AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Eleventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 10 April 1979, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. SIRUTUNAYE (Burundi)

Chairman: Mr. FERNANDEZ (Sri Lanka)

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79-55669
The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.167/L.16)

2. The agenda was adopted.

3. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN announced that he had received a letter from the delegation of the German Democratic Republic, requesting permission to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee acceded to that request.

4. It was so decided.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

5. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that on 29 March 1979 the Bureau of the Committee had been informed by the representative of Iran that Iran did not wish to continue to hold the chairmanship of the Committee: a new Chairman must therefore be elected.

6. Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka) was elected Chairman by acclamation.

7. Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka) took the Chair.

8. The CHAIRMAN expressed appreciation for the confidence placed in him by the Committee in electing him Chairman, and for the tribute thus paid to his country. He pledged that he would do his utmost to ensure that the Ad Hoc Committee efficiently fulfilled its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolutions.

9. He recalled that, in view of the danger of the continuing nuclear and conventional arms race, the non-aligned countries had initiated in the 1960s the idea of convening a world disarmament conference, which had been revived by the USSR in 1971. After various procedural arrangements on the subject, a significant development had been the adoption, by consensus, at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, of a final document stating that the Assembly considered that, at the earliest appropriate time, a world disarmament conference should be convened with universal participation and with adequate preparation. It was his earnest hope that, despite the difficulties inherent in the convening of such a conference, the Committee would proceed with its task successfully.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

10. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the General Assembly, in resolution 33/69, renewing the mandate of the Committee, had requested the Committee to maintain...
close contact with the representatives of the States possessing nuclear weapons in order to remain currently informed of their attitudes. In the past, such contact had been maintained through the Chairman of the Committee, and he suggested that the same practice should be continued. He would inform the Committee of the results of those contacts in due course.

11. As far as the schedule of work was concerned, the Committee usually held two series of meetings each year. After the first series of meetings, the Committee would meet again from 10 to 14 September 1979. Since the Committee had to submit its report to the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, the Working Group of the Committee could be asked to prepare a draft report to be submitted to the plenary Committee. The Working Group could function as it had in previous years. It was composed of the following 10 members of the Committee: Burundi, Egypt, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Poland and Spain. The Working Group was, of course, open-ended. Several members had made good use of that arrangement and participated in its work as observers. Needless to say, any interested members were again welcome to participate in the Working Group. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished the report to be prepared in accordance with the organizational arrangements he had outlined. He proposed that the Working Group should meet from 10 to 14 September to prepare the report.

12. It was so decided.

13. Mr. FOKINE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the 1978 special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which had confirmed that the continuation and increasing pace of the arms race presented a growing threat to world peace and security, consuming vast resources which were needed to solve other pressing problems, had again demonstrated that the ending of the arms race and disarmament were recognized as the most urgent problem in contemporary world politics, and one directly bound up with the fate of all mankind. It was universally recognized that the arms race was assuming global proportions and constituted a danger unprecedented in human history. Yet, with the weapon systems that were being developed, the arms race would become uncontrolled, and be entirely uncontrollable by political means. That possibility had caused alarm among the peoples of all countries, all of whom had a vital interest in disarmament. Their concern had been especially clearly shown during the preparations for the special session devoted to disarmament: at the international conference of non-governmental organizations held in Geneva just before the special session, the representatives of 71 international and 135 national organizations from many countries had voiced their deep concern, and sent a message to the special session calling for decisive measures to end the arms race. Appeals, messages and petitions with the same message had been sent by dozens of international and national public organizations. Governments and politicians had no right to ignore such authoritative voices raised against the arms race and the growing stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

