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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 15 December 1982, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. NATORF

(Poland)

- Opening of the session
- Adoption of the agenda
- Election of the Chairman and other officers of the Disarmament Commission
- Review of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session relating to the Disarmament Commission
- Draft provisional agenda for the 1983 session of the Disarmament Commission
- Organizational matters

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: As members are aware, we are meeting today in a brief organizational session to consider matters relevant to the work of the Commission at its next substantive session, particularly the election of the Commission's officers for 1983.

ADOPTION OF THE ACENDA

The CHAIRMAN: The provisional agenda for this session is contained in document A/CN.10/L.11. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to adopt the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to recall that at the last organizational meeting, held in December 1979 - and I am quoting from the report of the Disarmament Commission to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly,

"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)

Accordingly, the Bureau of the Commission was elected during the 1981 and 1982 sessions.

(The Chairman)

Following this principle, it is our task today to elect a new Chairman and other officers of the Committee.

We shall start with the election of a new Chairman.

Are there any nominations for the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission?

Mr. NOWAK (Poland): The delegation of Poland has the honour and pleasure to nominate Ambassador Celso Antonio de Souza e Silva of Brazil for the office of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1983. Ambassador Souza e Silva has an outstanding record that justifies this nomination. He has been the special representative of Brazil for disarmament affairs since 1979, and he has been the head of the Brazilian delegation to the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, where, I have been told, he is at this moment.

Prior to this appointment, Ambassador Celso Antonio de Souza e Silva was the Brazilian representative to the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. He was earlier Brazil's Ambassador to Moscow, and prior to that he served as Minister Councillor at the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations in New York. Ambassador Souza e Silva, who was born in 1924, entered the Brazilian Foreign Service in 1948. Among his various assignments he served as Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister and Head of the Department of International Organizations. He was also Director of the Journal do Brasil, a leading Rio de Janeiro daily newspaper.

Ambassador Souza e Silva has also served on various temporary assignments as a member of the Brazilian delegations to the International Labour Organisation and the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. and Buenos Aires, as an alternative representative of Brazil on the United Nations Security Council in 1967 and 1979 and as a member of the Brazilian delegation to the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva.

(Mr. Nowak, Poland)

Ambassador Souza e Silva is a graduate of Rio Branco Institute, which is the Brazilian diplomatic academy, and is a Bachelor of Juridical and Social Sciences of the Law School of Rio de Janeiro Catholic University.

I should like to express our deep conviction that Ambassador Souza e Silva will conduct the work of our Commission with his well-known skill and abilities.

Mr. HEPBURN (Bahamas): In addition to the impressive record just described by the representative of Poland, it is my personal feeling that Ambassador Souza e Silva would be a very good candidate for the chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for 1983. I think the work of the Commission will be in very capable hands under his skilful guidance, given his outstanding experience in the field of disarmament.

The Latin American Group unanimously welcomes this recommendation and would like to see it supported by the Commission as a whole. In my capacity as Chairman of the Latin American Group for the month of December, I consider it a very pleasant duty and responsibility to second the nomination of Ambassador Souza e Silva of Brazil to lead the United Nations Disarmament Commission for 1983.

The CHAIRMAN: Ambassador Souza e Silva of Brazil has been nominated for the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1983, and that nomination has been seconded. Since this is the only nomination, I propose that we proceed to elect the Chairman by acclamation. May I take it that this is the wish of the Commission?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I accordingly declare Ambassador Souza e Silva, representative of Brazil, elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1983, and I extend to him my warmest congratulations and very best wishes.

Mr. DUARTE (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation is deeply honoured by the decision just taken by this Commission, one that it views as a distinctive honour bestowed on Brazil and on the person of Ambassador Celso Antonio de Souza e Silva, the special representative of Brazil for disarmament affairs.

As members of the Commission are well aware, my delegation did not seek the chairmanship of the 1983 session of the Commission, nor did we promote, formally or informally, our candidature for the position of Chairman. This decision should thus be understood as a recognition of the keen interest and deep sense of responsibility with which the Brazilian Government follows the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and of the priority importance that it attaches to multilateral efforts for disarmament. The unanimous endorsement by the Latin American Group of the suggestions made by several delegations to the effect that Brazil be designated as its candidate, for which we are deeply grateful, also enhances our understanding of the consensus now achieved by the Commission on the election of its Chairman for 1983.

