STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

AUSTRIA

[Original: English]
[13 May 1976]

A. General remarks

When evaluating the efforts of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and arms control it must be admitted that the United Nations, during its 30 years of existence, has not been exceedingly successful in this very essential domain of its activities. Although the United Nations has certainly achieved various considerable results in dealing with different aspects of the general problem of disarmament, it has by no means accomplished a substantial break-through and has thus – as far as disarmament is concerned – failed to live up to the expectations of its founders and members.

Therefore the Austrian Government welcomes the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament and sincerely hopes that the result of the discussions in this Committee will indeed provide for a new impetus in the efforts aiming at a limitation of the current armament race.

The mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee as contained in resolution 3484 C (XXX) and as perceived by the Committee on the occasion of its first session in January 1976 is basically restricted to proposals for improvements in the United Nations infrastructure in dealing with disarmament problems and does not include substantive disarmament issues. Thus the following remarks are limited to procedural proposals which, in the view of the Austrian Government, might be conducive to the strengthening of the United Nations role in the field of disarmament.

B. Suggestions for improvements in the method of work of the First Committee of the General Assembly

The First Committee, which is the centre of the General Assembly's annual discussion of matters related to disarmament, finds itself every year confronted with new additional items on its already overloaded agenda. As important as many of these items may be, their very number leads to a situation where not a single one of these items can be discussed thoroughly. Thus the General Assembly is forced to adopt, in what seems to be an annual routine, a series of mostly repetitive resolutions and tends to lose sight of the main perspective of its important work.

It is therefore proposed that the General Assembly should try to limit the number of items in the field of disarmament allocated to the First Committee and
allow the Committee to concentrate on a certain number of specific issues during each session. This would constitute a considerable contribution to the impact of the adopted resolutions and at the same time allow the General Assembly, through the work of its First Committee, to fulfil what, in the opinion of the Austrian Government, should be its main task in the field of disarmament: to function as a co-ordinating body for the various United Nations organs dealing with different aspects of the general problem of disarmament and to give concrete guidelines to these organs for their respective future work. It has to be recognized that at the present time achievements in United Nations disarmament efforts can unfortunately not be obtained but by focusing on specific questions which often belong to the periphery of the essential problem. However, it is precisely this situation which increases the genuine need for effective co-ordination of the various efforts made.

There are several ways in which such a concentration of the work of the First Committee could be brought about. The following proposals should therefore not be regarded as being exhaustive:

(i) Those items on the agenda which deal with matters closely connected with each other should be combined into a single item, thus allowing for a unified and integrated study of these matters.

(ii) The First Committee should try to avoid the annual presentation and subsequent adoption of merely repetitive resolutions in areas where no significant progress was achieved in the respective year. The adoption of such resolutions which contribute very little to the cause of disarmament is a potential source for a loss of prestige of the United Nations as a whole. As an alternative it is suggested that only one resolution might be adopted which lists all those fields where no significant developments have occurred in the previous year.

(iii) It seems to be highly appropriate to discuss the establishment of priorities in the general field of disarmament efforts. These priorities need not necessarily remain unchanged but should be adjusted from time to time to meet the most urgent requirements. Thus one could think of devoting the work of one or several consecutive General Assembly sessions to the question of nuclear disarmament which - because of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons by far surpassing all other weapons and because of the high symbolic value attached to these weapons - in the opinion of the Austrian Government deserves the highest priority at the present time.

(iv) Certain items of the present agenda could be discussed every second year instead of every year which, once again, would enable the First Committee to devote more time to a detailed consideration of these items.

It seems to be obvious that the above-listed proposals are not mutually exclusive. Therefore the Ad Hoc Committee might find it useful to discuss various means of combining these and other similar proposals that will be put forward by other Member States.
C. Suggestions for organizational measures going beyond the restructuring of the work of the First Committee

(i) The Austrian Government continues to support the proposal of a World Disarmament Conference. The convening of such a Conference, however, is still not assured. It might therefore be considered useful to examine ways and means aimed at accelerating the decision-making process with regard to the convening of the World Disarmament Conference.

(ii) At the same time it might be worthwhile to discuss the chances for a revitalization of the United Nations Disarmament Commission which has been inactive in recent years. Any such decision should, however, provide for a concrete mandate of the Commission. Thus, the Commission should concentrate on one or more closely linked specific topics entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

(iii) The Geneva Conference of the Committee on Disarmament is certainly - at least for the time being - the most prestigious of the United Nations disarmament organs. It has in recent years, however, added little to what should have been the main disarmament item, that is, general and complete disarmament. As to the relationship between the General Assembly and the CCD, it is the opinion of the Austrian Government that the General Assembly would profit to a great extent from the work of the CCD if the Assembly were presented annually with a more detailed and, if possible, analytical report about the subjects covered by the CCD's discussions. The CCD, which is itself currently undergoing a review of its modalities, might also ventilate the possibility of opening its meetings to interested States which are not members of the CCD and which could be invited as observers. Another option which should be left open is the possibility of introducing the principle of rotation for the membership in the CCD. Such a principle, however, should not exclude possible re-election.

D. Intensification of information activities of the United Nations in the field of disarmament

There seems to be a clear need for strengthening the possibility for the United Nations of providing Member States with comprehensive studies of disarmament issues, supplementing the present system of ad hoc studies on the basis of specific General Assembly resolutions. For instance, the following system of reports would certainly constitute a highly valuable contribution to the ongoing efforts to strengthen the United Nations role in the field of disarmament:

(i) The Secretary-General should be requested to submit a comprehensive background report clearly outlining the past and present role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. This report should also reflect bilateral and regional activities in this field which are carried out outside the United Nations.
(ii) This report should be updated at regular intervals. This follow-up could perhaps lead to the publishing of a United Nations periodical on disarmament issues.

