AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 April, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.167/L.10)

2. The provisional agenda was adopted.

COMPOSITION OF THE BUREAU

3. The CHAIRMAN announced that Mr. Nyanakabu (Burundi) had been assigned to another post and would be unable to continue as Vice-Chairman of the Committee. The delegation of Burundi had requested that he be replaced in that function by Mr. Simbani. If he heard no objection, he would take it that Mr. Simbani was elected to the post of Vice-Chairman.

4. It was so decided.

5. The CHAIRMAN announced that Mr. Elias (Spain) had been assigned to another post and would be unable to continue as Rapporteur of the Committee. The delegation of Spain had requested that he be replaced in that function by Mr. Lopez-Chicheti. If he heard no objection, he would take it that Mr. Lopez-Chicheti was elected to the post of Rapporteur.

6. It was so decided.

7. Mr. SIMBANI (Burundi) pledged his country's support to the cause of disarmament and world peace and his own personal cooperation in helping the Ad Hoc Committee to achieve its objectives.

8. Mr. LOPEZ-CHICHERI (Spain) pledged his cooperation to the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

9. The CHAIRMAN announced that he had received a letter from Mr. Florin, the representative of the German Democratic Republic, requesting that he be admitted as an observer to the work of the current session of the Ad Hoc Committee. As that request had been made and accepted at the previous session of the Committee, he suggested that, if there was no objection, the Committee should admit the representative of the German Democratic Republic as an observer.

10. It was so decided.
ORGANIZATION OF WORK

OTHER MATTERS CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE

11. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) proposed that the two agenda items in question should be dealt with together.

12. It was so decided.

13. Mr. OIYENIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union favoured convening a world disarmament conference so as to enable all countries to present their views on the full range of disarmament problems. He recalled that his country had presented at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly a series of specific proposals for curtailing the arms race which reflected the views of many other countries. Efforts to curb the arms race had to be universal, and must therefore be discussed in the broadest possible forum, namely a world disarmament conference, which alone could adopt effective decisions. That proposal had the support of the overwhelming majority of States, and the task of convening such a conference was therefore one of the most urgent ones facing the international community.

14. With regard to the Committee's practical work, his delegation felt that the Chairman, with the aid of the other officers, should continue to maintain contact with the nuclear Powers. Information deriving from such contacts could be presented at subsequent meetings of the Committee and reflected in the latter's report to the General Assembly. He also proposed that the Committee recommend in its report that the Assembly include the question of a world disarmament conference as a separate item on the agenda of the special session devoted to disarmament. Such a recommendation would be fully in keeping with the Committee's mandate and would also be a practical way of indicating the connexion between the world disarmament conference and the special session called for in General Assembly resolution 31/190. It would also be fully in keeping with the position of the non-aligned countries at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government held at Colombo.

15. He further proposed that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that the latter instruct it to prepare a report for the special session on the convening of a world disarmament conference. The Committee already submitted reports to the regular sessions which had the world disarmament conference on the agenda, and it was all the more important to do the same for the special session devoted exclusively to disarmament. What was intended, of course, was an interim report of the Committee, which would subsequently pursue its work on the conference in the light of the results of the special session.

16. With regard to the organization of the Committee's work, his delegation felt that the Committee should follow the procedures which had worked well in the past. It should also, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/190, adopt a decision calling for the Working Group to prepare its draft report for consideration at the second part of the session in September.
17. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) recalled that, in opening the organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, the Secretary-General had pointed out that the United Nations could hardly be expected to function on the basis of the Charter and of international law unless it succeeded in making major progress in the field of disarmament. Only then would it be possible to create a system of world order based on collective responsibility in a climate of international confidence. With the arms race constituting the single most massive obstacle to effective progress, the need for disarmament was becoming increasingly urgent.

18. The world disarmament conference had been conceived to meet that need and, as a product of growing political détente, had been aimed at extending to the military sphere the global progress achieved in the political sphere. Those who opposed it did so on grounds of expediency rather than out of a desire to fulfil their countries' true aspirations.

19. The idea of convening a world disarmament conference had gained ground over the years, in spite of obstruction and delaying tactics, and had been given further impetus by the decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which would help to ensure that adequate preparations were made for the conference.

20. The General Assembly, by requesting the Ad Hoc Committee to submit a report to the Assembly at its thirty-second session "in accordance with its established procedure" (resolution 31/190), had acknowledged that the mandate of the Committee had not diminished in scope, and, indeed, the current session of the Committee was both timely and necessary if the United Nations was to respond to the needs of the current international situation.