14. Subsequent developments within the United Nations, and countless bilateral and multilateral talks bore witness to the fact that the special session and its
final document were having an effect, giving new impetus to attempts to solve the disarmament problem, and would continue to do so. The special session had shown that a broad programme of practical measures for disarmament was necessary in order to turn back the arms race. To be realistic, that programme should be based on the existing world balance of forces and should not damage the security interests of any of the participants in disarmament negotiations. The Soviet Union had presented its ideas for such a programme in a document submitted to the special session. It had recently, in response to a request by the Secretary-General, submitted detailed proposals concerning the fundamental goals and principles which should govern disarmament measures and the general orientation efforts in that field. His delegation considered that an effective programme could be worked out on that basis. The first task was to begin negotiations with a view to halting the production of nuclear weapons and eventually liquidating stockpiles of such weapons. The Soviet proposal to that effect was in keeping with the wishes of States as expressed in recommendations made by the Assembly at the special session devoted to disarmament and at the thirty-third regular session. Moved by that same desire, the delegations of the USSR, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland and Czechoslovakia had submitted, in February 1979, a working paper on the subject of negotiations on the curtailment of production of all types of nuclear weapons and the gradual curtailment of stockpiles, culminating in their complete liquidation.

15. One of the major achievements of the special session had been the recognition of the fact that the question of disarmament was universal, affecting the vital interests of all peoples and States, and could therefore be resolved only by the combined efforts of all parties. The fact that the special session had been held was evidence of the need for world-wide discussions on disarmament. The Soviet Union had supported the idea of holding both the first special session and a second one in 1982; but it would be illogical to confine efforts to the discussion of disarmament at special sessions, and for that reason the Soviet Union continued to advocate a world disarmament conference, which it considered to be a logical step forward in disarmament attempts, supplementing, and not conflicting with, any achievements made during General Assembly sessions.

16. Long experience had shown that the cause of disarmament could not be advanced by recommendations alone. States must make specific commitments to take practical steps. The Soviet Union believed that a world disarmament conference would be an appropriate forum: it could organize its work so that the decisions it took went beyond recommendations and were binding on all States. Universal participation in the conference would ensure that all States took part in the discussion of disarmament problems. The conference could be so organized that the States directly involved played a leading part in the consideration of specific problems, thereby making it possible to reach mutually acceptable solutions most effectively. A combination of different methods of work would facilitate progress. If delegations participating in the conference were given the necessary authority, suitable documents could be prepared with the assistance of qualified experts, if necessary.
17. The idea of holding a world disarmament conference continued to enjoy wide support among the Warsaw Pact Countries, the non-aligned countries and other States of various regions and political groups, and was also being considered in bilateral talks. In the light of the recommendations made at the special session, to the effect that a world disarmament conference should be convened at the earliest possible date, his delegation considered that the time had come to take new measures to hasten the convening of the conference. The Ad Hoc Committee had done useful work and created a solid base from which to move directly to preparations for the holding of the conference. His delegation considered, therefore, that in its report to the General Assembly the Ad Hoc Committee should include a recommendation to the effect that the dates for the world conference on disarmament and the establishment of a preparatory body should be discussed at the thirty-fourth session of the Assembly.

18. Mr. SLAWINA (Czechoslovakia) said that his Government was consistently and indefatigably pursuing a peaceful foreign policy and taking part in efforts to ensure the implementation of measures leading to the reduction of the threat of war and to the strengthening of international peace and security. Undoubtedly, the halting of the arms race, the reversal of the dangerous process of armaments development and the establishment of a gradual disarmament process were prerequisites for a peaceful future. Armaments were harmful to mankind even when they were not used, since the expenditure involved reduced the resources available for economic and social development and for food and medical care. The recent past had confirmed that the majority of Governments saw disarmament as a prerequisite for peace.

19. Apart from the progress made in mutual disarmament talks by the major nuclear Powers, positive results had also been achieved in multilateral negotiations, both within and outside the United Nations. Of particular importance was the 1979 special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In that connexion the idea of a world disarmament conference and its early convocation had gained wide support in many international forums, governmental and non-governmental, multilateral and bilateral. The socialist States, both individually and as a group, were permanently and actively committed to the early convocation of a world disarmament conference, as had been stated at the most recent meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty States. The conference would provide a universal forum which could consider a number of specific disarmament measures and further expand and elaborate political and other principles of disarmament; it could thus follow up, and in some respects even finalize, the work of other multilateral disarmament negotiations. The conference would be an active component in the process of détente and would provide an opportunity for extending détente into the military sphere as well. The convening of the conference should not be prevented by obstacles raised in a demagogic manner by States which, while hiding behind slogans of peace, pursued their own expansionist and nationalist objectives of power that were totally alien to peace.
20. Noting that the Ad Hoc Committee had already completed the important preparatory stage of its work for the conference, he expressed the view that the time had come for the Ad Hoc Committee to recommend to the General Assembly at its next session that it should consider the question of determining the date for the holding of the world disarmament conference and at the same time establish a preparatory committee for the conference.

21. Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland) said that, in view of the renewed mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee and the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its special session devoted to disarmament, the Ad Hoc Committee should now move beyond the valuable initial work it had performed and proceed to a higher phase, namely that of specific preparations for a world disarmament conference. His Government was convinced that all possible opportunities and negotiating fora should be utilized to the maximum in order to advance the cause of disarmament. A world disarmament conference would be the most appropriate international gathering to sum up the disarmament efforts made thus far at numerous levels. In that connexion, his delegation had high hopes for the bilateral Soviet-American talks within the framework of SALT II, whose results should be beneficial both to the parties directly concerned and to the world at large by injecting new vitality into the process of détente and affecting in a positive manner the course of disarmament discussions elsewhere. His Government also hoped for a favourable outcome of the talks on mutual reduction of forces and armaments in central Europe, talks in which the socialist States had demonstrated their political goodwill and flexibility. It was only to be regretted that the Western participants had so far not been able to meet the constructive proposals of the socialist States half way. However, his delegation believed that progress would be possible if all sides fully respected the principle of the undiminished security of all concerned. In that connexion he cited the important proposals contained in the Declaration adopted at the meeting of the Warsaw Treaty's Political Consultative Committee held at Moscow in November 1978. He also cited the new proposals submitted by the socialist States to the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. It was clear that the main priority was to put an end to the arms race, to stabilize the levels of armaments and to secure their effective limitation and reduction. In that connexion, a world disarmament conference could play a very important role.

22. There were, however, numerous adverse factors impeding progress in the crucial field of curbing the arms race. They included the blatant use of force, such as the recent aggression against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam by a permanent member of the Security Council, the intensification of the arms race by the NATO States and attempts at destabilization in different parts of the world. At the same time vast material and human resources were being wasted on armaments, thereby giving rise to negative economic and social repercussions, including galloping inflation. It was clear that the main opposition to a world disarmament conference came precisely from those quarters which bore a substantial share of responsibility for the existing evils in world affairs.
23. Conscious of the need to take measures and pursue policies which strengthened international peace and security and built up confidence among States, Poland had undertaken a political initiative in the United Nations, which had resulted in the adoption by the General Assembly, at its thirty-third session, of an unprecedented document, namely the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace, which his delegation believed would become an instrument for the active promotion of global détente and further progress in disarmament. In conclusion, he announced his delegation's willingness to join in the preparation of a recommendation to be included in the Ad Hoc Committee's report to the General Assembly to the effect that the Ad Hoc Committee should be transformed into a preparatory committee for the world disarmament conference.

24. Mr. DASHTSEREN (Mongolia) said that his delegation continued to believe that a world disarmament conference was a suitable forum for effective deliberations on a problem of world importance such as disarmament; it therefore advocated the speediest possible convening of the conference. His delegation's view was prompted by its concern over the continued escalation of the arms race and military build-up and the unceasing conflict situations in different parts of the world. In that connexion he cited the actions of military-industrial circles in the NATO countries and allied countries, which were intensely engaged in strengthening their war potential in order to achieve their expansionist aspirations and great-Power hegemonistic ambitions. He also referred to the armed aggression recently launched by China against the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. All of those factors demonstrated the need for the most effective and immediate measures to remove the threat of a new world war, to stop the arms race and bring about genuine disarmament. It was his delegation's belief that a world disarmament conference would represent one of the significant events of the second decade of disarmament and would play an important role in the formulation and implementation of its purposes and objectives. There was, furthermore, a close link between disarmament and development; and all aspects of disarmament, including its economic and social results, should be dealt with in depth in a forum of universal scope such as a world disarmament conference. It was the view of his delegation that the Ad Hoc Committee should now proceed to work out specific measures for the convening of a world disarmament conference and make specific recommendations as to the date and other organizational matters concerning the convening of the conference.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.