(iii) Additionally, it is suggested that the Secretary-General submit an annual report on the status of international agreements in the field of disarmament.

These stepped-up research and information activities of the United Nations might be magnified and facilitated by systematic contacts with existing private or governmental institutions such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which so far has been one of the main sources of valuable data on disarmament.

E. The role of the United Nations in the process of negotiations and implementation of disarmament agreements

Discussions concerning increased participation of the United Nations in the negotiating process as well as concerning possible follow-up functions in connexion with existing agreements should, inter alia, take into consideration the following possibilities:

(i) Lending of technical conference assistance;

(ii) Active participation in review conferences, including the submission of concrete proposals for such conferences;

(iii) Carrying out of vital functions in the field of verification of compliance with existing agreements.

F.

It is obvious that the realization of the above-mentioned and of similar proposals is dependent upon a restructuring of the United Nations Disarmament Division. In order to enable the Division to carry out the necessary services that would result from the adoption of new proposals relating to an intensified role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, it seems indispensable to increase the professional staff of the Division.

Given the fact that the international community spends $300 billion a year on military budgets and only the small amount of $3 million a year on the disarmament budget of the United Nations, such a proposal does not seem to be unreasonable. All the efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament are closely linked to the improvement of the Disarmament Division's financial and organizational infrastructure.

/...
BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

[Original: Russian]
[7 May 1976]

The position of the Byelorussian SSR on disarmament questions has frequently been stated at sessions of the General Assembly and in the replies of the Byelorussian SSR to questionnaires from the United Nations Secretariat. In 1975, the following replies were sent by the Byelorussian SSR to the Secretariat:

Comments on the main objectives of a world disarmament conference and related matters (A/10028);

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 3254 (XXIX) concerning a reduction of the military budgets of States permanent members of the Security Council by 10 per cent and utilization of part of the funds thus saved to provide assistance to developing countries (A/10165);

Information on the question of the Disarmament Decade (A/10294).

The Byelorussian people enthusiastically welcomed the outcome of the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Programme for the continuing struggle for peace and international co-operation and the freedom and independence of peoples adopted at the Twenty-fifth Party Congress, considering that mankind has become weary of living on mountains of armaments, recognizes the need for a solution, as a matter of top priority, of the following urgent problems in the disarmament field:

The need to bring about the cessation of the growing arms race, which constitutes a danger to peace, and to achieve progress towards a reduction in accumulated stocks of weapons and towards disarmament. To that end it is essential:

(a) To make every effort to complete the preparation of a new agreement between the USSR and the United States on the limitation and reduction of strategic weapons, and to conclude international agreements concerning the general and complete cessation of nuclear-weapons tests, prohibition of the use of chemical weapons and destruction of such weapons, prohibition of the development of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction, and prohibition of action to influence the environment for military and other harmful purposes;

(b) To make fresh efforts to activate the talks on the reduction of armed forces and weapons in central Europe, and, after achieving agreement on the first practical steps in that direction, to continue in subsequent years with the task of military détente in that area;

(c) To achieve the replacement of the present constant growth of military expenditure of many States by a practice of systematically reducing such expenditure;

/...
(d) To take all measures for the earliest possible convening of a world disarmament conference.

The Byelorussian SSR welcomes the conclusion of agreements and conventions, within and outside the United Nations framework, and the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of resolutions designed to limit or avert a further arms race, particularly in weapons of mass destruction. As was emphasized by L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in the report of the Central Committee to the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Party, "The problem is to ensure that those resolutions are implemented."

The Byelorussian SSR opposes attempts to replace practical and extremely necessary measures in the disarmament field by all kinds of reorganization and abstract theoretical research and to detract from the value of existing organs and means of conducting disarmament talks. This consideration determines the Byelorussian SSR's position vis-à-vis the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament established under General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX). Its position is based on the premise that the Committee in question will divert the efforts of States from the problems of disarmament towards the discussion of organizational and other subsidiary questions and may become a pretext for the opponents of disarmament to move even further away from participation in effective talks and measures for the limitation of armaments, disarmament and the implementation of United Nations decisions in the disarmament field. That is why the delegation of the Byelorussian SSR abstained in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 3484 (XXX). The first session of the Ad Hoc Committee has confirmed our misgivings.

The Byelorussian SSR considers that the solution of the problems of disarmament depends essentially on the political will of States and on their intention to ensure real and effective international security and peace in the whole world, and it accordingly supports an expansion of the role of the United Nations in the solution of urgent disarmament problems through more effective support of efforts undertaken by Member States on a bilateral, regional and multilateral basis to limit the arms race and achieve disarmament.

The need for the adoption of new, more decisive measures to limit the arms race and achieve disarmament raises the question of convening a universal forum for disarmament talks with the participation of all the States in the world on an equal footing. In this connexion, the question of the earliest possible convening of a world disarmament conference assumes ever-increasing urgency. No arguments can justify further delay in this matter or replacement of the world conference on disarmament by another forum.

The Byelorussian SSR actively supports and will continue to support United Nations efforts designed to bring about a cessation of the arms race and disarmament and to contribute to the strengthening of peace and international security.