I shall convey the Commission's decision to my Government in Brasilia, as well as to Ambassador Souza e Silva, who has already reassumed his official functions in Geneva, and in whose name I thank the Commission, through you, Sir, as well as the representatives of Poland and the Bahamas for their expressions of esteem for the Ambassador of Brazil.

The CHAIRMAN: Regarding the election of the other member officers of the Commission, namely 8 Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, for the year 1983, unfortunately consultations are still under way within certain regional groups for the selection of their candidates.

(The Chairman)

Therefore, pending the conclusion of those consultations, I suggest that we defer the election of the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur to a later stage.

In this connection I should like to urge those regional groups that are still conducting consultations - and I have in mind the Latin American Group, the African Group and the Asian Group - to make every effort to ensure that the election can take place at our next meeting. I know that there is a precedent for deferring the election of the other officers of the Commission to the May session. But, to put it bluntly, I believe that that is a bad precedent because if all the officers are not elected now, the Bureau will not be able to prepare for the substantive session of the Commission, which will result in delays in our work and in impeding the performance of the Commission.

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

The CHAIRMAN: As members of the Commission are aware, at the current session the General Assembly adopted six resolutions which have a direct relevance to the Commission's work. For the sake of clarity and for the benefit of the members of the Commission, I shall refer to them one by one in the order they were considered in the First Committee.

The first resolution - resolution 37/95 A - under agenda item 40 of the General Assembly, entitled "Reduction of military budgets", was considered in the First Committee as document A/C.1/37/L.20. Operative paragraphs 5 and 6 of the resolution, inter alia, read as follows:

(The Chairman)

"5. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue, at its session to be held in 1983, the consideration of the item entitled 'Reduction of military budgets', including consideration of the background paper as well as other proposals and ideas on that subject matter, with a view to identifying and elaborating the principles which should govern further actions of States in freezing and reducing military expenditures, keeping in mind the possibility of embodying such principles in a suitable document at an appropriate stage;

"6. Also requests the Disarmament Commission to consider at its next substantive session other proposals and ideas as well as recommendations submitted by Member States for reducing military budgets." The second relevant resolution - resolution 37/78 F - deals with the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the tenth special session, under agenda item 50 (h). It was contained in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.26/Rev.1 in the First Committee. Operative paragraph 7 of the resolution, inter alia, reads as follows:

"7. Calls upon the United Nations Disarmament Commission to intensify its work in considering various issues of disarmament on its agenda and to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth regular session concrete recommendations with a view to contributing to a solution of outstanding issues."

The third relevant resolution - resolution 37/99 B - concerns the report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, under agenda item 55, entitled "General and complete disarmament". It was considered in the First Committee in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.30. Operative paragraph 2 of the resolution, inter alia, reads as follows:

"2. Further requests the United Nations Disarmament Commission to consider those recommendations and proposals in the report that relate to disarmament and arms limitation and to suggest, in a report to the General Assembly, how best to ensure an effective follow-up thereof within the United Nations system or otherwise."

(The Chairman)

The fourth relevant resolution - resolution 37/100 D - relates to the question of confidence-building measures, under agenda item 133. It was contained in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.35 in the First Committee. Operative paragraphs 3 and 4 of the resolution, inter alia, read as follows:

"3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to consider the elaboration of guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level;

"4. Further requests the Disarmament Commission to submit a progress report on its deliberations on this item to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session."

The fifth relevant resolution - resolution 37/74 B - is on the question of South Africa's nuclear capability, under agenda item 44. It was contained in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.38 in the First Committee. Operative paragraph 3 of the resolution, inter alia, reads as follows:

"3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to consider substantively the question of South Africa's nuclear capability pursuant, inter alia, to the findings of the expert group appointed by the Secretary-General."

The sixth relevant resolution - resolution 37/78 H - is on the work and report of the Disarmament Commission, under agenda item 50. It was considered in the First Committee in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.42. Operative paragraphs 1 to 4 of the resolution, inter alia, read as follows:

"1. Takes note of the report of the Disarmament Commission;

"2. Notes that the Disarmament Commission again was not able to conclude its consideration of several items on its agenda;

(The Chairman)

"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 first special session devoted to disarmament and, to that end, to direct its attention at each substantive session to specific subjects from among those which have been and will be under its consideration, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and to make concrete recommendations on such subjects to the subsequent session of the General Assembly;

"4. Requests the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding four weeks during 1983 and to submit a substantive report on its work to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session."

DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE 1983 SESSION OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: Under resolution 37/78 H the Disarmament Commission is requested to continue its work and "to direct its attention at each substantive session to specific subjects from among those which have been and will be under its consideration, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and to make concrete recommendations on such subjects to the subsequent session of the General Assembly". A provisional agenda for the 1983 substantive session has been drafted to reflect the requests made by the General Assembly, taking also into account the six General Assembly resolutions related to the work of the Commission.

Accordingly, and without prejudice to the order of priority, this tentative draft provisional agenda for the 1983 session of the Disarmament Commission has been circulated, as a basis for discussion and consideration, in document A/CN.10/1982/CRP.10. Before I invite comments on the subject of the elements of the draft provisional agenda, I should like to make some remarks on the next item on our agenda, namely, organizational matters and I believe it would be better if we could have a discussion on all those subjects jointly.

(The Chairman)

May I emphasize that the following points regarding the method of work of the 1983 session are merely ideas for preliminary discussion which developed during my consultations at the meetings of the Bureau held last week. It goes without saying that at its 1983 session the Commission will decide on these matters.

My first observation concerns the time-table and duration of the 1983 session.

The Disarmament Commission will meet for a period of four weeks, from 9 May to 3 June 1983, to consider various items on its agenda and to finalize its report to be submitted to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. It was the view of the officers of the Commission that as far as the time-table is concerned, two weeks could be allocated to agenda item 3 - that is, the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament - and also to item 5, concerning the military capability of South Africa, and item 6, the so-called Palme report. We could then devote one week to item 4, which is the reduction of military budgets, and one week to the three remaining items - that is, item 7, the problems of confidence-building measures; item 8, the report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly and item 9, other business.

Certainly this tentative allocation of items is only indicative and is flexible in nature and subject to change during the process of deliberations on various subjects, but it does give us an idea of the priorities and the importance of the subject.

The Disarmament Commission might wish, as it has done in the past, to establish working groups at the beginning of its 1983 session to deal with substantive items on the agenda. These working groups could meet simultaneously - of course, after some preliminary discussions in the plenary Commission - so as to facilitate their work and their reporting to the Commission.

Moreover, the preparation and adoption of the Commission's report to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly could be considered by a Committee of the Whole established by the Commission.

With respect to the question of whether the Commission should have a general debate at its 1983 session, there is a feeling among the members of the Bureau that the Commission may not need a general debate because the time-frame of the session will be rather tight, in view of the number of substantive items inscribed on the agenda.

(The Chairman)

May I say in this connection also that during this year there have been ample opportunities to make general statements on disarmament - namely, at the twelfth special session and the current session of the Assembly - and in other forums. However, this would not, of course, exclude the possibility of delegations making some more general remarks on various subject matters on the agenda.

I now invite comments from members of the Commission on the provisional draft agenda, as well as on organizational matters.

Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria): My delegation merely wanted to draw attention to item 5 of the draft provisional agenda for 1983, contained in document A/CN.10/1982/CRP.10, where reference is made to a letter dated 8 March 1979 from the Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid addressed to the Secretary-General. It seems to my delegation that this question has since evolved; there is a resolution which commits this very subject to the Disarmament Commission for a substantive study. That resolution - 37/74 B - is very specific: it talks about South Africa's nuclear capability.

I would like to submit, therefore, that item 5 be redrafted to read, "South Africa's nuclear capability".

Mr. SREENIVASAN (India): My comment relates to item 6 of the draft provisional agenda for the 1983 substantive session. My delegation is not entirely certain that this item should figure in the agenda of the Disarmament Commission next year. We have some concerns and difficulties relating to this particular report and we would therefore like consultations to continue on this item before we finalize the agenda.

Mr. TRAUTWEIN (Federal Republic of Germany): Mr. Chairman, let me first express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding once again over the Commission. Secondly, we should like to ask our Brazilian friends to transmit our sincere congratulations to Ambassador Souza e Silva. We are confident that under his guidance the Disarmament Commission will accomplish the various tasks that the provisional agenda will bestow on this deliberative organ of the General Assembly.

I should like now briefly to address agenda item 5 particularly and then in general the draft provisional agenda for the 1983 substantive session. This draft agenda, which in its outline is in principle acceptable to my delegation, does not in any way, as we understand it, prejudge the order and methods of dealing with the different items assigned to the United Nations Disarmament Commission by the various resolutions of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly which you, Sir, have just enumerated.

