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

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5TH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 January 1976, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

1. Mr. Ceausu (Romania) said that the Ad Hoc Committee should approach its task with an awareness of the threat to world peace and stability posed by the arms race and with the objective of finding ways to lighten the increasingly heavy burden which the latter imposed on the peoples of the world.

2. It was clearly the function of the Ad Hoc Committee to recommend to the General Assembly ways of strengthening the role of the United Nations in multilateral efforts aimed at disarmament. Disarmament quite properly came within the purview of the United Nations because it was of vital concern to every country, and the participation of all interested parties was essential in dealing with the problem. Unfortunately, the General Assembly was usually too burdened with secondary problems to be a proper forum for re-evaluation of the essential problems of disarmament. Therefore, a review of all the problems of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, and the organizational measures necessary to ensure effective negotiation in that field could best be undertaken by a special session of the General Assembly devoted exclusively to the question.

3. The Ad Hoc Committee should also pay special attention to the relations between the General Assembly and other multilateral negotiating bodies in the field of disarmament in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing system of negotiation. It should examine with particular care the work of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and its relations with the General Assembly. The Committee on Disarmament required radical changes because it had yet to make any significant contribution to the cause of disarmament.

4. The basic review of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament called for in General Assembly resolution 3484 (XXX) should include a thorough, impartial and realistic consideration of the principles, content and structure of negotiation and consideration of the problem of public opinion.

5. His delegation hoped that working paper A/AC.181/L.2 would be accepted as a basis for future work. It felt that it was essential for the present organizational session to reach decisions which would facilitate the work of the next session, and it therefore supported the efforts of the Swedish delegation to produce a provisional agenda and carry out certain preparatory work. It also wished to emphasize the need for democratic procedures which would ensure participation and a contribution by all States. It therefore supported the proposal that the Committee should operate on the basis of consensus, allowing those delegations which could not support a consensus to have their views recorded in the report.

6. Mr. Kennedy (Ireland) said that his delegation had supported the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee because it felt that the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament had been far from adequate. The very nature of the problem required the widest possible participation, and his delegation therefore felt that the Ad Hoc Committee should meet at United Nations Headquarters in New York in /...
June and September rather than in Geneva, where active participation might be confined to those countries which were already active in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. New York would also be a more convenient location for third world countries, and holding the sessions there would make it possible for all five nuclear Powers to keep in touch with the Ad Hoc Committee's work. The Ad Hoc Committee should provide organizational and informational recommendations distinct from the more permanent, detailed, technical and negotiating functions of the CCD. It should in no way supplant the CCD or encroach upon its functions.

7. His delegation felt that working paper A/AC.181/L.2 provided a useful basis for discussion and agreed with its recommendation that the Committee try to establish a provisional agenda for the second session. Paragraph 6 of the working paper contained useful suggestions, but a decision with regard to the establishment of working groups for the second session, as recommended in paragraph 6 (b), should be deferred until June in order to take into account the demands on limited staff resources at that time. His delegation endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 7 that preliminary general debates should be avoided during the sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee because they could exhaust the time and energy available without exhausting the subject.

8. His delegation also agreed with the suggestion in paragraph 5 that the Secretary-General should be invited to give his views on the whole question of a basic review of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament by 1 May 1976 as well as the suggestion in paragraph 6 (a) that he should report on the Government's communications to him in accordance with operative paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX), so that all those views would then be available for consideration by the Committee in June.

9. In conclusion, he suggested that the date of the Committee's June session should be moved forward to 14 June so as to avoid a conflict with the summer session of the CCD.

10. Mrs. de BARISH (Costa Rica) said that her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons and the continuing arms race were straining the world's limited resources; it felt that arms expenditures could easily be reduced by one half, thus providing the resources needed for the establishment of a new world economic order.

11. With regard to the work of the Committee, she noted that its mandate was to deal with procedural rather than substantive matters. She felt that working paper A/AC.181/L.2 offered useful ideas on the role of the United Nations in disarmament.

12. Her delegation felt that paragraph 3 (b) and (c) of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX) suggested possibilities for developing practical ideas to improve the work of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. The work of the Secretariat in disseminating information on the subject was of great importance and helped to create greater awareness of the problems of disarmament. Non-governmental organizations could also make an effective contribution in that regard. Paragraph 3 (c) contained important suggestions for the effective implementation of bilateral disarmament agreements, which was indispensable if positive results in the various aspects of disarmament were to be achieved.

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13. Her delegation supported the suggestion in paragraph 5 of working paper A/AC.181/L.2 because it felt that the views of the Secretary-General would be extremely useful to the Committee.

14. Mr. OSHIMA (Japan) said that his delegation was convinced that the Committee could accomplish useful work within its limited mandate even though improvement in organization and procedure was no substitute for substantive progress in disarmament.

15. Paragraph 3 of working paper A/AC.181/L.2 contained suggestions which Governments might find useful in preparing the communications they were requested to submit by 1 May under the provisions of paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 34/84 B (XXX). The suggestions might also prove useful later in compiling Government communications under appropriate subheadings, so that the Ad Hoc Committee, when it met for substantive discussions, could address itself to the problem in a more effective and co-ordinated manner. Parts A, B and C of paragraph 3 dealt with the types of questions on which Governments might wish to comment in their communications and which the Committee might later wish to discuss, but they were only meant to be illustrative and should not be made binding.