/...
The experience from the course of the disarmament talks attests that the reason for the slow progress of the talks lies in the negative attitude towards the disarmament measures on the part of some Powers and in the lack of their goodwill to accede to an agreement on implementation of the existing proposals in that field. Discussions on questions pertaining to the review of the United Nations in the disarmament field can hardly lead towards adoption of concrete disarmament measures that would represent a contribution to the present development. Engaging in the review of the organizational elements of the disarmament talks could rather distract attention from the key disarmament issues. The role of the United Nations Organization in the field of disarmament would be strengthened primarily by a more effective and intensive support of the Member countries in the already existing disarmament talks. It is desirable to give full support to the idea of the World Disarmament Conference which, with the full participation of all countries and, particularly, all Powers, could positively contribute to speedier and broader disarmament negotiations in the framework of the United Nations Organization as well as outside it.

EGYPT

1. The concern of the United Nations with disarmament matters is basic and fundamental. It derives from the spirit and letter of the Charter. The United Nations through the bodies under its auspices and specially the CCD has exerted strenuous efforts in the field of disarmament. These have culminated in a considerable number of significant conventions and treaties. But to evade the devastating consequences of armaments and specially nuclear arms, efforts have to be intensified and given new vigour and fresh impetus so that more conventions on disarmament and specially nuclear disarmament could be concluded.

2. Egypt is of the opinion that co-operation for controlling the arms race and for disarmament, a task where the interests of all States converge, is essential. Egypt also considers the necessity for urging the nuclear Powers in their capacity as permanent members of the Security Council to bear their responsibilities in the field of disarmament and to prevent both vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation. The nuclear Powers should set the good example for the non-nuclear States and revive their conviction of the importance and benefits of general and complete disarmament.

3. The invigoration of the role of the United Nations to achieve general and complete disarmament and especially nuclear disarmament represents an effective
and essential factor to enhance international co-operation and ensure international peace and security.

4. Egypt is of the opinion that the following suggestions toward strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament should be considered:

(a) It might be appropriate to avoid the frequent duplication of items on the agenda of the General Assembly which deal with the same subject. The purpose of this exercise is to co-ordinate the work and spare the efforts.

(b) The importance of strengthening the present bodies in charge of debating and negotiating disarmament, especially the CCD, a body acknowledged for long experience in this field. The CCD started during its spring session this year 1976 to consider ways and means to develop its method of work so that it can move forward and get rid of the stagnation inflicted upon its function over years. Egypt appreciates and supports the constructive efforts exerted by the group of neutral States in Geneva (group of 15).

(c) The importance of supervising and implementing the conventions and treaties which had been to date concluded in the field of disarmament.

(d) The United Nations should undertake a thorough study of the work of the existing disarmament bodies and inform the world public opinion on:

The nature of these bodies,

Their work and ongoing debate and negotiation within their framework,

The progress so far achieved, and

Other steps which the United Nations expects these organs to take.

(e) The importance of the response of the Member States to inform their (national) public opinion on the disarmament decade and its objectives and goals, especially that the decade has already reached its second half.

(f) Egypt shares the views expressed by the non-aligned States in the Lima Conference (1975) which decided on the necessity of convening a General Assembly special session if the convening of a World Disarmament Conference proves to be impossible. A special session exclusively devoted to disarmament will give a vigorous impetus to the disarmament negotiations, currently under discussion in the existing bodies.

(g) It is of great importance to draw the attention of the smaller States to the disarmament matters, which will result in positive effects on their security and economic development. It is also necessary to recommend to the big Powers to give due consideration to the views and suggestions expressed by the smaller States.

/.../
The German Democratic Republic holds that one of the most important foreign policy objectives is to bring about agreements on ending the arms race and on disarmament. It supports the programme of the continued struggle for peace and international co-operation, for freedom and independence of the peoples adopted by the XXVth CPSU Congress. It sets tasks the solution of which will lead to decisive progress in the field of disarmament.

Since its establishment the United Nations Organization has always attached great importance to the question of disarmament according to the objectives laid down in its Charter and in compliance with the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of its members. The disarmament agreements concluded so far are closely associated with the work of the United Nations. Especially at the plenary session of the General Assembly and in the First (political) Committee, a great deal of work was done to create political prerequisites for such agreements and to give them universal scope.

Over the last few years United Nations activities in this field have remarkably increased. A number of important resolutions were adopted. If put into practice, they would bring us much closer to the end of the arms race and to disarmament.

Amongst them are resolutions 2833 (XXVI), 2930 (XXVII), 3183 (XXVIII), 3260 (XXIX) and 3469 (XXX) on the World Disarmament Conference; resolution 3479 (XXX) on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and of new systems of such weapons; resolution 3478 (XXX) on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests; resolution 3093 A (XXVIII) on the reduction of the military budgets; resolution 2936 (XXVII) on the non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

The implementation of the resolutions adopted on the initiative of the Soviet Union by a great majority of votes would contribute essentially to making a decisive step forward in the field of disarmament.

The negative attitude adopted by some States towards the above-mentioned resolutions, however, constitutes a considerable obstacle to their implementation. It is generally known that the work of the Special Committee on the World Disarmament Conference is hampered by the fact that two nuclear powers refuse to participate in the preparations of the Conference.

It is not the structure and the working method of the bodies in the field of disarmament, but political reasons that stand in the way of higher effectiveness of the United Nations. Therefore organizational measures are no real way out. On the contrary. To deal mainly with organizational measures may divert from the
necessity that all militarily important States, especially all nuclear Powers, must take up a constructive attitude towards the disarmament question so that further decisive progress can be made in this field.

