AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 13 March 1978, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. HOVEYDA (Iran)

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

OPENING OF THE SESSION

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.167/L.12)

2. The agenda was adopted.

3. The CHAIRMAN announced that he had received a communication from the delegation of the German Democratic Republic in which it asked to be allowed to attend the meetings of the Committee as an observer. Since the same request had been made and granted at the previous session, he suggested that the Committee should accede to it.

4. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

5. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that in resolution 32/89 the General Assembly had requested the Committee to submit to it at its special session devoted to disarmament a special report on the state of its work and deliberations, and to maintain close contact with the representatives of the States possessing nuclear weapons, as well as to consider any relevant comments and observations and to submit a report to it at its thirty-third session. That, therefore, was the Committee's mandate for the current session.

6. Mr. FOKINE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that at its latest session the General Assembly had once again emphasized the danger of the arms race, which was accelerating, and the need to put an end to it, particularly in the field of nuclear weapons. All those who, like the Soviet Union and other peaceful countries, wished for lasting peace and security in the world were aware of the urgency of that task.

7. The United Nations played an increasingly important role in the field of disarmament, particularly through the active preparations for the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. As his delegation had pointed out on numerous occasions, the task of that session would be not only to hold a broad exchange of views on ways and means of dealing with the problem of disarmament at the current stage, but also to define the broad outlines of the efforts to be made by States in that key area of international relations.

8. The United Nations was obviously not the only forum in which questions relating to disarmament were debated. It would be noted that at present bilateral and multilateral negotiations on disarmament were multiplying; that testified to the serious concern felt by States and peoples over the arms race and demonstrated their determination to take effective measures to put an end to it.
9. The Soviet Union, which attached paramount importance to the settlement of disarmament problems as soon as possible, had submitted numerous constructive proposals designed to curb the arms race and promote disarmament. President Brezhnev had, inter alia, proposed important measures relating to the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the complete prohibition of nuclear tests and the renunciation of the manufacture of the neutron bomb. It was encouraging to note that those proposals had been very favourably received in many countries.

10. Détente and the halting of the arms race were the only ways of establishing lasting peace in the world. The Soviet Union spared no effort in order to promote those processes. It was convinced that the best forum for the consideration of disarmament problems in all their aspects and for the implementation of the decisions which the General Assembly would take at its forthcoming special session was the World Disarmament Conference which, because of its universal membership, would enable all States to participate in the practical consideration of disarmament questions.

11. It was important that the delegations which would participate in the Conference should have the necessary powers to draw up the appropriate documents, with the help, if need be, of qualified experts.

12. The World Disarmament Conference should be the forum which would make it possible to pass from the stage of declarations and appeals to the practical stage of measures adopted by joint agreement in the field of disarmament.

13. The special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would mark an important stage in the preparations for that Conference. In paragraph 1 of resolution 32/89, the General Assembly had requested the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference to submit to it at its special session a special report on the state of its work and deliberations. That report would not only enable it to examine in detail the question of the World Disarmament Conference at its special session, but would also expedite the preparations for the Conference itself.

14. In the view of his delegation, the Ad Hoc Committee should take an active part in the convening of the Disarmament Conference, not only by submitting to the special session an exhaustive report on the specific aspects of its organization, but also by formulating recommendations on the subject. In its report, the Ad Hoc Committee should give an account of its work and set out in detail the views of States Members of the United Nations on the subject of the convening of the World Disarmament Conference.

15. Once the members of the Ad Hoc Committee had held a broad exchange of views, a working group could prepare the report, then the Committee would convene again in plenary meeting in order to examine the report in question before submitting it to the General Assembly at its special session. His delegation would as far as possible help the Committee to discharge that first part of its mandate.

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16. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) observed that the only other organ which the General Assembly had requested to prepare a report on the question of disarmament was the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament; that testified to the importance of the mandate entrusted to the Ad Hoc Committee. The General Assembly had decided to include in the agenda of its special session devoted to disarmament an item entitled "Review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament and of the international machinery for negotiations on disarmament, including, in particular, the question of convening a World Disarmament Conference". The special session of the General Assembly would thus provide a propitious atmosphere for the preparations for a World Disarmament Conference. The Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament had also been considering for some time the idea of such a Conference. That was only natural since the special session of the General Assembly and the World Disarmament Conference would in fact be complementary and should be regarded as such. Those who regarded those two forums as some kind of rival venture showed thereby that they were not really interested in either.

17. At its special session, the General Assembly should, inter alia, take a decision as to the date of the World Disarmament Conference, adopt recommendations concerning its agenda, and establish a preparatory committee with a view to the convening of the Conference.

18. It was with that in mind that the Committee should prepare its special report. The report should be an exhaustive document which would enable the General Assembly at its special session to gain an idea of the measures which had been taken with a view to the convening of the World Disarmament Conference and of the way in which the international community should organize that Conference. In the report, the Committee should formulate recommendations and conclusions which would translate into action the successive resolutions which had been adopted on the question, in particular with regard to the preparations for the Conference. In that connexion, three important elements should be defined: the date of the Conference; the transformation of the Ad Hoc Committee into a preparatory committee; and the terms of reference of the Conference, which should include the review and appraisal of the measures taken to implement the decisions adopted at the special session and, above all, powers which would enable the Conference to adopt practical and binding disarmament measures.

19. His delegation was prepared to devote all its efforts to the realization of that objective, both in plenary meeting and in a working group.

20. Mr. PALMA (Peru), supported by Mr. VUKOVIC (Yugoslavia), said that the essential element of the terms of reference given to the Committee by the General Assembly was the submission of a special report at the special session devoted to disarmament. It was therefore important to entrust a working group of the Committee, as soon as possible, with the task of preparing a draft report reflecting the deliberations of the Committee at its current session, as well as the work it had accomplished at its previous sessions. The draft report could then be considered by the Committee in plenary meeting. It would be useful, however, if members of the Committee were first to formulate observations regarding the way in which the draft report should be prepared in order to facilitate the task of the working group.
21. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) said he thought that, before asking the working group to start on the task of drafting the special report, the Committee should hold an exchange of views on the question, particularly since provision had been made in its programme of work for two meetings to be devoted to the organization of work. At the end of the following meeting, the Committee could therefore decide on the date on which the working group would meet and on the time-limit for the submission of the draft report. In that connexion, his delegation thought it would be somewhat optimistic to expect the working group to complete its work during the session; it might therefore be advisable to provide for the Committee to hold another plenary meeting at the beginning of May to adopt the draft report.

22. Mr. FLORIN (Observer for the German Democratic Republic) said that he had a few comments to make on the question of the organization of the Committee's work but that he would prefer to hear other delegations before making a statement.

23. Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria) thought that the work of the working group would be facilitated if the members of the Committee first held an exchange of views on the content of the report and the methods of work of the group. In his view, therefore, one or two additional meetings should be devoted to the question of the organization of work, during which his delegation would have some comments to make.

24. The CHAIRMAI suggested that the Committee should devote one more meeting to the organization of its work and that it should then instruct the working group to prepare a draft report which it would consider as soon as possible.

25. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.