DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE NINETY-FIRST MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 14 May 1985, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. AHMAD (Pakistan)

- Election of officers (continued)
- Organization of work

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: I am happy to report that, as I indicated yesterday, the African Group has been able to nominate another candidate for a vice-chairmanship of the Commission - namely, Morocco. If there is no objection to that nomination, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Morocco as a Vice-Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at the current session.

It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: As I pointed out at our last plenary meeting, on Friday, since the organization of work regarding agenda items 7, 8 and 9 has so far not been concluded, the Commission should devote its efforts this week to considering and concluding - as we hope - agenda items 4, 5 and 6. These items relate, respectively, to the arms race and nuclear disarmament, the reduction of military budgets, and South Africa's nuclear capability. In this connection, the Secretariat has prepared a work timetable for this week. It is contained in Informal Working Paper No. 1, which has been distributed to all delegations. Of course, this work timetable is only indicative; it is flexible and subject to modification if circumstances so require.

Does any representative wish to comment on the timetable for this week?

That does not appear to be the case, and I therefore take it that the timetable for this week is by and large acceptable to delegations.

I see that Ambassador Engo of the Cameroon is with us today. I welcome him - also as a Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

Mr. Konstantinov (Bulgaria): On behalf of the delegations of the German Democratic Republic and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as well as on its own behalf, my delegation has submitted a working paper on item 8, "Curbing the naval arms race". Regarding it as an important issue that has been neglected for a long time, the Bulgarian delegation makes some suggestions in the working paper for a possible approach to discussing and seeking mutually acceptable ways and means for more detailed consideration in the Commission. The Bulgarian delegation expects due attention to be given to the working paper, and is prepared to discuss any other ideas and proposals on this item.
Mr. ENGO (Cameroon): First, Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much for the very kind words of welcome you addressed to me and my delegation. I assure you and the Commission we shall make the best contribution we can, within our limits. You can count on our co-operation.

I want merely to remind the Commission about the proposals relating to item 7. We sincerely hope it will be possible for us to accept the proposal to set up a working group on that item, which is so critical, and that it will not be necessary to combine two important issues in one working group at the same time. I take it that the statement of our colleague from Bulgaria is an indication that he will not insist on having two important items discussed together in the same working group. We have always enjoyed co-operation with our colleagues from the East, and we hope that a discussion on this issue will once again demonstrate the degree of friendship and common concerns that we share and have shared for a long time.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia): My silence a few moments ago with regard to informal working paper No. 1 was, and should be interpreted as, agreement to the work schedule that you have outlined for this week, Mr. Chairman.

I was interested, Sir, in what you said about consultations continuing with regard to the other three items - items 7, 8 and 9. As this is a plenary meeting, I want to record my delegation's firm hope that we may agree to make arrangements for the conduct of the work on those three items as soon as possible. In our informal consultation on this question you made clear that there was thorough and widespread agreement that a working group should be established on item 7. My delegation supports that view, and we want to see that happen as soon as possible.

You also reported to us, Sir, on some other approaches that would be taken towards items 8 and 9, and said that because of lack of agreement on item 8 you were not in a position to bring into operation arrangements for all three of those items. That was accepted at the time of those informal consultations. But a number of us made the point that we should be seriously concerned if linkages were to be made between those items, because they are not related in substance and because the logic of such linkages would defeat us, in terms of making progress where it is available and able to be made.

Therefore, I want to record the view of my delegation, which is that when we are ready to begin work on each of these subjects in a particular fashion we should do so. For example, let us bring into existence a working group on item 7, because we are agreed about that. If further consultation is required with regard to our working procedures on other items, of course let us continue to have that consultation. But I must enter a plea that we make progress as soon as we can and
that we completely avoid what in my view would be the unacceptable idea of making progress on one subject linked to, or dependent upon, progress on another.

Mr. Konstantinov (Bulgaria): I wish first merely to add something to what the representative of Australia said - that in the last informal meeting there was disagreement not only on item 8 but also on items 7 and 9.