16. His delegation agreed with the suggestion in paragraph 5 because the Secretary-General's views were essential to the accomplishment of the Committee's work. It would be even more helpful if his views were requested on specific, well-defined points instead of leaving the matter to his discretion.

17. Paragraph 6 of the working paper contained all the necessary ingredients for deciding the question of establishing a provisional agenda for the second session. The establishment of a working group or working groups with specific tasks would be useful and should be discussed at the second session.

18. In conclusion, his delegation fully agreed that it was essential to ensure the widest possible participation by States, including the nuclear-weapon States, in the Committee's work.

19. Mr. LENNKH (Austria) said that while the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee represented one possible response to the recent frustration pervading the debate on disarmament, other interested bodies, particularly the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, could perhaps undertake their own reviews. It was more important to ask the right questions than to come up with quick solutions. Accordingly, his delegation attached particular importance to the suggestion that the Secretary-General should submit a report clearly outlining the past and present role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. The Committee should know what other bodies existed for the purpose of dealing with disarmament, what they had done so far, and what the cost of those bodies had been. Only then could it proceed to the second phase, namely, the determination of what it desired to achieve. That discussion would be based on the views submitted by Member States. Accordingly, the list of matters suggested in document A/AC.181/L.2 was not intended to be exhaustive. It was essential that all members should preserve an open mind on all suggestions. Finally, he expressed the hope that the Ad Hoc Committee would not prove to be just another body for which room must be found in the calendar of conferences.
20. Mr. SCALABRE (France) recalled that his delegation had approved the principle of a review because it believed that the disarmament debate was not on the right path. While it was too early to know whether his Government's ideas concerning the structure of and the methods employed by the bodies dealing with disarmament could be discussed within the framework of the review which the Committee was to undertake, his delegation fully endorsed the Chairman's earlier suggestions concerning the procedure the Committee should adopt and the need to decide the agenda for the Committee's future sessions. However, it hoped that all States, particularly the five nuclear Powers, would support the consensuses arrived at by the Committee or, at any rate, not oppose them. It would be useful in that connexion to have the ideas of certain States set forth in a separate chapter of the Committee's final report and attributed to the States in question. His delegation would also prefer, for the reasons stated by the representative of Ireland, that the Committee should hold all its sessions in New York.

21. Although his delegation might be placed in a somewhat embarrassing position when the discussion turned to problems relating to the relationship between the United Nations and a certain body in which France - for reasons which it had repeatedly explained - did not participate, France would endeavour not to hamper the Committee's work. His delegation had been greatly interested in the comments and suggestions made by the representative of Romania and fully agreed that a basic review was needed.

22. Mr. BUDHIRAJA (India), referring to document A/AC.181/L.2, suggested that the item proposed in somewhat ambiguous terms in paragraph 3 C (i) should be amended to read as follows: "Nature of the assistance that the United Nations can render, on request, to parties to disarmament agreements towards the fulfilment of their obligations arising out of those agreements". That would bring the item more in line with paragraph 3 (c) of General Assembly resolution 34/84 B (XXX).

23. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the procedural suggestion she had made at the 2nd meeting to the effect that delegations should try to reach unanimous agreement in so far as possible, on the understanding that any delegation or group of delegations could have its views fully recorded.

24. Mr. CEAMU (Romania) suggested that "consensus" would be a better term. If there was unanimous agreement on an issue, there was no reason to record individual views.

25. Mr. SCALABRE (France) endorsed that suggestion. The term "unanimous agreement" implied the absence of any reservations while "consensus" merely implied non-opposition. The recording of delegations' ideas and suggestions was yet another matter. Such views should not merely explain why a delegation had not joined in the consensus but should also touch on other points.

26. Mr. PALMA (Peru) said that he, too, preferred the term "consensus". However, he wondered whether that would mean - as it had in one Committee - that divergent views would have to be reflected as though they were part of the general agreement. If that was the understanding, the Committee might be hampered in its work.
27. Mr. LOGAN (United Kingdom) pointed out that the formula suggested by the Chairman made specific provision for recording individual views not held by the majority. He suggested that a decision should be deferred until consultations had been held.

28. It was so decided.

29. Mr. BACHROUCH (Tunisia), introducing document A/AC.181/L.3, said that the Committee's future work would be facilitated if it could adopt a provisional agenda at the present session. He drew attention to paragraph 2, which contained suggestions as to what might be included in the report which the Secretary-General was to be invited to submit to the Committee.

30. Ms. BEAGLE (New Zealand) said that her delegation supported the view expressed in paragraph 7 of document A/AC.181/L.2 that the Committee should avoid preliminary general debates. She endorsed the comment by the representative of Tunisia that adoption of the provisional agenda at the present session would assist Governments in focusing on the major areas to be dealt with and would provide guidelines for the replies they were to submit in accordance with operative paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 34/84 B (XXX). She hoped that Governments would offer the broadest possible range of views and suggestions and that those which had not participated in the present session would participate in the others. Her delegation, too, would prefer the venue to be New York.

31. It would be helpful if the views and suggestions of the Secretary-General could be available at the start of the second session and if those views could deal with the entire subject of disarmament. In that context, her delegation would welcome a comprehensive background report on current United Nations activities in the field of disarmament. Without such a report it would be impossible to conduct a realistic review.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that she hoped to be able to announce at the following meeting that efforts were under way to work out alternative dates for the Ad Hoc Committee's sessions. Since no one had voiced opposition to the suggestion that all sessions should be held at New York, she assumed that New York would be the venue.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.