The decision as to which "specific subjects from among those which have been and will be under its consideration" - to quote from operative paragraph 3 of resolution 37/78 H - will have to be taken at the appropriate time. Our consent to submit this draft provisional agenda to the next session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for its adoption should not be construed as consent to accept the numerical order proposed in the draft agenda as an indication of any priority. We are very glad that this seems to be your understanding as well, Mr. Chairman, as you indicated in your statement just a few moments ago. But we were a little bit surprised, therefore, when you gave us your thinking about the possible time-frame of work for the items on the agenda. This indicative time-frame that you have just mentioned does not, as we understand it, reflect fully the demands of resolution 37/78 H, and we should like to reserve our final position on this until after we have had further consultations with some other delegations. To be quite specific, Mr. Chairman, we do not concur with your reasoning that one specific agenda item, item 7, dealing with confidence-building measures, should be allocated only one week and that even this one week should be shared with other agenda items such as 8 and 9. We are convinced that a more appropriate time-frame could be found.

Mr. SHUSTOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): Our delegation wishes first of all to note that you, Sir, as Chairman of this Commission, with the assistance of the Secretariat, have been undertaking positive efforts to promote a better and more effective organization of the work of the Commission next year. I think that everyone will agree that the less discussion we have on purely procedural questions at the session of the Commission in 1983, the better, and the more time we will have for substantive work. In these efforts to organize the work of the Commission the Chairman will always have our delegation's support.

We request the delegation of Brazil to transmit our warmest congratulations and wishes to Ambassador Souza e Silva, who will be the Chairman next year by unanimous decision of the Commission. As everyone who works in the field of disarmament knows, he is an extremely experienced representative in this area who represents in a most compelling manner the interests of his country and at the same time energetically strives to move forward the cause of disarmament.

As far as the draft provisional agenda submitted to us is concerned, our delegation has at this stage no particular comments. Several representatives have already made individual comments. We share some of their opinions - for example, that of the representative of Nigeria on item 5. Perhaps indeed it might be useful to word the item as he suggested, since that wording is found in the relevant resolution of the General Assembly. As regards the specific order for the discussion of question on the draft provisional agenda, it would probably be difficult now for many delegations to decide in advance on their approach, but in the process of consultations - in which, as was pointed out in the statement of the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, some delegations are now engaged - we should bear in mind the possibility of procedural disagreements at the next session and try to settle them in advance so that next year we can proceed to a discussion of substantive questions.

The representative of India raised a question on agenda item 6. We all know the reason for the inclusion of this agenda item: it was predetermined by a decision of the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. But as regards exactly how that question should be discussed and what proposals or decisions should be adopted as a result of that discussion, perhaps the delegations that are interested in the question could give some clarifications at this session, if possible, or at the very beginning of the next session, so that the other delegations could usefully and knowledgeably take part in the discussion of that item.

Mr. de la SABLIERE (France) (interpretation from French): My delegation would like to make a few remarks, first of all with regard to item 5 in document A/CN.10/1982/CRP.10, which has been distributed to us.

The delegation of Nigeria suggested that that item as submitted to us be amended so as to include a reference to resolution 37/44 B, on the nuclear capability of South Africa.

If that reference is to be included, my delegation would suggest that we also make reference to all the resolutions adopted on this subject, particularly resolution 34/76 B, which established the group of experts on the nuclear capability of South Africa and which had the great merit of having been adopted by consensus.

(Mr. de la Sablière, France)

My second remark relates to all the proposals which have been made concerning the organization of work for the Commission's 1983 session. My delegation has taken note of those proposals, and we shall give them our careful consideration. We believe that at the appropriate time, and after due consultations, the Commission should take positions on these proposals.

Finally, I wish to express my delegation's satisfaction at the choice of the Commission's Chairman for 1983. We congratulate Ambassador Souza e Silva on his election.

Mr. DIACONU (Romania) (interpretation from French): My Chairman, the conduct of this meeting is evidence that both you and the Secretariat staff have done your work well; we have before us concrete proposals which have enabled us to begin our organizational work on a clear and accurate basis.

I should like to convey our warmest congratulations to the delegation of Brazil on the election of Ambassador Souza e Silva to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for 1983. His election reflects the fact that all of us consider Brazil's role in disarmament negotiations and in any consideration of disarmament problems in general to be an important one. I ask the representative of Brazil to transmit our congratulations to Ambassador Souza e Silva.