Secondly, no member of the Bulgarian delegation has made any linkage between the items and questions. Bulgaria clearly pointed out its position - that for my delegation all three items are equally important - and procedural problems should not be used to postpone the normal decision to create groups or find some kind of format to discuss all three items, because they are important and they are on the agenda of this year's session.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I am sure that you will be as successful as you have been so far in concluding your current consultations.

The Chairman: Consultations are under way, and I hope that I shall have further developments to report to the Commission fairly soon. It remains my hope that the consultations will lead to an acceptable arrangement with regard to the three pending items on which there has not yet been agreement on organization of work.

Mr. Campora (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): The Argentine delegation supports the proposal made by the delegation of Cameroon for the setting up of a working group on item 7 - and to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Nanna (Nigeria): Last week the representative of Cameroon said that there should be no linkage between the three new agenda items. We support the idea that there should be no linkage, and now that consultations are dragging on we appeal to you, Sir, to accelerate your consultations so that we may begin consideration of those items on which there is consensus as to the method of work.

If there is not yet consensus on any particular item, then consultations can continue with a view to reaching consensus as soon as possible. After that, consideration of that particular agenda item could begin.

Having said that, I would add that it is our understanding that the Chairman proposed - and, to the best of our knowledge, there was no objection - that with regard to agenda item 9 there would be a specific number of plenary meetings at which delegations would be able to indicate their views about the areas on which there had been progress and the areas on which there had not been progress in regard to the implementation of the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade; thereafter a drafting group or a contact group would be
established to put together, as recommendations to the General Assembly, the ideas expressed in plenary meetings. As I said earlier, we have no objection to this procedure suggested by the Chairman.

I would therefore repeat my appeal to the Chairman to accelerate his consultations so that we may begin our work on those items on which there is consensus on the procedure. There could be further consultations on the remaining items in order to reach consensus.

Mr. Roche (Canada): First, I should like again to express appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, for your patience in attempting to resolve the question of the way in which the three new items will be dealt with by the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I think, however, that it is only realistic to note that everyone's patience has a limit. Today, we are in the second day of the second week of this session of the Disarmament Commission. The cost of holding formal meetings here is considerable.

I believe that has been an expression of overwhelming support for the immediate establishment of a working group on item 7. We have noted the important contribution that the Cameroon delegation has already made on this subject, which is so closely related to the manner in which the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations will be observed from the point of view of seriously considering the United Nations system in relation to what further steps can be taken to enhance the prospects for measures on disarmament. Item 7 is mature, and it calls for our urgent attention and some immediate work on it.

I would respectfully request you, Mr. Chairman, to inquire of the Commission this morning whether or not there is any objection to our proceeding immediately to the establishment of a working group on agenda item 7.

The representative of Nigeria has said that his delegation is prepared - and I would think most delegations would be prepared - to have item 9, on the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade, reviewed in plenary meeting, for the purpose of establishing a drafting group to submit a report on the item. I say this because of the importance and maturity of agenda item 9 as well.

With respect to agenda item 8, we recognize the importance of the item. We also know that the report of the expert group will be submitted later this year. We are prepared to have the plenary Commission discuss agenda item 8 and decide the manner in which it wishes to move the item forward.

It is possible for us to make some progress today. I would respectfully ask whether or not it is feasible to consider proceeding immediately on agenda item 7.
Mrs. OSODE (Liberia): I shall be brief because part of what I had intended to say has already been said by the representative of Canada.

I too should like to know if there is indeed any objection to the establishment of a working group. A consensus does seem to have emerged for the establishment of such a working group. We are certainly prepared to participate in such a group. As the Commission knows, in a resolution the General Assembly requested the Commission to give this item priority. This session of the Commission will soon be over, and we have not yet decided anything, either in plenary meeting or in a working group.

My delegation therefore goes along with the hope expressed by some representatives that this matter will be resolved at this meeting.

Mr. THIELICKE (German Democratic Republic): I support the approach of the representative of Nigeria on agenda item 9. It is my delegation's understanding that the same approach will be taken to agenda item 8. Actually, you proposed this some days ago, Mr. Chairman. I appeal to the Western States not to prevent the Commission from taking up agenda item 8 in a business-like manner.

