



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



UNITED NATIONS
CENTRE FOR DISARMAMENT
DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL AND SECURITY AFFAIRS
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Distr. GENERAL
A/AC.181/SR.18
16 September 1976
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

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

Third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 9 September 1976, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF MAO TSE-TUNG, CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

1. The CHAIRMAN expressed, on behalf of the Committee, sincere condolences to the Government and people of the People's Republic of China on the death of Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, to whom she paid tribute.

2. On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mao Tse-tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT:

(a) PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS OF THE SECOND SESSION AS WELL AS ALL OTHER PROPOSALS SUBMITTED AT THE SECOND SESSION

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF DOCUMENTS A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.1 and Add.1 AND OF ALL OTHER WORKING PAPERS SUBMITTED AT THE SECOND SESSION (A/AC.181/4)

(c) OTHER WORKING PAPERS SUBMITTED TO THE AD HOC COMMITTEE (A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2)

3. Mr. CORRADINI (Secretary of the Committee) said that a correction should be made in the text of document A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2; in the penultimate line of paragraph 8 (a), the words "on the above topics" should be deleted.

4. Mr. HAMILTON (Sweden) pointed out that the working paper submitted by his delegation for the Committee's consideration (A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2) was the outcome of the informal negotiations which had recently been concluded. He therefore hoped that the recommendations contained in it would be acceptable to the members of the Committee.

5. Mr. PASTINEN (Finland), supported by Mr. CORREA (Mexico) and Mr. OXLEY (Australia), proposed that, instead of considering working paper A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2 section by section, the Committee should allow delegations to make general comments on the text or on the particular sections and paragraphs which they considered to be of special importance. He believed that that procedure would be much more practical, and it seemed reasonable in view of the fact that the working paper was the result of informal negotiations in which all delegations had participated.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, she would take it that the Committee agreed to the proposal of the representative of Finland.

7. It was so decided.

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8. Mr. CORREA (Mexico) said that the positions stated by his delegation on a number of occasions were reflected in the text of working paper A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2. However, he proposed that in the second line of paragraph 2 (d) the word "appropriate" in the English text should be replaced by "procedural"; in the Spanish version, the wording "cuestiones apropiadas" should be changed to "cuestiones de procedimiento". His delegation also wished to reiterate its view that the United Nations Centre for Disarmament referred to in paragraph 10 should be headed by a national of a third world country. Otherwise, the text of the paper was acceptable to his delegation.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, she would take it that the Committee adopted the amendment proposed by the representative of Mexico.

10. It was so decided.

11. Mr. LAY (Italy) said he wished to stress that, in the discussions on measures for strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, the importance of organizational changes should not be overemphasized. The political will of States to make substantive progress towards general and complete disarmament - progress to which the Italian Government was firmly committed - was more important than efforts to find new machinery, although that political will could certainly benefit from better modalities. The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament remained for his delegation the main forum for discussions on disarmament, and it did not therefore consider it useful that existing structures should be duplicated. Rather, it favoured the attainment of a greater degree of efficiency together with a better use of the budgetary resources of the United Nations, and it would prefer that those structures which had proved to be useful and effective should be strengthened in the measure required as shown by experience.

12. The revised working paper (A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2) was generally acceptable to his delegation, which was fully aware of and had participated in the preparatory work leading up to its submission.

13. Mr. TULINOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union's position on the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament had been clearly expressed in its reply to the Secretary-General's questionnaire under resolution 3484 B (XXX) and in the statements of its representatives at the first and second sessions of the Committee. His delegation considered that the working paper submitted by the delegation of Sweden (A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2) was a great improvement on the earlier version and that the changes made were generally in the right direction.

14. With regard to paragraph 8 (a), dealing with the publication of information on disarmament, he wished to repeat that his delegation, which had always considered it necessary to take effective measures to curb the arms race, did not believe that undue attention should be given to technical matters of a secondary nature, such as the development of criteria for the evaluation of data. That would mean ignoring the major aspects of the problem; moreover, such minor activities could be used by those opposed to disarmament as a cover for their unwillingness to take decisive action in the field.

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(Mr. Tulinov, USSR)

15. While his delegation was not opposed to an expansion of the work of the Secretariat in connexion with the publication of documents on disarmament, or to an increase in the number of staff engaged in that kind of work, it wished to emphasize the need to reduce to a minimum the financial implications of such activities.

16. Mr. SCALABRE (France) said that his delegation was not opposed to the consensus on the working paper. However, with regard to section I.C (Role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission), it considered that the Commission should be recommended to examine the structure and procedures of the disarmament bodies as a whole. As for section I.E (The relationship between the General Assembly and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament), he wished to make it clear that, while his delegation had no objection to the contents of the section, that did not imply any change in its well-known attitude to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. In connexion with section I.F (Studies), his delegation would stress the particular difficulties which studies conducted by the Secretariat with the assistance of qualified experts nominated by Governments might encounter when they came to the most controversial aspects of disarmament - in other words, to those of the greatest importance.