I turn now to the proposals before the Commission.

With regard to item 4 of the draft provisional agenda, we note that the wording of this item - "reduction of military budgets" - is similar to that which appeared in the agenda of the last session. This wording, by mentioning General Assembly resolution 37/78 H, includes a reference to the documents which the Commission itself decided ought to be considered to help identify and draw up principles which should govern the actions of States in the area of military budgets. I have in mind in particular the working papers and other proposals and ideas on this subject. Therefore, no specific reference to those documents is needed in the agenda item, because of the reference to resolution 37/78 H.

We have listened with considerable interest to the other comments of previous speakers. The Chairman has just made some suggestions with regard to the organization of our work; we believe that these have still to be refined, but that the Commission will succeed in working them out in due course. I would simply

(Mr. Diaconu, Romania)

stress that the 1982 session proved that when the Commission wants to work in a serious manner, it must create working groups from the very outset. Those working groups initiate that serious work and can usually produce results in a very short time - but only if they are established and start working at an early stage.

I think, for example, that rather than creating a single working group to deal with one item during a single week's work, the Commission could create two working groups for a two-week period to work on two items.

Thus the Commission has some matters to think over in order to find the best possible organization of its work.

Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria): My delegation will have an opportunity at a later stage to pronounce itself on the planning of our programme of work. For the moment, we should like to say that the Chairman's outline of the programme was very helpful.

My delegation noted the comment made a short while ago by the representative of France regarding item 5 of the draft provisional agenda. I hope that the delegations of Nigeria and France have not misunderstood each other. Resolution 37/74 B, which has just been adopted by the General Assembly, gives specific instructions to the Disarmament Commission as to how it should tackle the subject of South Africa's nuclear capability. I was referring to that resolution only as a rationale for the decision to modify the wording of the agenda item. My delegation, of course, has no difficulties with the French delegation's interest in resolution 34/76 B, but I must state that we are not married to a reflection of those two resolutions in the agenda item: what we want to see reflected is the substance of the matter, and that is South Africa's nuclear capability. We are not interested in a reflection of either resolution 37/74 B or resolution 34/76 B, or any other resolution. I think that when the Commission discusses this subject, all these resolutions will, of course, be in play.

Mr. LEHNE (Austria): I should like first of all to ask the Brazilian delegation to convey the congratulations of the Austrian delegation to Ambassador Souza e Silva on his election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission.

I should like also to thank you, Sir, for your comments on the discussions you had within the Bureau on the organization of the work of the May session; I think they were most useful for our discussions. There is just one point on which my delegation would like some additional clarification. You spoke of the allocation of the session's time to the various agenda items: the first two weeks to items 3, 5 and 6, the third week to item 4, and the last week to items 7, 8 and 9.

At the same time you stated that the Disarmament Commission might establish working groups to meet simultaneously. I wonder if you could tell the Commission whether your discussions have yet touched on the matter of which items working groups should be established for. This issue is, of course, intimately linked to the organization of work and to the time-frame for our work, and my delegation would therefore be very grateful if you could elaborate on this point.

The CHAIRMAN: As there appear to be no further comments, I think we should try to solve some of the questions which were raised and which call for solution at this time, and then I shall give some additional explanations concerning the organization of work and the way in which we discussed it in the meetings of the Bureau. Then perhaps we shall hear further comments.

First of all, I believe we have to settle the problems concerning the agenda. We have one very specific proposal, put forward by the representative of Nigeria, to change the title of item 5 of the provisional agenda so that, instead of the present wording - that is, a repetition of last year's agenda item - we would simply say "South Africa's nuclear capability".

I would draw the attention of the Commission to the fact that in resolution 37/74 B, paragraph 3, the General Assembly "requests the Disarmament Commission to consider substantively the question of South Africa's nuclear capability ...". I understand that it is the clear suggestion of the representative of Nigeria that the item be entitled in that way, without any specific reference to the various resolutions. If the representative of France does not object, it seems to me that agenda item 5 could be given the title "South Africa's nuclear capability". Of course during the deliberations on this subject every delegation will be free to refer to any of the relevant resolutions, even though they are not included in the title of the item. Is that agreeable to the Commission?

Mr. ADAMSON (United States of America): Mr. Chairman, I apologize for coming up with some comments at this stage but I had not realized that we were going to try to travel quite as far this afternoon as apparently you would like us to.

First, I offer my congratulations to the delegation of Brazil on the election of Ambassador Souza e Silva to the chairmanship of the Commission.