Taking into account these fundamental considerations the German Democratic Republic, with regard to the problems raised, takes the following view:

The Geneva Committee on Disarmament has played a decisive and positive role in the elaboration of most of the disarmament measures so far achieved. This body has gained a lot of useful experience in the elaboration of draft agreements that have met with widest approval. To restrict its activity and curtail its role would be detrimental to the cause of disarmament.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee in matters relating to disarmament would be welcomed. A modification, however, must not restrict the right of United Nations members to put forward proposals at each General Assembly session as well as to comment on the implementation of resolutions in the field of disarmament.

The United Nations can enhance its role in the field of disarmament by providing yet more effective support to the disarmament efforts in a global, regional and bilateral framework than hitherto.

The overwhelming majority of States considers a World Disarmament Conference as the appropriate forum to define the main tasks in the field of disarmament and to bring about decisive progress in this sphere. This includes the discussion of the necessary organizational measures. Therefore it is a first-rate task to prepare this Conference without delay.

If demands on the Disarmament Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat will increase by the enhancement of the activities of States in the field of disarmament, its staff may be increased in an appropriate way, as this was done at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly. However, it would be erroneous to believe that a solution to the problems in the field of disarmament could be found by structural changes of the United Nations Secretariat. Such an approach involves the danger of over-expanding the United Nations apparatus and of further increasing the strain on the United Nations budget. This, however, would be contrary to the demand for higher effectiveness of the United Nations.
1. The strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament should be aimed essentially, in the Italian Government's opinion, at identifying the criteria and procedures which should be borne in mind in discussing and developing in the General Assembly the various proposals on disarmament before that body.

All proposals aimed at securing specific objectives in the field of disarmament should be based on a realistic evaluation of the problem. In the light of the results of such evaluation, they should therefore be adequately prepared, either through previous contacts with the countries most directly concerned (particularly all the nuclear Powers) or through efforts to assign to the proposals their proper importance and priority, bearing in mind the lessons learned from previous proposals and the need to discuss them successively in the appropriate forum which, in Italy's view, remains essentially the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

2. The Italian Government is convinced that the proposals for partial measures of disarmament can produce satisfactory results only if they are considered as part of a global programme of disarmament designed to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

In this context, nuclear disarmament, above all the cessation of all nuclear tests, constitutes a basic objective which is the responsibility, as already pointed out, of all States, especially the nuclear Powers, among which the signatories of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation have a special role to play.

3. The multiplicity of proposals on disarmament submitted to the General Assembly seems to require, besides the consideration of the modalities and criteria described above, a rationalization of the procedures governing their submission, discussion and possible adoption by the General Assembly. The possibilities to be borne in mind should entail neither a substantial modification of the existing structure nor a broadening of the powers of other organs nor the establishment of new bodies, running the risk of causing useless duplication of existing organs without achieving any effective improvement in the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Italy, in fact, considers that the General Assembly essentially has a role of reflection and encouragement and of the presentation and discussion of proposals put forward by the various Governments which require — when conditions are appropriate — a negotiating forum such as the CCD for fruitful and realistic negotiations.

4. The rationalization of the procedures could therefore allow for the possibility of recommending that the various proposals should be submitted sufficiently in advance of the opening meetings of the First Committee to permit informal contacts and consultations regarding them. The proposals could then be
embodied in working papers, rather than formal draft resolutions, especially in cases where further study and analysis, rather than specific action, is required.

The debate in the First Committee should therefore facilitate a deeper exploration of the issues put forward, without losing the opportunity of achieving the broadest possible consensus for the adoption of any proposal. Consideration should also be given to the desirability of avoiding the annual review of the various proposals when no new developments have occurred. Instead, the discussion of such matters should be spaced out over a predetermined period (two or three years).

5. As regards the activities of the United Nations in the field of information and documentation on the question of disarmament, the Italian Government feels that the present activities have already reached a level which is commensurate with the purposes and functions of the Organization in the disarmament sector.

6. With regard to control and verification activities in the execution of disarmament agreements, the Italian Government feels that these could more appropriately be performed by suitable bodies chosen by the States which subscribe to the agreement. In any case, the activity of the Secretariat in such matters, whenever so provided for by the agreement, should be based on a specific request by the parties themselves.

7. Finally, the Italian Government is fully aware that it is not enough merely to correct or improve, as far as this is necessary, the existing structures in order to achieve more positive results in the field of disarmament. Such results depend on the will and readiness of Governments, as well as on the existence of conditions favourable to the conclusion of agreements on disarmament or the control of armaments and, of course, on the technical complexity of the issues being discussed.

IVORY COAST

[Original: French]
[13 May 1976]

The Ivory Coast, conscious of the many outstanding efforts made by the United Nations at the world level in the interest of universal peace, wishes this Organization, whenever possible, to promote and encourage the necessary dialogue between the super-Powers, with a view to arriving at acceptable solutions in the field of disarmament.

Furthermore, with regard to the third world countries in general, and those of Africa in particular, energetic deterrent measures could be taken against Governments by the specialized organs of the United Nations in order to curb, if not eliminate, the insane arms race initiated by certain countries of the African continent.