The representative of Canada has just pointed to the cost of our meetings. Indeed, I think we should not go on discussing organizational questions but should schedule some meetings on agenda item 8, on curbing the naval arms race. After that, a contact group could be established to draft the pertinent conclusions.

I repeat that I think we should get down to solving this question.

Mr. KORNEENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): My delegation also would like to make a few comments on the present item.

As you have already noted, Mr. Chairman, consultations are continuing on the organization of our work on several urgent items, notably items 7, 8 and 9. Unfortunately no apparent agreement or consensus has yet emerged. For example, we are not at all convinced by the argument that it is necessary, or even possible, to create a working group on items 7 and 8 without creating a working group on item 9.

Indeed, we are somewhat surprised by that approach: we feel that one cannot separate certain agenda items while discriminating against others.

As the representative of Bulgaria said, a document has been introduced today on agenda item 8. This is an item that deserves careful consideration and, in my delegation's view, does warrant the creation of a working group.

Mr. de La BAUME (France) (interpretation from French): The representative of Liberia asked whether there were any objections to the establishment of a working group on item 7. I am not aware of any.
This being a fundamental question, I should like the working group to be set up as soon as possible.

Mr. Konstantinov (Bulgaria): I would remind representatives that consultations have now reached the final stages. Indeed, I hope that they will continue. You might wish in the near future, Mr. Chairman, to report to the Disarmament Commission on this matter.

As to the urgency of the problem that has been raised by the representative of Canada, among others, a programme of work for this week has been adopted today. It is not in vain that the Disarmament Commission has been awaiting the conclusion of those consultations: we have enough other work for this week; I think we can finish our useful consultations and that they will help bring the work of the Disarmament Commission to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Aboulnassr (Egypt): Mr. Chairman, this is the first time that I have participated in the important work of this Commission, and, I must confess, I am somewhat confused.

We have been speaking of a contact group, we have been speaking of a drafting committee, we have been speaking of Working Group I and Working Group II. We are not moving one step forward. We have been discussing this over and over again. I do not really understand what the problem is, Sir.

Listening to this discussion, one cannot help but be more convinced of the importance and validity of item 7, introduced by Cameroon. I think this very discussion proves that this item is extremely important and that we should give it priority. There should be a review not only of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament but also of the role of this Commission, in the light of the numerous organs that we are talking about without really being able to concentrate on one issue or another.

I do support the representative of Canada in his assessment that there is agreement – should someone disagree, let him say so – at least on the creation of some sort of a group to be entrusted with the consideration of item 7.

Although all items are equally important, some warrant the creation of working groups. That is something to be considered, but we can come to that decision at a later stage, after having heard the views of the delegation of Bulgaria on item 8, among others. Thereafter, if agreement seems possible, we can entrust the item to a working group.
(Mr. Aboulnasr, Egypt)

To sum up, I hope that, should someone have objections to the suggestion that we should immediately establish a working group on item 7, let him say so; I have not heard anyone specifically say that he is against the creation of such a body. From that point, we could move forward. Let us deal with each item on its own merits. At the moment, however, we are trying to deal with them as a group and are becoming bogged down.

Mr. MARTYNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): My delegation largely shares the concerns expressed by many representatives at today's meeting regarding the immediate need to begin work on the whole agenda of the Commission. I emphasize, however, that the entire agenda has been adopted; hence we should not delay our consideration of it.

Considering what has been said here today at this official plenary meeting, we shall not very likely be able to solve immediately all the problems that have been discussed during the past week and a half. Inasmuch as consultations are still in progress - as you said at the beginning of your statement, Mr. Chairman, they are drawing to a conclusion - we would ask you, Sir, to continue them with no interference in this delicate process.

The CHAIRMAN: If there are no further speakers, I would merely seek the permission of the Commission to allow me to continue with the consultations. I hope that it will be possible to conclude them expeditiously and successfully.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.