AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 3 March 1976, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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General debate (continued)

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

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) reiterated his country's steadfast support for the Soviet Union's proposal to convene a world disarmament conference, a proposal which was one of the significant political initiatives of modern times. He quoted from a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session stressing the responsibility of all States, particularly the major Powers, to contribute to the process of negotiations and constructive disarmament measures, the most suitable forum for such efforts being a world disarmament conference. He also quoted from a resolution on foreign policy adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party calling for an extension of détente to the military sphere and an end to the arms race through such action as the convening of a world disarmament conference. He was pleased to note that the overwhelming majority of Member States favoured the convening of such a conference, and noted that support for the proposal had been reiterated at the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and by the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries held in Lima in August 1975. He was confident that the non-aligned countries would express similar support at their forthcoming meeting in Colombo.

2. The idea of convening a world disarmament conference assumed greater momentum and political relevance each year. What was needed was the political will of all States, dictated not by expediency but by genuine concern for the future of mankind. A clearly defined mandate had been provided by General Assembly resolution 3260 (XXIX) and would be supplemented by an analytical study of the conclusions in the Ad Hoc Committee's report to the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly as well as any observations and recommendations which the Ad Hoc Committee might deem appropriate relating to its mandate.

3. The Ad Hoc Committee should undertake the requisite preparatory work, including the formulation of the agenda and procedures for such a conference. One of the main tasks of the working group responsible for preparing the Ad Hoc Committee's draft report to the General Assembly should be to draft specific agenda items on the basis of the outline worked out in 1975 and the main trends of the current debate. The Ad Hoc Committee could consider the draft report in July and perhaps finish its work at that time, thus making a third session unnecessary.

4. The Ad Hoc Committee had spent enough time examining general views and suggestions. The United Nations should now concentrate on implementing existing initiatives and proposals rather than seek new mechanisms, forms of negotiations and meetings.

5. The fact that the delegations of the Soviet Union, France and the United Kingdom were attending the Ad Hoc Committee's meetings testified to the significance of the problem under discussion. He regretted that the other two nuclear Powers had not chosen to emerge from their self-imposed isolation.

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6. His delegation was convinced that progress towards the early convening of a world disarmament conference would be a significant contribution to the consolidation of the historical transition from the policy of confrontation to international détente and co-operation and to progress in the field of disarmament.

7. Mr. ALZAMORA (Peru) said that it was more urgent than ever to halt the uncontrolled arms race, which consumed enormous financial, technological, scientific and human resources. That race had grave implications for the already distressing economic and social situation of the vast majority of mankind and for world peace and security. The political and moral pressure of world public opinion, which had prompted progress in the elimination of colonialism and racism and in defence of human rights, should now be brought to bear on the question of disarmament and should encourage the great Powers, which had a special responsibility in that field, to put a stop to the arms race. He warned the Ad Hoc Committee that the acceleration of the senseless arms race at the expense of the legitimate aspirations of millions of human beings for a better life would spark tensions fraught with danger for world security.

8. The developing countries which were members of the Ad Hoc Committee had the political and moral responsibility to do their utmost to break the present impasse in the field of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and to search for a solid consensus in favour of convening a world disarmament conference. Despite the many years of debate on disarmament in various forums, it had not yet proved possible to reduce or put a halt to nuclear weapons tests, and disarmament rhetoric continued to flow in defence of a status quo which had ominous implications, particularly for the developing countries. The arms race threatened to lead inexorably to the consolidation of the military hegemony of the great Powers and the establishment of a system of political and economic domination. However, the effectiveness of the development process in the developing countries required collective security, the renunciation of hegemony and the democratization of world power following general and complete disarmament, above all, nuclear disarmament. Latin America was determined not to allow the arms race to be imported to the Latin American continent.

9. The international community agreed that the uncontrolled increase of weapons constituted a threat to peace and security and hampered urgent development efforts and that all countries had a stake in questions of disarmament and should participate in discussions on them. Accordingly, all States should demonstrate the political will to make the World Disarmament Conference the appropriate forum for consideration of all questions relating to disarmament and should participate in its work. The Ad Hoc Committee's major objective should be to encourage States to demonstrate that will. Indeed, the great majority of States wished such a conference to be convened. He recalled that the idea had originated with the non-aligned countries, which, at their recent ministerial meeting in Lima, had indicated an alternative course of action should the current impasse continue.