Finally, so far as information is concerned, the laudable efforts made to keep the international community better informed should be further increased.
MEXICO

1. At its 2439th meeting on 12 December 1975, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 34/84 B (XXX) in which it invited all States to communicate to the Secretary-General, not later than 1 May 1976, their views and suggestions on the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

2. In that resolution it was also decided to establish an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly, open to the participation of all Member States, to carry out a basic review of the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field. The General Assembly further decided that the review should, inter alia, focus on the following objectives:

   (a) Possible new approaches for achieving more effective procedures and organization of work in the field of disarmament, thereby enabling the United Nations to exercise its full role in multilateral disarmament efforts;

   (b) Ways and means of improving existing United Nations facilities for collection, compilation and dissemination of information on disarmament issues, in order to keep all Governments, as well as world public opinion, properly informed on progress achieved in the field of disarmament;

   (c) Ways and means to enable the United Nations Secretariat to assist, on request, States parties to multilateral disarmament agreements in their duty to ensure the effective functioning of such agreements, including appropriate periodical reviews.

3. This memorandum, prepared in response to that invitation from the General Assembly, contains the views and suggestions of the Government of Mexico on the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

4. For years Mexico has been emphasizing the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and has been making efforts to that end. An example of that constant concern on the part of the Mexican Government is its active participation in the "comprehensive programme of disarmament" (document A/8191 of 2 December 1970), which was submitted to the General Assembly at the twenty-fifth session and which the Assembly recommended should be taken into account in all future disarmament negotiations. The introduction to the programme, which was prepared pursuant to the Assembly's request in resolution 2602 E (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 in which it declared the decade of the 1970s as a Disarmament Decade, states:

   "In the light of the contents of that resolution it would seem fully justified to state that the request of the General Assembly implies that the comprehensive programme of disarmament should embrace not only the work of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament but all negotiations
and other acts on this matter, in whatever forum and form they may take place, and that the programme should include effective procedures in order to facilitate the co-ordination of such activities and ensure that the United Nations General Assembly be kept informed on their progress so as to permit it the proper performance of its functions, including the constant evaluation of the situation."

5. If, as the Assembly declared in 1959 and has subsequently reaffirmed emphatically on a number of occasions, the question of disarmament is the most important one facing the world today, and if, as the Assembly itself has pointed out year after year since 1971, all peoples have a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations and it is therefore imperative that all States exert further efforts for the adoption of effective measures of disarmament and, more particularly, nuclear disarmament, then it is axiomatic that the disarmament system which the United Nations has had for the past 15 years is patently inadequate.

6. The General Assembly, of course, meets annually. However, as is well known, its programme is always crammed with items of widely differing kinds. When disarmament issues are submerged in over a hundred items, their importance can obviously not be properly assessed. Even in the First Committee, to which they are usually allocated, they cannot be given the consideration they deserve since they must compete with a number of other questions, including some that are themselves of no small importance, such as those relating to the peaceful uses of outer space. Consequently, after three or four weeks of hurried debate in which, in order to save time, disarmament questions are generally considered jointly and not individually, the Assembly each year finds itself reduced to adopting a set of rather routine resolutions, very similar to those adopted in previous years, which, regardless of their tone of deep concern, justified alarm or pressing urgency, almost invariably find their last resting place - for reasons which all of us no doubt deplore but which we have so far been powerless to change - in the inertia, resignation or oblivion of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

7. In view of the above and of the fact that the Disarmament Commission, the only other body the United Nations has to deal with disarmament questions, has existed only on paper for more than a decade, the Government of Mexico has since 1971 continually stressed the need for the early convening of a world disarmament conference open to all States and has participated actively in the negotiation of texts which, over the past five years, have become so many more General Assembly resolutions on this question. It was also for those reasons that the Government of Mexico was the first to reply to the invitation in resolution 2833 (XXVI) by sending to the Secretary-General a memorandum dated 12 June 1971 containing its views on various matters pertaining to the conference (A/8693). At that time the Government of Mexico stated that the main objectives of the world disarmament conference should be the following:

"The aim of the Conference should be to take the requisite decisions to provide the United Nations with an effective disarmament system capable of obtaining more encouraging results than those achieved to date in the
vitaly important task which the Charter conferred on the Organization by specifically instructing it to turn its attention to promoting 'the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources'.

"In order to achieve this end and make tangible progress both towards the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament under effective international control and towards the immediate adoption of partial measures to limit and reduce nuclear armaments and eliminate other weapons of mass destruction, it will be necessary to strengthen principles, review rules, develop procedures and bring up to date the international machinery dealing with these questions.

"With regard to that machinery, it seems advisable, in the light of the experience acquired over the more than 25 years since the San Francisco Conference in 1945, that the Conference should recommend to the General Assembly that in future there should be three main organs for the promotion of disarmament:

"(a) The General Assembly, which should continue to be the supreme organ and would receive and consider reports from the other two, to which it could entrust specific tasks;

"(b) The World Disarmament Conference - replacing the Disarmament Commission, which would be dissolved in order to avoid duplication and for other obvious reasons - would be open to 'all States'; it would meet every three or four years in order to review progress in the field of disarmament, compare the development of armaments and of disarmament, and adopt such decisions as that review showed to be desirable. In short, the World Conference would have the same position within the United Nations in the field of disarmament as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has in the economic and social fields;

"(c) A negotiating body of about 30 members, preferably the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, which celebrated its tenth anniversary this year. Naturally, for this to be possible that Committee would have to undergo a number of changes, which would both increase its effectiveness and make it easier for the People's Republic of China and France to take part in its work. The first of these changes should be to abolish the unusual institution whereby the nuclear super-Powers act as Co-Chairmen and replace it by a procedure more consistent with the principle of the sovereign equality of States, such as the annual election of a chairman from among the non-nuclear States members or monthly rotation among all members, as in the Security Council."
last session of the General Assembly, that unless more tangible progress can be achieved by the Ad Hoc Committee during 1976, the General Assembly must at the thirty-first session decide to convene a special session for the purpose of considering, inter alia, the question of convening a world disarmament conference.