17. Lastly, his delegation wished to stress the need to avoid increasing the expenses of the Organization, especially by the establishment of new posts, until more rapid and tangible progress was being made in the disarmament effort. Of course, no increase of funds would be too much if concrete results were in fact achieved in a field of such vital importance.

18. Mr. LOPEZ CHICHERI (Spain) pointed out a mistake in the Spanish version of the working paper; in the first two lines of paragraph 8 (b), the words "la posibilidad de publicar el" should be replaced by "la publicación del".

19. Mr. BUENO (Brazil) said that his delegation had doubts as to the practical results to be expected from an expansion of the Secretariat staff responsible for disarmament affairs and the attendant financial implications, since all initiatives in that direction should serve the dual purpose of meeting the needs resulting from progress in the field of disarmament and of acting as political leverage to promote agreement in promising areas. Yet any advance in disarmament negotiations was a remote possibility. None the less, without losing sight of those realities, his delegation believed that no effort should be spared to improve the methods of work of the First Committee and to provide publications on latest developments in the field of disarmament for the interested public. That might enable countries which did not ordinarily have the opportunity to become acquainted with many of the issues involved to develop their potentialities for assessment and therefore to play a more active role in the process of formulating national policies and decisions.

20. As far as paragraph 7 (a) of the working paper was concerned, his delegation maintained its reservations on the idea of leaving the possibility open for the Secretary-General, in conducting studies of the arms race, to make use of sources

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(Mr. Bueno, Brazil)

other than the qualified experts designated by Governments. Among such "other sources" there might be private institutions which, while they had made valuable contributions in the field of disarmament, were already known to hold views that they were unlikely to change when dealing with the same questions under the aegis of the United Nations. Moreover, there was a need to clarify the precise meaning of the options that paragraph 7 (a) left open on such questions as the composition of expert groups, the type of assistance that might be requested, and the limits of the Secretariat's responsibilities for publications and for the opinions and conclusions contained in them. Aside from those reservations, his delegation found the new version of the working paper acceptable.

21. Mr. IONESCU (Romania) said that, although his delegation joined in the consensus on some measures to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, it was of the view that the work of the Committee was merely the beginning of a longer process to put the United Nations in its natural place in disarmament efforts. The views of Romania on the subject could be found in the documents it had submitted to the General Assembly in the previous year and to the Committee during the current year.

22. Mr. SHERER (United States of America) said that his delegation's support of the Committee's recommendations was based on the fact that it was in agreement with their substance and felt that if they were implemented by the General Assembly they would be conducive to improvements in the operation and effectiveness of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. However, that approval of the Committee's recommendations did not prejudice his Government's position on the financial and administrative implications of what would be required in the way of financial resources and staff, implications which would have to be examined by the First Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in the light of the United Nations budget and the priorities determined by the Assembly.

23. Mr. LOGAN (United Kingdom), referring to the amendment introduced by the Mexican delegation in the working paper, said it was his delegation's understanding that the new wording of paragraph 2 (d) would not rule out the possibility of the First Committee's taking decisions on other questions.

24. With regard to the recommendation in paragraph 9 (b) to the effect that as a general rule States might request the Secretary-General to assume the role of depositary, his delegation considered that the words "as a general rule" meant that the Secretary-General could exercise those functions when the parties to disarmament agreements deemed it appropriate.

25. With respect to section IV (Strengthening of the resources of the United Nations Secretariat), his delegation thought that the staff should not be expanded unless new tasks, clearly defined, so required, in which case the relevant administrative and financial implications should be considered by the General Assembly's Fifth Committee.

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26. Mr. MOHAJER (Iran), referring to section I.A (Improved methods of work of the First Committee of the General Assembly in disarmament matters), said that in the view of his delegation no further progress had been made in improving the First Committee's methods of work: all that had been done was to repeat what was already known. The rest of the document was, on the whole, acceptable, although the questions of substance which were really holding up progress had not actually been considered. For example, only a passing reference had been made to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

27. With regard to the studies provided for in section I.F, his delegation would have preferred to retain the previous wording of the text, particularly in paragraph 7 (a).

28. In conclusion, he stressed that the last subparagraph of paragraph 8 (a), referring to factual information which should be contained in the Yearbook and the format of the latter, should be read and interpreted as a whole. There was a close connexion between the two parts of that subparagraph, which could not be considered separately.

29. Mr. SCALABRE (France) said that his delegation agreed with the United Kingdom representative's interpretation of the expression "as a general rule" in paragraph 9 (b). It was for States to determine the modalities of implementation of the agreement to which they were parties and of supervision of compliance, as well as to decide whether there was a need to secure the good offices of the Secretary-General as depositary for the agreement in question.