10. In view of the foregoing considerations, the Ad Hoc Committee should continue to study the views of Governments on the Conference and should pursue its
consideration of the objectives of the Conference. It should also prepare an analytical study of the conclusions contained in its report to the General Assembly in 1975, with a view to presenting to the General Assembly a clear analysis of the situation to enable it to decide what course of action should be followed. It should be borne in mind that the observations and recommendations which the Committee might make concerning its mandate pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 3469 (XXX) should encourage all States, particularly the nuclear Powers, to overcome their misunderstandings and participate in the Committee's work.

11. Mr. GROZEV (Bulgaria) said that now more than ever before it was of paramount importance to put an end to the arms race and bring about disarmament. Mankind did not want to go on living under the constant threat of nuclear annihilation. Since the previous session of the Committee the first practical step towards genuine disarmament had been taken, namely, the entry into force of the international Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapons. At the same time the sphere of application of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons had been broadened. One of the most important tasks at present was the adoption of effective measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and achieve effective disarmament. There could be no doubt that the World Disarmament Conference could play a particularly constructive role in that regard. The United Nations had recently adopted a number of important resolutions in the field of disarmament, and the main task at present was to implement those resolutions. That was a difficult task, however, since a number of States with a large military potential were not showing the political will needed to end the arms race. In addition, the opponents of détente and disarmament were still active despite the fact that the possibilities of imperialism, reaction and military adventurism had been significantly limited. If progress was to be achieved in the field of disarmament, vigorous action on the part of all forces of peace and goodwill would be needed and no time should be lost in convening the Conference, which would formulate the fundamental principles and trends of disarmament on a world scale. All States should participate in the preparations for the Conference. It was time for those who claimed that they were not opposed to disarmament to take an active part in the work of the Committee and stop sabotaging it. Political détente must be accompanied by military détente. A significant step forward could be made if the two remaining nuclear Powers joined the Committee in its efforts to prepare for the convening of the Conference as quickly as possible.

12. The struggle to halt the arms race and bring about general and complete disarmament was one of the keystones of his country's foreign policy. It saw détente and disarmament as the way to create more favourable conditions for its task of peaceful socialist construction. The world was now at the stage where it needed to give priority to translating the principles of peaceful coexistence into practical day-to-day acts. In order to broaden and consolidate the constructive changes which had recently taken place in international relations, all States must adhere to existing international agreements in the field of disarmament, bring about a 10 per cent reduction in the military budgets initially of the five permanent members of the Security Council and subsequently of other countries, and
convene the World Disarmament Conference in the near future. In that regard, the Committee had an important role to play since it was the body responsible for preparing for the convening of the first Disarmament Conference in world history.

13. Europe had set the example by showing that, with the necessary political will, countries with different social systems could reach agreement on such urgent problems as security and intergovernmental co-operation. The progress made in Europe should serve not only as an encouragement but also as a concrete example for the Committee's work. It showed that what was most necessary was goodwill and persistence in harmonizing views and overcoming obstacles.

14. The discussions and documents on the subject indicated that the great majority of States welcomed the idea of convening the Disarmament Conference as a matter of urgency. The Committee must bear that in mind in beginning its work in accordance with its renewed mandate under General Assembly resolution 3469 (XXX). The question of strengthening the role of the United Nations in various fields, including disarmament, was currently being discussed. If Member States truly wished to strengthen the role of the United Nations in general and in the field of disarmament in particular, they must first demonstrate that they respected and implemented their own decisions. Since 1971 the General Assembly had at each session adopted resolutions on the convening of a world disarmament conference. The Committee set up to consider the question had already been meeting for three years. Governments had described their positions in detail in intergovernmental and non-governmental forums. All agreed that the convening of a world disarmament conference was an urgent political necessity, and the time had come to begin making serious preparations for it. It would therefore be illogical to say that measures should be taken to enhance the role of the Organization in the field of disarmament and at the same time to continue to flout the five relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Conference should make a comprehensive study, with the participation of all States, of the problems of disarmament in all its aspects with a view to adopting decisive measures to halt the arms race and bring about effective disarmament.