21. In organizing its work for the coming year, the Ad Hoc Committee would have to bear in mind three major substantive aspects of its work: firstly, it was still operating with machinery for disarmament negotiations which had taken more than 25 years to establish and which needed an effective stimulus that could only be provided by a universal forum such as the world disarmament conference. That machinery involved bilateral, regional and global discussions and included the SALT negotiations and Vienna talks, which he was sure would succeed provided that they were based on the premise of the undiminished security of all the parties concerned. Their success would no doubt positively influence the efforts undertaken in global forums.

22. Secondly, the idea of convening a world disarmament conference had been the outcome of consistency of action, particularly on the part of the non-aligned countries. Successive high-level meetings of those countries, culminating in the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Colombo, had issued declarations and resolutions in support of a world disarmament conference. In addition, the socialist countries had voiced continuous support for such a conference, as could be seen from the documents of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the States Parties to the Warsaw Treaty, held at Bucharest in November 1976. In recent months, it had been the foreign policy of
his own country to reaffirm the desirability and political utility of convening such a conference, as could be seen from a number of documents agreed upon during talks between its political leaders and those of other countries, including the non-aligned countries.

23. Thirdly, there was a close substantive and organizational link between the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the world disarmament conference. That link was inherent in the subject-matter of each of those gatherings and in the conviction that the special session should be regarded as an important stage in the process leading to the world disarmament conference. That relationship had also been reflected in General Assembly resolution 31/190 on the world disarmament conference, which had taken note of the decision to convene a special session devoted to disarmament, and in resolution 31/189 B on the special session devoted to disarmament, which had referred to the suggestion made by the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at Colombo to the effect that the agenda of the special session should include the question of convening a world disarmament conference with a view to promoting general and complete disarmament under strict international control. Both the contents of those two resolutions and the consistent position of the non-aligned countries fully coincided with his own country's approach.

24. His delegation therefore agreed that the Committee should have ample time in September to complete its work prior to the thirty-second session, so that it could fulfill its mandate "in accordance with its established procedure". By September, further comments would have been received from Governments, which would be helpful in preparing the Committee's report to the General Assembly. Accordingly, the Working Group should be authorized to prepare a draft report for final discussion and adoption at the September session.

25. His delegation also believed that, in accordance with the proposal by the non-aligned countries to include the question of convening a world disarmament conference in the agenda of the special session devoted to disarmament, the Working Group should follow developments on that subject in the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session and inform the Ad Hoc Committee accordingly. At its September session, the Ad Hoc Committee would thus be able to propose in its report that, in view of the inclusion of the convening of the world disarmament conference in the agenda of the special session, the Ad Hoc Committee should be requested to submit its comments on that subject to the special session. Such an approach would make a substantial contribution to the success both of the special session and of the world disarmament conference.

26. The CHAIRMAN noted that the members of the Bureau had met some time ago to discuss the organization of the Ad Hoc Committee's work and had presumably informed the members of their different groups of their ideas on that subject. During his own consultations with the members of the different groups, most delegations had stressed that General Assembly resolution 31/190 had been prepared on the basis of an extremely delicate compromise and that it had requested the Ad Hoc Committee to meet briefly and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second
session. Accordingly, following consultations with the Secretariat, one week had been allocated to the current session, as opposed to the three weeks normally allocated in the past. With such limited time available, the organization of the Committee’s work must differ substantially from normal practice, and it was therefore unrealistic to establish a working group within the space of one week and expect it to produce a report.

27. The representative of Poland had suggested that the current session should be very brief and deal solely with the organization of the Committee’s work and that the finalizing of the report to the General Assembly should be discussed in September. However, it would be impossible for a working group to draft a report in the meantime unless a general debate had taken place at the current session on which it could base its report. Such a general debate would require several meetings and might not make much progress at the present stage. In his view, therefore, it would be preferable to hear those members who wished to speak at the current meeting. It could then be decided whether to continue the session throughout the week or to adopt the Polish proposal and wait until the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session, so that members of the Committee would have time to consider the proposals made by the representative of the Soviet Union. If a decision was taken at the current meeting to postpone the general debate until the September session, the questions of the establishment of a working group and of the form of the report could only be discussed in September, following the general debate.

28. Mr. ENDREFFY (Hungary) observed that a number of circumstances had changed since the end of the Ad Hoc Committee’s 1976 session. At its thirty-first session, the General Assembly had decided by consensus to convene a special session devoted to disarmament in the conviction that every effort must be made to mobilize the potential of the international community to promote disarmament and that such a session would be a major step towards the final goal of general and complete disarmament. The special session — and, indeed, any disarmament action — could be successful only if it was thoroughly prepared and if participants were fully informed of each other’s views. The special session should contribute to that process. The session should not be regarded as a substitute for the world disarmament conference, for both gatherings would be major landmarks in the disarmament process. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee and that of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session must be complementary, for with mutual co-operation the special session could help to ensure that the aims of the world disarmament conference were achieved. The conference was the best framework within which to unite the international community in the fight for disarmament.

