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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW  
OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

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

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS	
Iran . . . . .	2
New Zealand . . . . .	4

REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

IRAN

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1. Attempts to streamline the procedure and the machinery of the arms-control forums and enhance the effectiveness of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament cannot be made in isolation from the fundamental and systematic problems which have plagued progress in this field. To the very marginal extent that procedural devices may improve the over-all situation, they should be aimed at and be responsive to such fundamental short-comings. The Ad Hoc Committee should therefore approach its task with a keen consciousness of such problems and formulate its recommendation in such a way as to correspond to the real problem areas.

2. Proceeding from such a stance the Government of Iran wishes to make the following analysis of the situation in the field of disarmament. First, it should be recognized that, at present, the arms-control forums are confronted with an essential state of stalemate, the main characteristics of which are the following:

(a) The question of a comprehensive test ban treaty and a chemical weapons convention have engaged the attention of disarmament forums for many years. However, hopes for the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban agreement have been repeatedly dashed. And despite some recent initiatives a convention prohibiting chemical weapons is not yet within our grasp.

(b) Progress has been possible in areas where a convention would: (i) ban a weapon system of dubious military significance; (ii) pre-empt potentially theoretical areas of arms competition; (iii) freeze a situation of strategic superiority for certain Powers at the expense of others.

(c) The strategic arms limitation talks have been useful in bringing further stabilizing influences to bear on the strategic relations of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Nevertheless, the core problem of reduction of such armaments remains unresolved.

3. It is equally important to be cognizant of reasons underlying the present state of stalemate and the forces that generate the dynamics of arms competition:

(a) It seems that the strategic balance between the two main nuclear Powers is too precarious to permit an abiding sense of security vis-à-vis one another and thus obviate the need for development of new weapons, as well as sophistication of the existing systems.

(b) Strategic imbalance is noticeable a fortiori in relations among these and the remaining nuclear Powers. The latter group has thus tended to keep the options open.

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(c) The security perception of the non-nuclear Powers is influenced by the general political situation of the world, which is rife with international tension, wars, forceful occupations, external intervention, subversion and other forms of threat to their national integrity and independence.

(d) The dynamics governing the domestic economic situation of individual States and the whole range of problems associated with economic dislocation resulting from curbs on arms production.

4. It is against the background of the above analysis that the Iranian Government believes that the Ad Hoc Committee can more usefully study ways and means of employing the machinery available to the United Nations to engage the nuclear-weapon States in serious arms control negotiations designed to reduce the risk of war and to reverse the nuclear arms race, particularly between the two major nuclear Powers. For this purpose, the Ad Hoc Committee may study the implication of such proposals as modifications in the procedures and structure of the CCD, the revival of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as well as any other relevant proposal which would be conducive to the above objective.

5. At present, CCD is engaged in reviewing its procedures and operational methods. The Government of Iran hopes that such review will yield positive results. It is the opinion of the Iranian Government that if CCD were to rid itself of the burdensome vestige of the institution of the co-chairmanship, it would not be so susceptible to the charges of displaying hegemonic tendencies. By eliminating this device of dubious operational value, a great psychological hurdle will have been lifted, paving the way for larger and more meaningful participation in its work.

Such a measure should not be taken in a precipitate fashion and without careful consideration of its implications and consequences. An appropriate course of action might therefore be the authorization, by the Ad Hoc Committee on Review of the Role of the United Nations in Disarmament, of its Chairman or the entire bureau to undertake consultations with the parties concerned in order to ascertain their views regarding the ways and means of facilitating their participation.

Furthermore, in recommending any structural modifications the Ad Hoc Committee should also take into account the views of CCD itself on all matters concerning procedural reform.

6. The Ad Hoc Committee should also study ways and means of enhancing the effectiveness and the role of the Disarmament Affairs Division of the United Nations Secretariat in all its aspects and make concrete recommendations to this effect.

NEW ZEALAND

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/11 June 1976/

The New Zealand Government believes that the United Nations Charter confers an inescapable responsibility on the Organization to promote disarmament. The Security Council has a clear mandate under Article 26 of the Charter, which it has not discharged, and the Assembly's competence to make recommendations in this field is equally clearly established in Article 11. New Zealand shares the world-wide frustration at the slow progress being made towards global disarmament, towards nuclear disarmament and even, as a first step, towards a comprehensive and universal agreement to end all nuclear weapons tests. It is apparent to all that while the General Assembly continues to debate disarmament proposals year after year, the increase in expenditure on weapons of all kinds continues unabated. It is especially disturbing that such limited developments as have taken place in this field have done so largely outside the United Nations framework and, in some cases, entirely divorced from it.

As a co-sponsor of resolution 3484 B (XXX), New Zealand welcomes the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in Disarmament and hopes that as many States as possible will participate in its endeavours to make the United Nations machinery for dealing with disarmament problems work more effectively. It must be remembered, however, that while improved machinery may result in greater efficiency, it is not in itself capable of achieving substantive results: what is most needed, and what appears to be lacking, is the essential political will.

"Possible new approaches for achieving more effective procedures and organization of work in the field of disarmament"

It has become increasingly obvious that if the General Assembly is to make a significant contribution to the cause of disarmament, it is essential that some improvement be made in the procedure by which the Assembly considers disarmament matters. The First Committee is now each year confronted with an agenda of mammoth proportions, with new items added each year to those fruitlessly retained from previous sessions, in most cases without visible signs of progress. Some of the resolutions adopted have done little to promote the cause of disarmament.