15. Some argued that the Committee's mandate was limited and that the Committee had strictly defined tasks. Everyone knew, however, that the main obstacle to the achievement of what was called for by the spirit, if not by the letter, of the relevant General Assembly resolution lay not in the mandate of the Committee but in the unwillingness of certain nuclear Powers to participate in its work. In the current year the Committee should work actively to overcome the obstacles which had been deliberately placed in the way of its work. The Committee must, and could within the framework of its mandate, recommend to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session that the World Disarmament Conference should be convened in the near future and that practical preparations for it should be undertaken. Although some might say that it was premature to speak about that, his delegation felt that the Committee should clarify the question at the beginning of its work for the current year. If it carried out the task entrusted to it in paragraph 3 of resolution 3469 (XXX), the Committee would be making a significant step towards
the implementation of that resolution. All the Committee needed to enable it to carry out its work was persistence and goodwill. Those who were participating in the Committee's work shared a sincere desire to achieve progress and should therefore not frustrate the behind-the-scenes manoeuvres of those who were not only failing to participate but even trying to undermine the Committee's activities. The Committee must so organize its work as to prevent the opponents of disarmament from standing in the way of the will of the great majority of States and distorting agreed viewpoints and recommendations.

16. He was convinced that the only correct interpretation of the Committee's mandate was that it must direct its efforts towards establishing a solid basis for beginning work on the practical preparations for the Conference, which meant agreeing on the main tasks of the Conference, its agenda and the date on which and place where it would be convened. As indicated in resolution 3469 (XXX), paragraph 3, the Committee would need to formulate specific recommendations in accordance with the wishes of the great majority of States and the peoples of the world. The surest way of unmasking those who stood in the way of disarmament and of overcoming their opposition would be to place before them specific and clear-cut decisions aimed at implementing resolution 3469 (XXX). They would then have to adopt a more responsible policy. At its current session the Committee should therefore clearly define the tasks of the Working Group so that it could submit to the Committee at its next session a draft report in accordance with resolution 3469 (XXX), paragraph 3. The Committee could then give serious consideration to that report and the recommendations contained in it.

17. Mr. JOZAN (Hungary) said that his country's consistent and whole-hearted support for the convening of a world disarmament conference had been prompted by its policy in pursuit of peace and international co-operation and by the tremendous human and material losses it had suffered in two world wars. The Ad Hoc Committee was pursuing the important goal of strengthening international security and bringing about general and complete disarmament.

18. Progress towards the convening of the Conference thus far had been slow and specific steps must be taken in order to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. All States appeared to agree in principle that the Conference should be convened, but a consensus had yet to be reached on its timing, agenda and objectives.

19. The Ad Hoc Committee must analyse the opinions of States and undertake the highly important preparatory work for the Conference. He deplored the fact that one or two nuclear Powers had been posing obstacles to the convening of the Conference for some time. Nevertheless, he was optimistic that the overwhelming support of Member States for the convening of the Conference would prompt those countries which opposed it to realize the futility of their attitude. A well-prepared world conference would give new impetus to efforts to settle all aspects of the disarmament question and would make it possible to formulate a programme for general and complete disarmament.
20. Mr. OVINNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, although he agreed with the comments made by the representative of Peru, he wished to express his views on certain matters raised by that representative. His delegation agreed that it was necessary for all States to participate in discussions on disarmament and the proper way of doing so would be by convening a conference on the subject. The representative of Peru had stressed the particular responsibility of the major Powers. However, the major Powers took different stands. The Soviet Union had repeatedly initiated international and bilateral discussions on disarmament and it was not its fault that not all of its proposals had met with the agreement of other countries. There was one country—China—which did not even want to discuss disarmament and was attempting to block possible solutions to the problem. As the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had observed, the limits of bilateral agreements had almost been reached in some areas and there were fields where the conclusion of bilateral agreements was unthinkable. For example, one or two countries could not reduce their military budgets while others continued to increase them. In the General Assembly the Soviet Union had proposed a general reduction of military budgets. It was not its fault that no agreement had been reached. The increasing importance of convening a disarmament conference was obvious. Such a conference would provide an impetus to disarmament and a forum for achieving agreement.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.