9. Moreover, the Government of Mexico, having noted with interest that the Secretary-General himself, in the introduction to his most recent annual report, had come to the conclusion that "the role which the United Nations is playing in disarmament is far from adequate", supported resolution 3484 B (XXX) of 12 December 1975 establishing the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament. Likewise, on 30 October 1975, at the 2072nd meeting of the First Committee, the Mexican delegation, opening the debate on the disarmament items at the thirtyieth session of the General Assembly, said that, as a first step, the General Assembly should adopt decisions designed to "strengthen the competent staff of the Secretariat of the world Organization so that it may be capable of giving Member States which desire it - and I am sure that this includes the majority of States - effective technical co-operation in matters of disarmament and the regulation of armaments including, periodical publications giving timely and accurate information, which should be as complete as possible, on these questions". Accordingly, Mexico was one of the sponsors of the draft resolution which became resolution 3484 D (XXX) of 12 December 1975, in which the Assembly, conscious of the increased responsibilities placed on the Disarmament Affairs Division, requested the Secretary-General to take "appropriate steps for the strengthening of the Disarmament Affairs Division, including the addition of staff necessary for the effective carrying out of its increased responsibilities".

10. Hence, too, the Government of Mexico's participation in the basic review of the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field being carried out by the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly. Under the terms of resolution 3484 B (XXX), the report which the Ad Hoc Committee will submit to the Assembly at the thirty-first session is to include findings and proposals. There can be no doubt that those findings and proposals will not only serve as guidelines for the discussion of the item "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field", but will also provide the Assembly with additional material for the discussions that have gone on for several years on the subject of the World Disarmament Conference, a decision on the convening of which must be taken this year.
The Netherlands Government is favourably inclined towards a review of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, in the light of the following general considerations.

The present low productivity of disarmament and arms control negotiations is not primarily the result of the negotiations machinery but rather due to often widely diverging views of participating States, more particularly, the most important military Powers. Wherever in the past results have been achieved (e.g., the NPT and B weapons treaties) the existing negotiating procedures proved to be no obstacle to reaching agreement. It is important to bear the foregoing in mind when one considers what can be expected from an examination and a possible reinforcement of the role of the United Nations in disarmament affairs. If one expects such a review to provide a decisive momentum to surmount the present stagnation, then feelings of frustration would be aggravated if such a break-through does not materialize. The Netherlands Government therefore considers that review of the role of the United Nations in disarmament affairs could advantageously be sought in adaptation of existing procedures and institutions to developments over the last decade in the United Nations, as well as in the field of disarmament. In the light of these general considerations the Netherlands Government would like to make the following more detailed remarks and suggestions.

In recent years the disarmament debate in the First Committee of the General Assembly has shown an increase of the number of agenda items and resolutions but not a stronger influence of these items and recommendations on the disarmament situation. In the view of the Netherlands Government, the debate could be of greater force and effectiveness if the number of separate items on the agenda were limited. This could be effectuated in the first place by grouping obviously related matters together under one agenda item. Secondly, some matters could well be dealt with at intervals of more than one year. The yearly debate should concentrate on a small number of specific questions. An attempt should also be made to limit the number of resolutions.

The General Assembly should exercise more restraint than at present in addressing requests to the Committee of the Conference on Disarmament. In doing so, requests should be limited to those cases for which broad support can be expected in the General Assembly.

The yearly disarmament debate in the First Committee of the General Assembly enables all Members of the United Nations to express their views on disarmament and arms control issues. Consequently, there does not seem to be an urgent reason for convening other world-wide meetings under United Nations auspices, such as a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament or meetings of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. A world disarmament conference might have a stimulating effect provided it is carefully prepared and the participation of the
military most important States, particularly all permanent members of the Security Council in the preparations, as well as in the conference itself, is guaranteed. Concrete disarmament negotiations, however, will be conducted more effectively in bodies of a more limited composition.

In 1973 the Netherlands have suggested in the CCD the creation of an international disarmament agency which could enhance an effective functioning of international treaties on disarmament and arms control similar to f.e. OPANAL, for example. Reference is made to the Netherlands intervention of 31 July 1973 in the CCD and to the working paper CCD/410 submitted on that occasion. At the time the suggestion was made in the framework of discussions on a chemical weapons ban but the Netherlands added that such an organization could have a function in connexion with future treaties as well. Such an agency could be entrusted with a task in the implementation of verification provisions (fact-finding), in the organization of review conferences and in the study of technical matters. The Netherlands Government still considers that the establishment of such a body within the framework of the United Nations would fulfil a growing need as witnessed by the increasing amount of draft treaties submitted since 1973.

As long as such a disarmament agency has not been established it appears useful to examine the possible role of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this field. Ways of increasing the mediating functions of the Secretary-General in negotiating new treaties and in the implementation of existing ones could be examined. In this context and by way of example, thought could be given to assistance to Member States, on their request, in the elaboration of national legislation in conformity with disarmament treaties.
The United States Government is of the view that progress toward the objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control can best be made through the negotiation of concrete measures in the field of disarmament. There has been significant progress on such measures in recent years, particularly with respect to nuclear and other mass destruction weapons. The multilateral agreements so far concluded have been facilitated by existing institutional arrangements, notably the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and the annual review of disarmament issues by the United Nations General Assembly.