Secondly, I should like to associate my delegation with the comments made by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany with respect to the order of the agenda items and also with respect to the allocation of time that has been proposed.

(Mr. Adamson, United States)

My delegation also shares the views expressed by the delegation of India with respect to agenda item 6. We do indeed think there may be a need for some further consultations on that item of our draft provisional agenda.

Now, turning to item 5 of our provisional agenda, we listened with interest to the comments made by several delegations on that. We should think that, if we are going to change the title, perhaps the best way to do it would be to word it as you read it out, Sir - that is to say, "Question of South Africa's nuclear capability". But at this stage I should like to reserve the position of my delegation on that particular question, pending further reflection. It had been the understanding of my delegation that we should be having another meeting later this week, when we might come to somewhat more concrete decisions on some of these questions. My delegation believes there is a need for some informal consultations, as I think you indicated at one stage, Sir.

Those are our initial comments.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not in a hurry, especially since, as the representative of the United States has mentioned, we shall have to have another meeting. I believe we could finalize this question of the title of agenda item 5 at that time. I hope the representative of Nigeria will not mind if we postpone the final decision on this question until our next meeting, because some delegations are not yet ready to come to a decision.

As far as agenda item 6 is concerned, the representative of the Soviet Union has already mentioned that a resolution was adopted by the General Assembly which, let us say, delegated this item to the Disarmament Commission. Thus it seems to me that we should have it on our agenda, but of course how to formulate it and how to deal with it is again a matter for our consideration. I can only say that, because the Palme report deals with many different subjects, we believe that it could be taken together with agenda item 3. For example, all these references to the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament could be dealt with together. Possibly it would be necessary to take some procedural decision in the Disarmament

(The Chairman)

Commission concerning the way in which to deal with this report in the future. We feel that it might also be necessary to have some paragraphs of the report of the Disarmament Commission directing attention to that procedural aspect of the Palme report. Perhaps there could be some informal consultations before the next meeting to clarify also the formulation of item 6 of the draft provisional agenda, if necessary.

Now I would say a few words about the organization of work, in connection with the remarks made by several representatives. First of all let me make it clear that the order of these items does not mean the order of priority. As a matter of fact, when we started our deliberations on these organizational questions in the meetings of the Bureau I asked the other officers of the Commission whether we should try the risky exercise of establishing a priority for the agenda items. We came to the agreed conclusion that it would be rather difficult, because then we might spend a great deal of time in the Commission arguing about which item was more important and which was less important. Most probably it would be extremely difficult to come to an agreed conclusion.

We reviewed these items and, in spite of the fact that we now have nine on the agenda, we came to the conclusion that we could group them and that we could allocate some time to every item. In this manner we would have the chance to consider all the items and avoid the difficult process of establishing strict priorities for them. Then, if we use the reserves which are available in the establishment of working groups, we should really have enough time to consider practically all the agenda items before us in more or less the following manner - and here I am answering the question of the representative of Austria.

(The Chairman)

I do not visualize that we shall spend two weeks on items 3, 6 and 7 and then, after we have finished them, turn to further items. Rather, we shall start, for example, by discussing item 3 for two or three days and, when that discussion brings us to the point where we can create a working group to prepare a draft resolution or a draft report, then in the plenary Committee we can turn our attention to other items, again for two or three days and again creating a working group which can work simultaneously.

This allocation emerged as the general opinion in the Bureau of how much time could be given to each item.

It seems to me important that we should be prepared in May to start substantive work on all the items during the first week. We can start and then, depending on the situation, we can organize the work properly.

I am not sure that what I have just said is quite clear. The next Chairman of the Commission is much more experienced than I am, and he will doubtless know exactly how to do this.

As I said before, we were trying in the Bureau to visualize a flexible approach, but not the kind of flexibility that will allow us to do nothing or to lose time at the beginning. That is why we believe that we should start the next session with the consideration of item 3, that is, nuclear disarmament, taking the relevant elements from all the other items - such as the South African nuclear capability, which is closely related to this general item - and so forth.

If there are no further comments, then I believe that, as some members have suggested, it would be wise to have some discussion in the regional groups concerning three problems: first, the election of the other officers of the Commission - this Bureau which concerns the African, Asian and Latin American Groups secondly, the formulation of item 5 and possibly item 6 of the provisional agenda; and thirdly, of course, the most complicated problem - the organization of work for the substantive session.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.