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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 June 1976, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/AC.181/2 and A/AC.181/3) (continued)

REVIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT, INCLUDING INTER ALIA THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ITEMS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION 34/84 B (XXX):

POSSIBLE NEW APPROACHES FOR ACHIEVING MORE EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK;

WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPROVING EXISTING UNITED NATIONS FACILITIES FOR COLLECTION, COMPILATION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION;

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 (A/AC.181/1 and Add.1-6; A/AC.181/2; A/AC.181/3; A/AC.181/L.5) (continued)

1. Mr. ARAIM (Iraq) stressed the importance of disarmament questions and expressed regret at the huge sums spent on armaments, particularly nuclear armaments. In his view, the United Nations had a very important role to play in that field and, if it was to assume that role, all contacts and consultations must be channelled through the appropriate international organs within the framework of the United Nations according to the principles of the Charter, and all States without discrimination must be urged to participate.

2. His delegation proposed a two-stage process to achieve the goal of disarmament. The first stage consisted of strengthening the Disarmament Affairs Division by increasing its staff, taking into consideration political and geographical distribution; the representation and active participation of the United Nations in all bilateral or multilateral meetings on disarmament; participation of as many States as possible in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and in the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference; negotiations between nuclear and non-nuclear States in order to reach an agreement on a general prohibition of nuclear tests; participation of all States possessing nuclear weapons or great military capabilities in negotiations on nuclear disarmament; presentation to the General Assembly by the United States and the Soviet Union of sufficient information about their disarmament talks; participation of all members of the Security Council in disarmament talks; intensification of contacts and co-operation between the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency; establishment of an ad hoc committee to study the amounts spent on armaments and how they could be used for development purposes; and the establishment of a joint United Nations/IAEA commission to supervise the methods of control with regard to the implementation of the nuclear test ban treaties. The second stage would include the following points: convening of a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament matters; convening of a world conference on disarmament in which all States would participate - it could consider the possibility of establishing an organ similar to UNCTAD to deal with disarmament; the conclusion of international agreements and treaties on disarmament.

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3. Turning to the working paper in document A/AC.181/L.5, he said that the proposals it contained were very helpful — although he might have some remarks concerning the wording of some of them — and that his delegation's proposals were complementary to them.

4. Mr. DJOKIC (Yugoslavia) said that his Government was convinced that the debates in the Ad Hoc Committee would make it possible to appraise the current situation objectively and to propose solutions that would mark progress in the involvement of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, which was one of the key problems of contemporary international relations. The disquieting situation with regard to the growth of armaments in the world, particularly nuclear weapons, the absence of real progress in solving the essential problems of disarmament and the limited possibilities of the United Nations to contribute more effectively to the realization of general and complete disarmament under strict international control imparted added urgency and importance to the task of the Committee.

5. In addition, technological progress was making possible new uses of nuclear energy; that could cause new risks and dangers and military expenditure was constantly rising and already exceeded $300 billion annually, of which $30 billion were spent on research and development.

6. In the view of his delegation, the scope and manner of United Nations involvement in the field of disarmament did not correspond to the actual needs of the present day. For a long time already the United Nations had been unable to make its influence felt directly with regard to means of considering disarmament problems; the current negotiations were being conducted outside the framework of the United Nations and there was no regular working relationship between them and the world Organization. Without wishing to underestimate the significance of those negotiations and the results obtained, his delegation believed it was necessary to appraise objectively their contribution to the solution of substantive disarmament problems. The United Nations should increase its influence in the field of disarmament and establish a closer link between the Organization and the bilateral or regional negotiations, in order to concentrate the various efforts and thus accelerate progress in the field of disarmament by enabling all countries to participate in them on an equal footing.

7. Since disarmament problems were very closely related to the basic question of the maintenance of international peace and security, and since the positive development of international relations depended on those problems being solved, there was no doubt that the United Nations, an irreplaceable instrument of international co-operation and agreement, must play a fundamental role in those efforts.

8. With regard to the possibility of all members of the international community participating in the consideration and solution of disarmament problems, his delegation recalled that at the first Conference of Heads of State or Government,
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(Mr. Djokic, Yugoslavia)

held in Belgrade in 1961, the non-aligned countries had proposed that a world disarmament conference should be convened; so far that suggestion had not yielded any concrete results. The non-aligned countries were aware of the difficulties which the convening of such a conference involved and, therefore, at the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Lima in 1975, they had concluded that if it was not possible to hold a world disarmament conference, a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament matters would have to be convened. That special session would not, in the view of his delegation, be a substitute for the world conference but it could contribute to overcoming more rapidly the problems currently preventing a disarmament conference from being held.

9. With regard to the United Nations structure for disarmament matters, he had noted, with interest, the proposals for improving the methods and organization of work of the First Committee of the General Assembly; in that connexion, consideration should be given to the possibility that the First Committee might consider simultaneously all questions relating to disarmament and international security, in view of their interdependence. Similarly, consideration could be given to the possibility that one of the two General Assembly Committees dealing with political questions might devote its work exclusively to studying questions relating to disarmament and security.