30. Mr. TANAKA (Japan) expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the new version of the working paper; however, he wished to reserve its position with regard to the strengthening of the resources of the Secretariat in so far as it might have financial implications.

31. Mr. GALLAGHER (Canada) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the consensus which had been reached, in which it participated.

32. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) said that her delegation endorsed the opinion of the Italian representative that political will was a determining factor in the attainment of goals in the sphere of disarmament. At the same time, it was obvious that an improvement in procedures and organization of work in the field of disarmament would enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in fulfilling the role assigned to it. That was why the recommendations in the working paper were valuable. Emphasis should also be placed on the important part which non-governmental organizations could play in activities related to disarmament.

33. Mr. NEUBERT (Federal Republic of Germany), referring to paragraph 2 (d), said that his delegation felt that the possibility of the First Committee's taking decisions instead of adopting resolutions did not rule out the application of rule 125 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure. With regard to paragraph 6, his delegation considered that the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament was the body which could most appropriately conduct substantive negotiations in the field of disarmament. Finally, his delegation felt that any increases in staff or financial resources should be examined by the Fifth Committee and ACABQ.

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34. Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria) said that although his delegation considered that the outcome of the deliberations had on the whole been positive, it would have preferred more far-reaching recommendations, especially with regard to improving the methods of work of the First Committee and the Secretariat facilities for the dissemination of information on disarmament issues. However, it hoped that in restricting the scope of the recommendations the Committee had facilitated their adoption by the General Assembly at its forthcoming session.

35. Mr. PASTINEN (Finland), supported by Mr. VALDERRAMA (Philippines), said that the new text of the working paper (A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2) was an improvement on the earlier version except in one respect, which his delegation considered of particular importance. In document A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.1 it was stated that the Committee recommended that the United Nations should publish a Disarmament Yearbook and also a disarmament periodical which would be issued three times a year. In the present version, the publication of the Yearbook was again recommended but with regard to the periodical the wording was somewhat vague and gave the impression that the project for its publication was being deferred. His delegation wished to place on record its hope that the idea of issuing a disarmament periodical would not be forgotten or relegated to some future date, since if that were to happen it would mean that the intention to inform public opinion about disarmament issues was not being carried out.

36. He also noted that Finland, in its reply to the Secretary-General, had stressed the importance which it attributed to the role that could be played by non-governmental organizations in arousing the support of public opinion for disarmament efforts. The new version of the document did not specifically mention non-governmental organizations, and although it could be assumed that paragraph 8 (c) and (d), referring to public opinion and to information disseminated to the public, also implicitly covered non-governmental organizations, his delegation would have preferred them to be mentioned explicitly.

37. Mr. MULYE (India) recalled that in his Government's reply to the Secretary-General's inquiry emphasis had been placed on the need to make progress with respect to disarmament, which would depend on the political will of Governments, particularly the nuclear Powers. As to the document before the Committee, he considered that although it was not perfect it faithfully reflected the consensus achieved and the Committee could justly be satisfied with it. In that connexion, he noted the importance of the role played by the delegation of Sweden in securing that consensus. Referring specifically to paragraph 7 (a) of the document, he reiterated his delegation's opinion, expressed on earlier occasions, that the in-depth studies should be left, as in the past, to experts appointed by Governments and said that his delegation would have preferred it if the last part of that subparagraph had been deleted.

38. Mr. TELLMANN (Norway) said that the effectiveness of the United Nations in promoting the cause of disarmament and arms control must be improved. The scope and complexity of disarmament issues made it essential to establish better procedures for compiling and disseminating documents and to arouse greater

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(Mr. Tellmann, Norway)

awareness of those issues on the part of public opinion, purposes which could be achieved by improving the information services of the United Nations. His Government was in favour of adopting specific measures to improve the capacity of the Secretariat, and particularly of the Disarmament Affairs Division, to carry out its informational task and contribute to the conclusion of effective multilateral disarmament agreements. His delegation would have preferred a different wording in some passages, which would have strengthened certain ideas, but it supported the consensus document, which constituted a positive result of the consultations and negotiations that had been carried out in a spirit of co-operation.

39. Mr. PALMA (Peru) said that his delegation considered the document before the Committee acceptable although it could have gone farther in certain respects. It was now for the General Assembly to examine the results of the Committee's efforts and adopt the appropriate decisions to expand and strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

40. The CHAIRMAN said that if she heard no objection she would take it that the Committee was prepared to adopt the recommendations in working paper A/AC.181/L.5/Rev.2 and include them in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session.

41. It was so agreed.

OTHER MATTERS

42. The CHAIRMAN, noting that no delegation wished to speak on other matters, said that consideration of that item had been concluded.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

43. The CHAIRMAN suggested that in order to give the Rapporteur time to prepare the draft report for submission to the General Assembly the current meeting should be adjourned and the Committee should meet briefly the next morning to consider and adopt the report.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.