AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Eleventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 11 April 1979, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka)

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Other matters

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.
The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

OTHER MATTERS

1. Mr. ENDREFFY (Hungary) said that the past year had witnessed a tremendous upsurge of interest in disarmament matters, which had found the most visible expression in the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That session had in turn greatly stimulated interest regarding disarmament on the part of Governments and world public opinion. It had become absolutely clear that the peoples of the world, as well as most Governments, wanted action in the field of disarmament which would reduce the costs of the arms race and contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security.

2. His Government continued to believe that the most suitable forum for the promotion of effective action in the field of disarmament would be the World Disarmament Conference, and it was gratified to learn that the Governments of most Member States shared that view. The special session had advocated that a world disarmament conference should be convened at the earliest possible time, and subsequently the General Assembly had unanimously adopted its resolution 33/69, renewing the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee. That wide support should convince the Committee that the existing difficulties could be overcome, thus providing further stimulus to its work.

3. His delegation had repeatedly expressed its conviction that improvements in the international climate, progress in disarmament and the strengthening of international security were mutually reinforcing and created conditions conducive to the convening of a world disarmament conference. Members of the Committee should not remain passive observers of those developments, but should help to contribute to their realization. Hungary would use the possibilities of the Committee to the fullest to advance the cause of the World Disarmament Conference and to impress the usefulness of the undertaking upon those who doubted. In view of the growing support for disarmament and also the growing sense of urgency regarding effective action, it would be increasingly difficult to oppose the convening of the Conference. His delegation was convinced of the need to keep the option of the World Disarmament Conference open and to have the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee extended by the General Assembly. It would resolutely support a draft resolution to that effect.

4. Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic) reminded members that new weapons systems of ever greater destructive force and accuracy were constantly being developed, put into production and used to equip armies. The danger of a nuclear war was growing. The quantity and quality of weaponry possessed by certain NATO countries more and more exceeded the military force they needed for defence purposes. Nothing was being done about the profit-seeking monopolies which grew fat from the arms race and were for ever inventing new "threats" simply in order to maintain and expand their rich arms production deals.

5. At the same time, there was a growing movement among the peoples and the overwhelming majority of States in favour of effective disarmament measures, and
the opponents of disarmament were finding it increasingly difficult to resist that demand. The special session devoted to disarmament had adopted a far-reaching Programme of Action which could serve as an excellent basis for agreement on disarmament measures; only the will was lacking. And there was a whole series of concrete proposals to back up the Programme of Action, including those made in the declaration of 23 November 1978 by the States members of the Warsaw Pact.

6. In order to implement the Programme of Action and other proposals, it was becoming more and more necessary to establish a forum in which all States would participate. At such a world disarmament conference, States could discuss disarmament and conclude international agreements strengthening the security of all States, promoting détente and thereby hastening social progress for all. The goal should be general and complete disarmament under international control. Experience had shown that existing machinery was insufficient to achieve that goal; what was needed was a world disarmament conference with all States taking part. Preparations for the conference should begin as soon as possible. Organizing it would be a slow and lengthy process, but no task could be too great if it was for the salvation of mankind.

7. His delegation supported the proposal that the Ad Hoc Committee should recommend the General Assembly, at its thirty-fourth session, to set a date for the World Disarmament Conference and establish a body to begin immediate preparations.

8. Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria) said that in the past year the United Nations had been the centre of brisk activity in the efforts to achieve progress in the field of disarmament. Those efforts had culminated in the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which had given expression to the anxiety of States about the threat to mankind's existence, a threat made very tangible by the enormous amounts of stockpiled weapons of mass destruction and the continuing arms race. The special session had adopted a number of substantive and timely recommendations, which should provide a real impetus towards practical action in the field of disarmament. It was very difficult, and hardly necessary, to assess the real impact of the special session on the process of disarmament. Moreover, the implementation of many of its decisions required a long period of time. It should be starkly obvious, however, that not one of the dangerous dimensions of the gigantic arms race had been neutralized and not one of the reasons for the concern which had existed at the time of the special session had lost its significance. A dangerous inertia continued to thrust mankind in a direction leading to a point of no return.

9. The accelerated arms race, fuelled by reactionary imperialist quarters and the military-industrial complex, was having disastrous consequences in many areas of international life. Enormous arsenals of weapons of mass destruction had been built up, complemented by no less frightening arsenals of highly sophisticated weaponry of other types. Even more alarming was the creation of new and increasingly merciless means of mass destruction, such as "death rays", "chemical lasers" and other technical "novelties". The Pentagon had requested huge sums of money for the production of such "novelties". Even for laymen, therefore, the threats posed by the arms race were perfectly clear.

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10. The continuous stockpiling of lethal weaponry threatened to paralyse international co-operation and perpetuate existing hotbeds of tension, whereas it was imperative to consolidate political détente, complementing it with détente in the military field. It was not possible to ensure a movement of all nations towards social and economic progress without breaking the vicious upward spiral of military expenditure.

11. Disarmament was a complicated and difficult process involving protracted and sometimes painful discussion. Discussing the problems of disarmament within the framework of the United Nations, particularly at special sessions, contributed to clarifying and bringing together the viewpoints of the States concerned. Accordingly, Bulgaria had participated actively in the tenth special session of the General Assembly and would continue to work for the successful conduct of the second special session devoted to disarmament in 1982. It was of the opinion that the convening of the World Disarmament Conference would not supersede the special sessions but would represent an absolutely necessary independent stage.

12. The process of bringing views on separate issues of disarmament closer should find its logical completion in concrete, legally binding instruments. That final stage might be left to the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, as was the prevailing practice. However, the World Disarmament Conference could serve as a powerful accelerator to the negotiations on the various measures for disarmament. From a purely technical point of view, the Conference would allow negotiations to be conducted concurrently on a wide range of problems, with the participation of high-level experts, and would provide an opportunity to negotiate treaties and agreements. From a political point of view, the Conference would undoubtedly stimulate the element of political will, which was essential to success in the field of disarmament.

13. The interrelationship between the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and the World Disarmament Conference was acknowledged by the overwhelming majority of States. The special session had recognized the need to convene a world disarmament conference, the two basic requirements for which were universal participation and adequate preparation. Preparations should therefore begin well in advance. In that connexion, Bulgaria strongly supported the Soviet proposal that the Ad Hoc Committee should recommend in its report that the General Assembly should discuss at its thirty-fourth session the date for the convening of the World Disarmament Conference and the setting up of a preparatory body.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its first series of meetings for 1979 and would meet again from 10 to 14 September to prepare its report to the General Assembly, at which time he would inform the Committee of the results of his contacts with the nuclear-weapon States.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.