10. Mr. BAYANDOR (Iran) said that although his delegation had voted for General Assembly resolution 3464 B (XXX), it had certain misgivings about its underlying premises. In its opinion, the inadequacy of the role which the United Nations was playing in the field of disarmament was not a question related to methodology and procedures; rather, it was a problem of substance, a series of fundamental short-comings which had been outlined by the Secretary-General in document A/10001/Add.1 and by Iran in its reply to the Secretary-General (A/AC.181/1/Add.5).

11. One problem, although by no means the most important one, which could be regarded as a quasi-procedural matter, arose from the fact that there was currently no disarmament negotiating forum in which all the major Powers participated. His delegation considered that it would be helpful if the Ad Hoc Committee studied ways and means of employing the machinery available to the United Nations in order to engage the nuclear weapon States in negotiations designed to reduce the risk of war and to halt the nuclear arms race, particularly between the two major nuclear Powers. To that end, the Ad Hoc Committee might study the implications of such proposals as that requiring the modification of the procedures and structure of CCD, the revival of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and any other relevant proposals which would be conducive to the attainment of the desired objective.

12. Another important question was that of CCD procedures. His delegation had doubts as to the operational value of the institution of co-chairmanship. Without prejudice to the review that CCD itself was conducting of its own operational procedures and methods, he believed that the Ad Hoc Committee should determine whether a radical change in the structure and procedures of CCD would lead to...
fuller participation and more meaningful negotiations in that forum. To that end the Committee should authorize the Chairman to enter into unofficial contacts with the representatives of the nuclear weapon States in order to ascertain their positions on the issue and to report the results of such consultations to the Committee at the following session.

13. Subject to the reservations he had expressed, his delegation was amenable to the idea of using the working paper in document A/AC.181/L.5 as a basis for formulating recommendations. Before taking a decision on the recommendation to strengthen the resources of the United Nations Secretariat, it would be necessary to examine and define the precise functions that an expanded division would be called upon to perform.

14. Mr. KENNEDY (Ireland) observed that, since the thirtieth session of the General Assembly, Governments had resolutely tackled the problem of determining how United Nations procedures could be better organized in order to advance work on disarmament and enable the United Nations to assume its full role. There was certainly room for improvement. In that connexion, the Secretary-General, in the introduction to his report on the work of the Organization (A/10001/Add.1), had stated that the role which the United Nations was playing in disarmament was far from adequate and that it was vitally necessary that the General Assembly should undertake a basic review of the role of the United Nations in that field.

15. In the tabulated replies from Governments (A/AC.181/2) there were remarkable similarities of thinking with respect to the practical and realistic changes which should be made to achieve progress. Many delegations clearly saw the need for improved methods of work in the First Committee of the General Assembly. Currently, the General Assembly was the only forum open to all Member States for the in-depth review of disarmament questions, and it would therefore be inappropriate to restrict the right of any Member State to raise before the Assembly any disarmament question or to advance any proposal which it considered important. Nevertheless, it was clear that the disarmament component of the agenda of the First Committee was becoming overloaded, at the expense of clarity and progress on priority issues.

16. With regard to ways and means of improving existing United Nations facilities in the field of information, he observed that the United Nations played a twofold informational role with respect to disarmament questions. First, it endeavoured to ensure that Member States had access to up-to-date, detailed and specialized information on all aspects of disarmament. Secondly, it saw to it that public opinion remained informed of ongoing international disarmament activities. In that connexion, the working paper submitted by the delegation of Sweden (A/AC.181/L.5) contained a number of constructive suggestions. He was thinking in particular of the suggestion concerning non-governmental organizations which took a special interest in disarmament affairs; some of those organizations played such an extremely useful role in disseminating information on disarmament that it might be desirable to consider the possibility of granting them a consultative role.
17. With respect to ways and means of enabling the United Nations Secretariat to assist in the effective functioning of multilateral disarmament agreements, he believed that the Secretariat, within the limits of its resources, had already made a very valuable contribution, but that there was an emerging consensus that its role would inevitably be augmented as new disarmament responsibilities devolved upon the United Nations. His delegation therefore favoured the appointment of a senior official, with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General, to serve as Special Co-ordinator of United Nations activities in the field of disarmament.

18. Mr. ABDALLAH (Tunisia) said that, despite the lack of progress in the field of disarmament, his delegation was optimistic and would continue to make a determined contribution to all efforts undertaken to achieve disarmament. His delegation deplored the current difficult and explosive situation of open or masked conflicts and denounced the quantitative and qualitative growth of armaments and, in particular, of bacteriological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Tunisia was in favour of intensifying efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament and was firmly opposed to nuclear tests and the development of any weapon for indiscriminate destruction. It therefore regarded as essential the fostering of a climate of peace in which States renounced threats and settled their disputes by peaceful means.

19. His delegation believed that the lack of progress in disarmament matters was due both to existing structural defects and to a lack of political will on the part of Governments. It therefore considered that it would be highly desirable to hold a world disarmament conference, which would provide a suitable framework for a universal dialogue. It would also be desirable to use the immense sums spent on armaments for development.

20. His delegation welcomed the working paper in document A/AC.181/L.5, although it had two minor comments to make. The number of issues of the periodical referred to in paragraph 10 (b) should not be limited or, if it was, the periodical should appear five or six times a year. With regard to paragraph 12 (b) and (c), it had some misgivings about the increase in personnel and services.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.