AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 1 March 1976, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRMAN declared open the sixth session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.167/L.8)

2. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/31/INF/2)

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the General Assembly, on renewing the mandate of the Committee by resolution 3469 (XXX), had requested the Committee to include in its report at the thirty-first session an analytical study of the conclusions contained in its report to the thirty-first session (A/10028, paras. 40-44), as well as observations and recommendations relating to its mandate. The General Assembly had also reaffirmed its resolution 3260 (XXIX) 'in its entirety', and the provisions of that resolution would therefore continue to guide the Committee in its deliberations, which would, as before, proceed by consensus. Naturally, the consensus procedure embraced the nuclear Powers who co-operated or maintained contact with the Committee.

4. The membership of the Committee was unchanged, as was its Bureau, although there had been a few changes in representation: two of the three Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Ludwiczak (Poland) and Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar (Peru), having been appointed to other duties, had been replaced by the current permanent representatives of their countries to the United Nations, Mr. Jaroszef (Poland) and Mr. Alzamora (Peru).

5. He informed the Committee that the representative of the German Democratic Republic had asked to participate in the Committee's work as an observer. If there was no objection, he would take it that, as in 1975, the Committee agreed to that request.

6. It was so decided.

7. Mr. BJÖRNERSTEDT (Secretary of the Committee) said that in resolution 3415 (XXX) the General Assembly had endorsed a series of criteria for the preparation of meeting records, the application of which was the subject of a note by the Secretary-General (A/31/INF/2). In future, therefore, procedural debates and discussions concerning the adoption of the report would no longer be recorded in the summary records of the Committee, which would deal essentially with questions of substance and whose length would be limited.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that he was sure that members of the Committee would be the first to want criteria which they themselves had endorsed by adopting the relevant General Assembly resolution and which were dictated by the need for economy put into practice. The criteria should not, however, be treated as absolutely rigid rules, and the Committee was free to apply them with discrimination and to adapt them, if necessary, to the requirements of its work.
9. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said that it should be possible to exercise some flexibility in interpreting the criteria.

10. It was decided to renew the mandate of the Working Group and to keep its membership unchanged.

GENERAL DEBATE

11. Mr. OVINKIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference was assuming a great responsibility vis-à-vis the United Nations and all those who devoted themselves to the cause of peace and the security of nations. The struggle to end the arms race and achieve disarmament was becoming increasingly important inasmuch as the pace of the arms race, stimulated by aggressive imperialist circles, was constantly accelerating: expenditure on armaments throughout the world had amounted to $300 billion in 1975, in other words, it had increased by almost 50 per cent in 15 years; vast resources, which could have been devoted to the well-being of peoples, were thus being swallowed up. All countries should combine their efforts to end that baleful process, because any delay in finding a solution to the problem could have very serious consequences.

12. It was for that reason that the twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which was in progress in Moscow, had emphasized that one of the main foreign policy concerns of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and of the Soviet Government was the struggle to end the arms race, which demanded the application of vigorous measures and the unity of all peace-loving forces. In that connexion, Mr. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, had underlined in his report to the twenty-fifth Congress that the convening of a world disarmament conference, supported by the majority of the Member States of the United Nations, was of special importance.

13. The key element in the programme for continuing this struggle for international peace and co-operation, freedom and the independence of peoples which had just been proposed by the Soviet Union was the action programme for ending the arms race. The purpose of the latter programme was to halt the arms race, which was a threat to peace, and to bring about a reduction in arms stockpiles and general disarmament. No effort should be spared to secure the conclusion of a new Soviet-United States agreement on the limitation of strategic weapons and of international treaties on the general and complete cessation of nuclear weapons testing, on the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons, on banning the creation of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new weapons systems and on prohibiting action to influence the environment and climate for military and other hostile purposes. Moreover, the negotiations on the reduction of existing armed forces and armaments in Central Europe should be resumed and as soon as the first practical measures to that end had been agreed upon, military détente should be pursued in that region. Similarly, the military budgets of many States, which were growing steadily, should be systematically reduced. Finally, the World Disarmament Conference should be convened without delay. In other words, the Soviet Union was inviting all States to direct their efforts to the adoption of practical measures to limit and halt the arms race. In that context, the convening of a world disarmament conference was a matter of special urgency.

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14. In his delegation's view, those who were opposed to disarmament and were participating in the arms race should no longer be allowed to obstruct the efforts of the overwhelming majority of the States of the world; it was high time for the Ad Hoc Committee to stand up firmly to those who were encouraging the arms race and for its work to take a decisive turn.

15. The tasks assigned to the Ad Hoc Committee by General Assembly resolution 3469 (XXX) gave it every opportunity to awake from its slumber and devote itself to practical and serious work. The Ad Hoc Committee had been instructed, first, to analyse the conclusions contained in the report it had submitted the previous year, which were largely concerned with the subjects to be considered at the Conference. In 1976, therefore, the Committee should not lose its way in the maze of a general debate, but should decide which questions were to be considered by the World Disarmament Conference, if it was not to disobey the General Assembly resolution and play into the hands of supporters of the arms race. In resolution 3469 (XXX) the Ad Hoc Committee was also requested to submit observations and recommendations concerning its mandate. That meant that the great majority of Member States of the United Nations were tired of seeing the work of the Committee proceed in a vicious circle owing to the supporters of the arms race; it was time the Committee freed itself from the influence of certain Powers and decided to fulfil its responsibilities. It was for that reason that its mandate should be amended to enable it to make progress in the preparations for the Conference. Finally, resolution 3469 (XXX) emphasized the responsibility placed on the Ad Hoc Committee itself and offered it real scope for progress. Its consultations with the nuclear Powers would, of course, remain its principal task, but those consultations should no longer obstruct its work. On the basis of resolution 3469 (XXX), the Committee could therefore embark on a new phase of its activities and deal with practical preparations for convening the Conference.

16. The World Disarmament Conference would be a meeting at which all countries could, on an equal footing, express opinions on disarmament as a whole, as it affected weapons of mass destruction and those of the traditional type, and armed forces. Such an exchange of views would enable the position of all States on the problems of disarmament to be placed on record and make it possible to decide on the most effective means of resolving those problems. The Conference would help States to take concerted measures in the sphere of disarmament and considerably strengthen the role of the United Nations in that sphere. It was that approach that the Ad Hoc Committee should adopt in striving to have the Conference convened as early as possible.

17. The Soviet Union was in favour of convening the Conference in the very near future; it was proud to say that communism and peace, communism and disarmament, were inseparable. It urged all those who were striving for peace, security, freedom, independence and social progress to follow its example. The Ad Hoc Committee could, of course, also allow itself to be manipulated by those who were obstructing disarmament by every means available and were dragging the world into the insensate vortex of the arms race, but if there were Powers that were following and encouraging that race, it was the Committee's duty to denounce those responsible. That was the only effective way of bringing pressure to bear on those Powers which, conscious of the vileness of their motives, preferred to weave their plots in the dark.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.