AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 July 1976, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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Consideration of the draft report of the Committee

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The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE (A/AC.167/L.9)

1. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that, in the French version of the draft report (A/AC.167/L.9), the last sentence of the text of paragraph 26 had been omitted.

2. Mr. STRASSER (Austria) said that, in the opinion of his delegation, the draft report not only constituted a well-balanced text but also provided a sound basis for the adoption by the Committee of a comprehensive report to the General Assembly. The transmission of a detailed review of the work done thus far by the Ad Hoc Committee and of the views expressed by Governments would greatly facilitate the General Assembly's deliberations as to the future course of action with regard to the question of a world disarmament conference.

3. It was clear from the draft report that no break-through had yet been achieved that would make the convening of a world disarmament conference feasible in the near future. That could not, however, be attributed to the Working Group or to the Committee itself. On the contrary, the Committee had done its utmost to keep alive the idea of such a conference, an idea that was welcomed by the overwhelming majority of Member States. In the opinion of his delegation, the involvement in the Committee's work of all five nuclear-weapon States - although through different channels - was a unique feature of the Committee, as could be seen from the draft report. It was also true that the Committee had in recent years established useful machinery for the necessary consultations with regard to the question of convening such a conference.

4. His delegation took the view that, in transmitting to the General Assembly the third report on its work, the Ad Hoc Committee seemed to have completed its study of the current attitude of States with regard to that question, and it might therefore be useful to find new, realistic approaches for its future work. It would be most helpful if the Committee could maintain its contacts with those nuclear Powers which were not prepared at the current stage to participate in a world disarmament conference in order to perceive possible changes in their respective attitudes, and it might also be useful to examine more closely the real background to the attitude of those nuclear Powers. In any case, he felt that the Committee should avoid adopting an "all-or-nothing" strategy. Hence, it might be useful to explore in the future gradual steps that would pave the way for the convening of a world disarmament conference and at the same time ensure that the progress achieved during the past three years was not lost.

5. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) said the principal trend of current international relations continued to be that of promoting détente, and the United Nations should try to ensure that that process was strengthened and made universal and irreversible. The best way to achieve that goal was to extend political détente to the military sphere, which required substantial progress in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. His delegation strongly believed that that was feasible, since détente had created the indispensable degree of mutual trust among States, and that it was also necessary, for unless the continuing arms race
was ended there could be neither détente nor trust, and the threat of a nuclear conflict would persist, as had been stressed by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, speaking at the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe.

6. His delegation took the view that, while there were no reasons for excessive optimism, neither could it be claimed that the record of accomplishment in the disarmament field was virtually non-existent. In fact, current disarmament negotiation machinery was a multidimensional structure: at the bilateral level, mention could be made of the ongoing negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States within the context of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks; at the regional level, talks were proceeding at Vienna concerning the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe, talks in which Poland was taking an active part; finally, at the global level, reference could be made to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and to discussions within the United Nations, which had culminated in the adoption of a number of resolutions by the General Assembly.

7. In those circumstances, what was actually needed was an effective impetus to all those efforts in favour of disarmament, and the idea of a world disarmament conference thus constituted a logical and indispensable complement to current negotiations and discussions. Such a conference, open to all States and devoted to a discussion of all aspects of disarmament, would constitute a truly universal forum to seek progress towards general and complete disarmament under international control, in both nuclear and conventional fields.

8. In recent months there had been new evidence that the idea of a world disarmament conference continued to be a living and most timely one. It should be noted that direct reference had been made to that question in various important international documents, in joint communiqués and within the United Nations itself. In its foreign policy, Poland had given particular attention to that aspect, as could be seen from the talks which it had held with various Governments, including the talks held in May 1976 between the Prime Ministers of Poland and France and the visit to Warsaw of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal. Furthermore, a large number of States had referred to the conference in their communications to the Secretary-General in connexion with the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament and during the general debate which that Committee had held in June 1976.

9. His delegation felt that consideration of the draft report submitted by the Working Group (A/AC.167/L.9) indicated clearly that the Ad Hoc Committee had made considerable progress during the past three years, and that the time had come for specific preparatory work, including the elaboration of a more detailed agenda and procedure for a world disarmament conference.

10. As a member of the Working Group, his delegation had participated in the preparation of the draft report and, despite its mixed feelings with regard to the final text, it had approved the report in the Working Group in a spirit of...
co-operation. Nevertheless, it wished to draw attention to its impression that the views of those States that did not favour the convening of a world disarmament conference had been given a somewhat exaggerated presentation; furthermore, it did not believe that mere reference to a consideration of the advisability of the continuation of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee was a fair reflection of the views of all States, the majority of which felt that the conference should be convened promptly, with efficient and adequate preparation. To achieve that aim, the Committee would need a broad mandate, enabling it to cope properly with all aspects of the convening of such a conference.

11. At the same time, the positive aspects of the draft report should be noted, especially the fact that, for the first time in that field, it had proved possible to submit at an early stage a document that was likely to be adopted as the Committee's report to the General Assembly. His delegation was accordingly prepared to support the Chairman's suggestion that the Committee should adopt the report and should conclude its session as soon as possible, thus setting for other United Nations organs an example of economy and efficiency in fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them by the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.