United Nations General Assembly resolution 3484 B raises the question whether institutional and procedural changes in the United Nations could enable it to act more effectively in the disarmament field and thus promote progress toward disarmament objectives. The United States Government believes that some procedural changes could be beneficial and that a serious effort should be made by the Ad Hoc Committee to develop agreed recommendations for that purpose. At the same time, it believes that changes in procedure alone cannot make a major contribution to progress in disarmament, since differences over substantive issues, not institutional factors, are the major obstacles to such progress. It is difficult to conclude from historical experience that greater progress on multilateral disarmament measures could have been made with different institutional arrangements or procedures. It should also be recognized that the role of the United Nations will not necessarily be strengthened by assigning it additional functions, enlarging its staff or attempting to extend its authority. In some cases, it may be more relevant to consider whether existing United Nations institutions and procedures are being used to maximum effectiveness.

The essential role of the United Nations in the disarmament field, in the United States view, has been to provide a forum for the exchange of information and opinions and for the adoption of recommendations for defining and promoting disarmament objectives. This has been the particular task of the General Assembly and its First Committee. Efforts to alter this role, for example by suggesting that United Nations General Assembly resolutions have more than recommendatory status and could be used as means of forcing States to take actions against their will, would not only be inconsistent with the Charter, but could diminish the influence of the United Nations General Assembly.

The following observations relate to the specific objectives of the Ad Hoc Committee as set forth in resolution 3484 B (XXX).

(a) Possible approaches for achieving more effective procedures and organization of work

For many years the disarmament activities of the United Nations have been focused in the General Assembly and its First Committee, and it would not be
feasible or desirable to attempt to change that arrangement. The important task before the Ad Hoc Committee accordingly should be to develop agreed recommendations for increasing the efficiency of the United Nations General Assembly and particularly of the First Committee, where disarmament items are considered in detail.

Revisions in the procedures for debate and decision-making in the First Committee should be considered, taking into account that the number of delegations and the variety and complexity of issues have increased over the years and also that the increase in the number of resolutions approved each year - many of which concern relatively minor issues or have little prospect of achieving any practical result - has tended to dilute the impact of such resolutions and to diminish the influence of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

One possibility for rationalizing the debate would be to limit the number of agenda items, issues, and resolutions to be considered, with the understanding that issues not covered at one session could be given priority at the next.

Consideration might also be given to allotting a limited period of debate for each agenda item and dealing with each item in turn. In order to provide sufficient time for such an approach, it might be necessary to shorten substantially the time allotted to general debate in the First Committee.

In an effort to enhance the significance of recommendations by the General Assembly, the Ad Hoc Committee may wish to consider alternative procedures for decision-making.

Consideration might, for example, be given to the adoption of all substantive resolutions by the First Committee and the United Nations General Assembly by consensus. In instances where a draft resolution could not achieve consensus, the draft, or a working paper embodying the recommendations contained in the draft, could appear with a list of countries supporting the proposal in the official records of the First Committee and the United Nations General Assembly. Under this arrangement the First Committee could continue to vote on matters of a strictly administrative or procedural character, such as the establishment of an ad hoc study group, the referral of issues to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, and requests that the Secretary-General provide assistance at particular conferences. If it were not possible to adopt such a decision-making procedure on a formal basis, the Ad Hoc Committee might none the less wish to recommend that delegations make every effort to achieve consensus on First Committee and General Assembly resolutions. Under such a voluntary arrangement, delegations might choose to have their recommendations, together with a list of supporters, recorded as official documents rather than put to a vote.

(b) Ways and means of improving existing United Nations facilities for collection, compilation and dissemination of information on disarmament issues

The United States Government shares the view that increased availability of accurate information related to arms control and disarmament questions could make
an important contribution to the development of sound policies in the disarmament field. It also believes that the United Nations, particularly the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, could play a significant role in keeping the international community informed on disarmament matters. Accordingly, consideration should be given to appropriate means by which the United Nations could make widely available factual information provided by Governments on arms control and disarmament, focusing on such subjects as military expenditures, arms transfers and arms production.

The United States Government recognizes that, from time to time, the need for full and reliable information in the field of disarmament might best be served by in-depth studies carried out by experts on particular topics. In the past, experts' studies conducted under the auspices of the United Nations have made substantial contributions to international understanding of complex disarmament matters. The United States Government is of the view that further in-depth studies under the auspices of the United Nations should be encouraged, and it considers that, in order to maintain the authoritative character of such studies and to assure greatest access to information resources, the Secretary-General should follow the past practice of appointing consultant experts nominated by Governments.

(c) Ways and means of enabling the United Nations Secretariat to assist, on request, States parties to multilateral disarmament agreements in their duty to ensure the effective functioning of such agreements.

The United States Government recognizes the importance not only of the successful conclusion of effective agreements in the field of disarmament, but also of the effective operation of such agreements. It believes that the principal responsibility for the operation of a treaty régime lies with the treaty parties, and therefore doubts that a new international organization should be established for that purpose. None the less, the United Nations Secretariat could play an important role in assisting treaty parties in the effective implementation of disarmament agreements.

The Secretariat performed important functions in preparation for, and during, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and it would seem appropriate for the Secretariat to provide similar assistance to future review conferences, of the non-proliferation Treaty and of other agreements upon request of the parties. Consideration should also be given to the preparation of periodic factual reports by the Secretariat on the status of disarmament agreements.