29. The Ad Hoc Committee should therefore adhere to its established working procedures, as indicated by General Assembly resolution 31/190, and the Working Group should once more be requested to draft a report for submission to the General Assembly. It was too early at the present stage to discuss the precise details of that report, but since the preparations for and the convening of the special session should add a new dimension to the world disarmament conference, the Committee should explore the possibility of creating the necessary bridge between the two events.
The Ad Hoc Committee had a record of constructive cooperation, and his delegation hoped that that record would serve as proof of the Committee's co-operative potential and as a stimulus to its future work.

30. Mr. PUTSAGMONOV (Mongolia) said that it was becoming increasingly urgent to hold a world disarmament conference. The time had come for international action to halt the arms race and to clear the way for real disarmament. That would require the efforts of all nations, both large and small, both nuclear and non-nuclear. In that connexion, he recalled that a proposal had been made at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries to include an item on the world disarmament conference on the agenda of the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. His delegation did not, of course, view the special session as a substitute for such a conference but as an important step in that direction.

31. His delegation attached great importance to the Ad Hoc Committee, which had already done much useful work. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/190, it must maintain close contact with the representatives of States possessing nuclear weapons and consider any comments submitted to it. Accordingly, his delegation supported the Soviet proposal that the Committee, when reporting to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session, should recommend the inclusion of the question of convening a world disarmament conference on the agenda of the special session as a separate item and that the General Assembly should entrust the Committee with preparing a report on that item.

32. The CHAIRMAN, noting that only 10 meetings had been scheduled, pointed out that if the Committee postponed its session until September, Governments would have had time to communicate their views and members of the Committee would accordingly be better prepared to discuss substantive matters. In addition, the Bureau would have had consultations with the nuclear Powers. The Committee could either postpone its session until September and organize its work then as it saw fit or continue the present session, hear the views of members and then set up the working group. In his view, it would be best to postpone the remainder of the session until September. Delegations could receive reminders one month before the start of the resumed session and be asked to make their general statements at the first two meetings. The Committee could then decide to have the same working group as before. The group would hold four or five meetings to prepare a draft report, leaving the remaining two meetings for the Committee to consider the report.

33. Mr. CORPMA (Mexico) said that that would be the wisest course of action. His delegation was puzzled, for it had hoped that the discussions would be kept within the framework of General Assembly resolution 31/190, which had been negotiated at length and represented a delicate compromise. The Committee had now heard new proposals which fell outside that framework. Should the Committee adopt those proposals, it would be exceeding its authority.

34. Mr. JAROCZK (Poland) said that the Chairman's suggestion coincided with his own delegation's proposal. However, since General Assembly resolution 31/190

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requested the Committee to submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session "in accordance with its established procedure", it was not a question of establishing a working group but of deciding when the group should meet and for how long.

35. The CHAIRMAN replied that the phrase in question concerned both the matter of consensus and the participation of certain Powers which were not members of the Committee. As he recalled, he had asked the Committee at each session whether it wished to establish the working group as it had been established the previous year.

36. Mr. BENSMAIL (Algeria) said that his delegation firmly supported the Chairman's proposal as well as his interpretation of the status of the existing working group and of the phrase relating to procedure.

37. Mr. LAY (Italy) agreed with the Chairman's proposal. However, there was no need to decide just yet whether the working group or the Committee itself should prepare the report to the General Assembly.

38. Mr. OWINNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had no reason for not agreeing to the proposal. However, since further information would be available by September as a result of the contacts with other nuclear Powers, he suggested that a summary of the position of the nuclear Powers should be prepared as well as a summary of the opinions already voiced in the Committee. The two summaries should be available prior to the September session. Those suggestions were intended to complement the proposal already made by the Chairman.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that while he felt that members of the Committee must be kept up to date, he believed that they would be anyway because the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament would have met by September to discuss matters of substance and the Bureau would have contacted the nuclear Powers and, as usual, would have kept all members informed of developments. He could, of course, ask the Secretariat to transmit to the Committee the summary records of the Preparatory Committee's meetings.

40. In the meantime, he noted that a number of new proposals had been made at the meeting and he hoped that all members would study them carefully. The proposals would be reproduced as extensively as possible in the record of the meeting.

41. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed that the remainder of its session should be postponed until September; that a letter should be sent to members prior to that time asking them, in view of the fact that only nine of the original 10 meetings remained, to make their general statements at the second and third meetings so that the following five meetings could be devoted to the preparation of the report and the last two to the consideration of the report; and finally, that the working group should have the same composition and follow the same procedures as it had in the past.

42. It was so decided.
43. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to receive information on the outcome of the Bureau's consultations with the nuclear Powers as well as the summary records of the discussions of the Preparatory Committee.

44. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.