked by the Secretariat for the Commission's session.

Among other questions I should like to mention is that of the organization of the work. We had last year at the session in May an item concerning the method of work.
As representatives are aware, last year working groups were established. That method could be considered for 1982 as well. I suggest that when delegations consult among themselves in preparation for the next session, they give consideration to this question so that they will be prepared to take a decision at the outset of the session, thereby facilitating and perhaps improving the work in the Commission.

Those were the considerations that I wanted to share with the Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS

The CHAIRMAN: I invite comments from delegations on this agenda item.

Mr. ECONOMIDES (Italy): I wish to have some clarification.

We have been considering in a preliminary way a number of items on which we should have time to hold consultations between now and tomorrow in order to reach an understanding on some of the most important of them — for instance, the provisional agenda and the organization of work. Unless there are objections from other delegations, perhaps it would be useful to have a meeting tomorrow morning, thereby perhaps saving time at the 1982 session, which is to be very brief.

Mr. DUARTE (Brazil): I agree entirely with the representative of Italy. I suggest that we try to conclude this series of meetings with some further clarification of some of the issues that have been raised within the Commission. Therefore, I hope the Commission will accept the suggestion that we meet tomorrow, after having consulted among ourselves.

Document A/CN.10/CRP.19, which has been circulated, contains a reproduction of the 1981 agenda. I believe that I am right in assuming that. I entirely agree with the considerations you set forth, Mr. Chairman, regarding the advisability of holding a shorter general debate, or even not holding a general debate at all, at the 1982 substantive session.
However, as far as form is concerned, perhaps the provisional agenda of the 1981 session could be reproduced in full in order that we have a picture of the agenda as it is carried over, so to speak, by virtue of resolution 36/92 B. Subsequently, either at this organizational session or at the beginning of the 1982 session, the Commission could take a decision on that matter. I think that we should not at this stage omit one item that was on the agenda.

The CHAIRMAN: In reply to the question regarding the provisional agenda, as I understand it the agenda contained in Conference Room Paper 19 is identical to the 1981 agenda, with the changes required by the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly this year. In fact, there was no general debate item last year. Nevertheless, the Commission did have a general debate. In the report of the Disarmament Commission it is not stated that there is a special item "General debate", so in that sense the agenda in Conference Room Paper 19 is a reproduction.

Having heard the comments of the representatives of Italy and of Brazil, I shall follow the wishes of the Commission. Perhaps it would be beneficial to meet tomorrow as scheduled, after members have had a chance to exchange views.

Since I hear no objection, we shall meet tomorrow at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.