AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 12 September 1977, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN reminded members of the Ad Hoc Committee that the agenda for the current session (A/AC.167/L.10) had been adopted at the last meeting of the Committee on 4 April 1977.

2. It had also been decided at that meeting that two of the nine meetings scheduled for the current session would be devoted to general debate; the following five meetings would be set aside for the Working Group, with the same composition as at the previous session, which would work in closed session; and the whole Ad Hoc Committee would reconvene for the last two scheduled meetings in order to adopt a report. The Bureau had decided to make an official recommendation to that effect, and, if he heard no objection, he would take it that that recommendation was adopted.

3. It was so decided.

4. The CHAIRMAN pointed out to members that the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament had included in its report a recommendation that the General Assembly at its thirty-second session should request the Ad Hoc Committee to submit a special report to the special session on the state of its work and deliberations.

GENERAL DEBATE

5. Mr. FOKINE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said it was appropriate that the Ad Hoc Committee should begin its work immediately after the session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. That attested to the grave concern of States at the arms race and showed their desire to take effective measures to halt it.

6. The Soviet Union worked consistently for peace and disarmament. For that reason, it favoured convening a world disarmament conference, where States could express their opinions on all aspects of the arms race and adopt a programme of practical measures for halting it. The 1978 special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be an important stage in the preparations for such a conference.

7. Progress in the struggle for peace depended primarily on the concerted efforts of all countries. The proposal to convene a world disarmament conference commanded overwhelming support: the heads of delegations of nearly 40 countries had endorsed it at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly. The Ad Hoc Committee was doing useful work in analysing views and proposals on that subject and should certainly go on with its task.

8. The mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee was twofold: to maintain close contacts with the representatives of the States possessing nuclear weapons in order to remain
currently informed of their respective attitudes, and to consider any relevant comments and observations which might be made to the Committee. The Chairman of the Committee had done considerable work pursuant to the first part of that mandate. It was, however, unfortunate that two of the nuclear Powers had still not changed their positions on the question of a world disarmament conference.

9. The inclusion of the question of a world disarmament conference in the agenda of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the recommendation of the Preparatory Committee that the Ad Hoc Committee should prepare a report for the special session, in line with the Soviet proposal to the Ad Hoc Committee made on 4 April 1977, were both important and useful decisions. The Ad Hoc Committee should now recommend to the General Assembly that the Committee be instructed to submit a report on the world disarmament conference to the special session. That would, of course, be an interim report by the Committee, which would continue its work in the light of the discussions held at the special session. The report should be prepared by the working group and should reflect the views presented by States on the convening of a world disarmament conference since the submission of the Committee's report to the thirty-first session of the General Assembly.

10. The Soviet Union's position on the need for a world disarmament conference was based on its deep interest in the adoption of effective measures for the limitation of the arms race and the achievement of a break-through in dealing with the problems of disarmament. His delegation would do all in its power to advance the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

11. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) said that, thanks to the persistent efforts of numerous States, including those of the socialist community, the idea of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and that of a world disarmament conference had become closely associated. While the proposal for a conference had contributed to the decision to hold a special session, the special session would in turn be a major preparatory stage for the conference.

12. Only the world-wide enforcement of truly binding decisions adopted by a universal forum like the world disarmament conference could provide the prompt, effective measures for disarmament which today were more necessary than ever. The international community could no longer afford half-measures, beginning and ending with solemn declarations.

13. The lack of more substantial progress in disarmament was seriously hampering the process of détente. Political détente alone would not suffice in the long run; it must be accompanied by similar developments in the military sphere.

14. Ineffective efforts at disarmament merely encouraged States to perfect their instruments of destruction. There were constant new reminders of the growing threats which the world was facing. A world disarmament conference would help to dispel many of mankind's worst fears and would offer a new stimulus to efforts to prove that détente was an irreversible and a lasting process.

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15. As a result of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, the organic link between the world disarmament conference and the special session had been further strengthened. His delegation hoped that the special session would decide on a specific date for the convening of the conference, adopt a recommendation concerning its substantive terms of reference and establish a properly mandated preparatory committee for the conference.

16. A world disarmament conference would appraise the implementation of the decisions of the special session and be empowered to adopt practical and binding disarmament measures. It could become a powerful stimulus to, and a highly authoritative forum for, international disarmament efforts.

17. The Ad Hoc Committee's report to the thirty-second session of the General Assembly should be as factual and comprehensive as possible. The world disarmament conference had been referred to in numerous governmental communications concerning the special session and in the discussion of the Preparatory Committee. It had also been dealt with extensively at the thirty-first session of the General Assembly. His delegation assumed that those and other important sources of information would, as in the past, be properly reflected in the report.

18. The report should also include a recommendation that the thirty-second session of the General Assembly extend the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee and request the Committee to submit to the special session a report containing its comments, observations and proposed conclusions on all aspects of convening a world disarmament conference.

19. His delegation would spare no effort to help the Committee adopt a report that fully reflected the present status of the idea of a world disarmament conference and the prospects for convening it as a step towards effective, concrete disarmament efforts.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.