For some agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament, it might be appropriate to establish consultative bodies of treaty parties in order to assist in the implementation of those agreements. In such cases there might be need for a permanent staff for the consultative body. The United Nations Secretary-General and his staff could play a useful role in this regard.
YUGOSLAVIA

By its resolution 3484 B (XXX), the General Assembly of the United Nations inaugurated the consideration of extremely important questions relating to the place and role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. The Government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia welcomes this initiative of the General Assembly and expresses the conviction that the forthcoming debates will make it possible to appraise the present situation objectively and to propose solutions that will mark a progress in the involvement of the United Nations in this exceptionally important sphere of contemporary international relations.

The United Nations has devoted its attention to problems of disarmament during the last 30 years. The fact that, by its first resolution, the General Assembly established the Commission on Atomic Energy and that, at its last session, it adopted the largest number of resolutions so far on individual problems of disarmament testifies to the constant interest and endeavours of the United Nations to search ceaselessly for solutions to these questions. The complexity and, above all, the significance of disarmament as one of the key problems of contemporary international relations make it imperative for the United Nations to intensify its efforts for improving its work and strengthening its own role in this sphere. The current situation makes it imperative to take appropriate steps in that sense as soon as possible.

For a longer period of time, the United Nations has not been in the position to play an adequate role in the consideration of the problems of disarmament. Negotiations on various aspects of this problem are conducted, most frequently, outside the framework of the United Nations, on a bilateral or regional basis. No regular, organic link has ever been established between these negotiations and the United Nations. Neither is the only multilateral negotiating organ, the Committee on Disarmament, organically incorporated into the existing structure of the United Nations. International agreements on some questions from the broader field of disarmament, concluded in the past years, were not negotiated within the United Nations. They were merely submitted to the United Nations for purposes of recommendation or support.

On the other hand, the ever more manifest tendency to transfer the consideration of the most important problems of disarmament to narrower international bodies outside the United Nations has affected the scope and character of the involvement of the United Nations in this field. The Commission on Disarmament of the United Nations, established more than 17 years ago, held its first meeting in 1965. The abundance of items on the agenda of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament – which is a characteristic reflection of the desire of the majority of Member States to participate actively in the solving
of these problems within the framework of the United Nations - does not make it possible to engage, within the relatively short time at the disposal of the General Assembly, in a detailed and comprehensive debate. Thus, the majority of the Member States of the United Nations are actually deprived of the opportunity to participate directly in negotiations on numerous problems of disarmament and to contribute toward their solution.

In the past period, the United Nations has exerted significant efforts for improving its work and for becoming capable of realizing the goals set by the Charter. Special international organizations and bodies, essential components of current international relations, have been established in many fields within the sphere of activity of the United Nations. Their establishment was the result of awareness that the essential problems of international relations in the contemporary world can be solved only through the joint and co-ordinated efforts of all States, on the basis of equality. Their activity so far has proved beyond doubt that the United Nations provides the indispensable universal framework for dealing with those questions in international relations in which all the members of the international community are interested. However, such positive processes have not been extended to the field of disarmament. What is more, the functions of the United Nations have been practically diminished in this sphere and there is an obvious tendency to perpetuate such a state of affairs.

More than ever before, the problems of disarmament make it imperative for the United Nations and all its Members to get most directly and actively involved in their consideration. Without stopping the arms race and solving the substantive problems of disarmament, it will not be possible to ensure, on a lasting basis, the maintenance and strengthening of peace and security in the world. Without it, it will not be possible to secure either a stable development of political relations or a rapid solution of the ever more difficult problems of economic and social development. Briefly, the further positive development of over-all international relations depends, to a great extent, on the ability of the international community as a whole to find ways and means for solving the problems of disarmament. The United Nations must necessarily play the most important role in such efforts.

There are different ways of contributing to the improvement of the methods of work and involvement of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Many useful opinions were advanced and concrete proposals made in this sense during the past years and, especially, at the last session of the General Assembly. Among other things, attention has been brought repeatedly to the possibility of establishing a special international organization that would deal systematically with problems of disarmament and questions concerned with the implementation of international agreements concluded in this field. The First Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Belgrade in 1961, proposed the convening of a world disarmament conference. The Ministerial Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Lima in 1973, concluded that - if a world disarmament conference could not be convened - then it would be necessary to convene a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations devoted to problems of disarmament. The need was stressed to revive the work of the United
Nations Commission on Disarmament and to incorporate it into the efforts exerted by the United Nations in the field of disarmament. The holding of regular meetings of the Commission on the eve of General Assembly sessions, or at some other time, is one of the possibilities for achieving this aim. Many other opinions were expressed concerning the absolute necessity to establish a regular link between the United Nations and international bodies which negotiate, outside its framework, on various questions of disarmament, or to strengthen such links if they already exist.

Attention was also drawn to a number of measures that could be taken with a view to improving the method of work and activity of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. In this respect, it was pointed out that the United Nations should expand its activity with regard to the gathering and publishing of various kinds of information on questions from the broader sphere of disarmament; that it should elaborate studies on these questions, co-operate more closely with other institutions engaged in the study of problems of disarmament, peace and security, and take organizational measures and measures regarding personnel that will enable it to cope with the increased volume of work in this field etc.

All these proposals and views deserve to be examined with the greatest attention, particularly those relating to the establishment of an international organization for disarmament, to the convening of a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations devoted to problems of disarmament, to the convening of a world disarmament conference and to reviving the work of the United Nations Commission on Disarmament.

It is expected that concrete recommendations concerning the improvement of the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament will be adopted at the forthcoming meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament. It is also expected that the General Assembly will adopt, at its next session, appropriate decisions in that direction, which will usher in a new phase of even more effective and systemic activity of the United Nations with regard to the consideration and solving of problems of disarmament.