It would be desirable, in New Zealand's view, to attempt to limit the number of agenda items to be given full consideration in the First Committee at any one session. One possibility might be to establish a preparatory committee or sub-committee which would meet between the adoption of the agenda for the session by the General Assembly and the commencement of consideration by the First Committee of the disarmament items. The task of this group would be to consolidate the disarmament agenda as far as possible, to recommend a set of priorities and, where appropriate, suggest the deferment of items which have already been fully discussed or on which early progress seems unlikely.

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A suggestion made by the Group of Experts on the Structure of the United Nations may have some relevance to the problem of handling disarmament moves more effectively. With a view to facilitating agreement on issues on which there is a wide divergence of opinion and interest among Member States, the Group of Experts suggested new consultative procedures, including small negotiating groups working under a full-time chairman for specified periods during which interested parties would seek to reconcile their differences. It is recognized that such a procedure could be used to a limited extent only in the disarmament field, but in certain instances it could enhance the prospects of speedier implementation of resolutions. Whether or not this idea finds acceptance as part of the structural review, there is certainly a need for more systematic consultations among interested delegations concerning the draft resolutions on the principal disarmament items before the formal debate begins. It is a serious defect in present practice that important draft resolutions sometimes do not emerge until the general debate is over.

The New Zealand Government supports the convening of a world disarmament conference as soon as there is evidence that the nuclear Powers are ready to participate. Its attitude towards a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is subject to the same consideration.

While it is imperative that the principal forum for disarmament negotiations should be one in which all the nuclear Powers will be present with the firm intention of making progress, New Zealand also considers that that forum should be one in which the smaller Powers will also have an effective voice.

In recent years the New Zealand Government has been disappointed by the inability of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) to play a more positive role, owing to its limited mandate and the absence of two nuclear Powers. CCD, which is currently conducting a review of its own procedures, should examine ways and means of inducing all the nuclear Powers to participate in its work. CCD might, in addition, consider opening its meetings to allow interested non-Member States to attend as observers. This could be extended, to a limited extent, to giving access to non-governmental organizations, members of the public and the press.

It would also seem desirable to introduce rotation of membership of CCD. An infusion of new members on a regular basis could dispel the current appearance of inertia and result in new initiatives. Such rotation would not exclude re-election.

The annual report of CCD to the General Assembly in its present form does not contribute significantly to the disarmament debate. It would be more useful if it provided an analysis of the Committee's work rather than merely a description of it.

For many years the Security Council has not been directly active in promoting disarmament. The New Zealand Government would like to see the Council undertake a review of its Charter responsibilities with a view to a more active role, perhaps to be exercised through a revitalized and reconstituted Disarmament Commission.

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New Zealand would also support any initiatives the Secretary-General might feel able to promote, appreciating that the present exercise is directly related to his proposal in the introduction to his 1975 report for a study of the role of the United Nations in disarmament.

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

New Zealand is concerned that greater emphasis be given to the dissemination of information on disarmament issues in order to keep all Governments, as well as world public opinion, properly informed of progress achieved and problems to be overcome in the disarmament field. The present system whereby reports are prepared on an ad hoc basis only when required by the General Assembly is inadequate. In the first instance, a comprehensive background report clearly outlining the past and present role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament seems essential. New Zealand would, therefore, suggest that the Secretariat might usefully prepare, for release possibly on an annual basis, a publication which provided:

- (a) An up-to-date report on the status of disarmament agreements;
- (b) An analysis of developments in both multilateral and bilateral forums in each of the main areas of arms control and disarmament activity for the preceding year;
- (c) The reproduction of any relevant documents such as agreements, communiqués etc.;
- (d) A study on some major disarmament theme.

In addition to such reports, there is a need for the United Nations to play a greater role in the field of public information, in order to give a lead to Governments in this essential area. Both the Secretary-General and Member Governments were requested to publicize the disarmament decade in resolution 2602 E (XXIV).

Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council present recommendations to the Council and its subsidiary bodies in the economic, social and cultural fields. Similar arrangements could be made to enable non-governmental organizations to offer their views to any United Nations organ considering disarmament. This would provide United Nations organs with new information and ideas from private groups specializing in this field, for example, the International Institute for International Studies and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

"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"

New Zealand considers that the United Nations Secretariat could play a useful role in:

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- (a) Providing advice on the legislative history of particular agreements and assistance in the interpretation of the formal provisions;
- (b) Acting as the depository body for disarmament agreements;
- (c) Encouraging the ratification of disarmament agreements and, where appropriate, co-ordinating decisions to ratify;
- (d) Providing monitoring and verification services.

The extent to which the Secretariat can assist in these ways will, of course, be governed by the terms of individual treaties. New Zealand takes the view, however, that in drawing up arms control and disarmament agreements, Governments should make full provision for taking advantage of the services that the United Nations is able to provide.

New Zealand is not convinced that the discharge of the functions outlined above would necessarily require any radical strengthening of the Disarmament Division. New Zealand would, however, recommend that the Secretary-General be asked to keep the question of staffing under review.

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