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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 14 June 1976, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRMAN declared open the second session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.181/L.4)

2. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the provisional agenda in document A/AC.181/L.4.

3. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK, INCLUDING POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUPS FOR THE SECOND SESSION

4. The CHAIRMAN proposed that agenda items 4 and 5 be considered together, since the Secretary-General's report to which item 4 referred also contained Governments' observations on the main provisions of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX) which were referred to in item 5. As to the possible establishment of working groups, there would be no difficulty in doing so when the need arose. At all events, if it should prove necessary, it would be desirable to set up a single open-ended working group.

5. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) agreed that only one working group should be established in order to avoid overlapping and confusion. In his view, the nucleus of the working group should comprise the three super-Powers, which bore the major responsibility in matters of disarmament, the industrial Powers which manufactured armaments and other countries; the working group should have a maximum of 24 members.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Committee agreed with the recommendations concerning the organization of its work.

7. It was so decided.
PRESENTATION OF REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/AC.181/3)

REVIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT, INCLUDING INTER ALIA THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ITEMS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION 3484 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, 2 and 3, A/AC.181/2, A/AC.181/3; A/AC.181/L.5)

8. Mr. Björnstedt (Director, Disarmament Affairs Division) introduced document A/AC.181/1 and Add.1, 2 and 3 containing the replies of Governments to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General, inviting them to communicate their views and suggestions on the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. Document A/AC.181/2 contained the same replies in tabulated form. Document A/AC.181/3 contained a report by the Secretary-General prepared in response to the invitation extended by the Ad Hoc Committee at its sixth meeting, on 29 January 1976, stating the main questions which should be considered in order to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, namely, the need for United Nations action to be based on accurate and adequate information, the need for discussions to be comprehensive, the need to review the structure and procedures of the United Nations negotiating machinery, the need for a clearer definition of the relation and distribution of functions among different central and regional bodies in the disarmament field and the need for verification, control and co-ordination of existing agreements. Annexed to the document were a number of background papers prepared by the Secretariat. The first, entitled "Role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament: 1945-1975" was a brief summary of past events. The second, entitled "Information on disarmament issues", considered the possibility of initiating two publications.

9. Mr. Hamilton (Sweden) pointed out that disarmament could be achieved only if the political will could be mustered. His Government believed that it was necessary to improve and make more effective the available tools for discussion and negotiation and that the United Nations was the only global forum for discussing disarmament measures. The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament had recognized, in that connexion, the need to improve the methods of work of existing institutions. The Ad Hoc Committee should base its work on the political realities and propose specific measures to make the work in the existing organs more productive and efficient. It was, of course, important to improve the
organization of work of the First Committee of the General Assembly, which was the only forum where all Member States could put forward their views. The proceedings of the Committee must be made more orderly, efficient and simple and attention must be concentrated on the real priority issues. The capacity of the United Nations for disseminating basic information and undertaking in-depth studies of disarmament matters was far from adequate. The United Nations should solicit, for that purpose, the assistance of Government experts, institutions both within and outside the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

10. The United Nations should further be given the necessary capability to ensure the effective implementation of disarmament agreements. In the short term, the role of the United Nations could centre on publishing annual reports on the status of disarmament agreements and the assumption of the role of depositary of future disarmament conventions and treaties. In a longer perspective, the role should also comprise verification of compliance with disarmament agreements, fact finding and other technical support functions. As the performance of all those duties would require considerable strengthening of the resources of the Secretariat, his Government had suggested that the Disarmament Affairs Division should be enlarged and transformed into a United Nations Centre for Disarmament to which resources and functions commensurate with the importance of disarmament affairs would be allocated.

11. The Swedish Government supported the idea of convening a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

12. He then introduced working paper A/AC.181/L.5, prepared by his delegation, placing particular emphasis on the paragraphs which, in his view, deserved special attention: paragraph 5, which recommended that the First Committee should consider the relevant sections of the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency before the entire report of the Agency was dealt with by the General Assembly in plenary; paragraph 7, which recommended that States participating in multilateral and regional disarmament negotiations should give serious consideration to the possibility of requesting conference servicing and other technical assistance from the United Nations and should provide for review conferences on a regular basis and for an expanded United Nations role in that connexion; and paragraph 8, which recommended that the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament should be available to delegations in New York not later than 15 September each year and that all CCD documents should be distributed on a regular and continuing basis.

13. His delegation attached great importance to the publication of a report on disarmament annually or every second year.

14. In paragraph 12, it was recommended that a United Nations Centre for Disarmament (UNCD) should be established, headed by an Assistant Secretary-General, which would provide not only committee and conference services but also information retrieval and dissemination, disarmament studies and follow-up of disarmament resolutions and agreements.

15. His delegation trusted that the document would serve a useful purpose to the Committee at that session.

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16. Mr. LONGERSTAY (Belgium) noted that the replies sent by Governments showed two tendencies: some countries felt that the present structure of the international activities and the methods and means of action of the United Nations in the disarmament area were inadequate or insufficient, whereas others felt that the reason why progress had not been achieved in disarmament activities was related not to structure or methods of work but rather to the lack of political will of Governments. In his opinion, the two positions, although they were to some extent true and pertinent, were extreme and the Committee should extract from them those aspects which would have a positive impact on international activities relating to disarmament and arms control.

17. In any case, the Committee should direct its activities towards effective action; it should not therefore seek change for change's sake or adopt without prior reflection new machinery or methods which could prove unproductive or counterproductive. The proposals to be formulated by the Committee should aim basically at extending international dialogue and eliminating confrontation and polemics in that area.

18. His delegation felt that a careful exchange of views should be undertaken on the function of the United Nations and its Secretariat in international disarmament negotiations and that the Committee should formulate precise suggestions to that effect. It should be emphasized that the United Nations had not given sufficient attention to the possibility of holding negotiations at the regional level on the subject of disarmament and arms control. Finally, he said that the evolution of the world armaments situation tended to focus the debate on conventional forces, whose role with regard to the stability, peace and security of States was more evident each day. The United Nations should draw the relevant conclusions from that fact.

19. Mr. GÜVEN (Turkey) noted the importance of the catalytic function which the United Nations could have in the disarmament field. In the view of his delegation, the fact that rapid and tangible progress had not been achieved in that regard was due essentially to the lack of dialogue between the most important States, especially those with nuclear weapons. Although it could not be denied that the differences on the subject of achieving general and complete disarmament under effective international control were especially great between those countries, it was necessary to overcome the lack of dialogue and establish suitable negotiating machinery as soon as possible.

20. With regard to improving the working methods of the United Nations in the disarmament field, he noted that the number of disarmament items considered by the First Committee increased each year; that fact, although it showed the interest of the international community in disarmament questions, constituted an obstacle to productive discussion and his delegation therefore felt it would be better to reduce the number of items assigned to the First Committee and even to consider the possibility of having the First Committee deal only with disarmament questions. Moreover, the fact that an excessively large number of resolutions dealing with the same questions was adopted each year served only to confuse world public opinion, and it would be better, therefore, if draft resolutions aimed at the same objectives were consolidated.
21. Finally, he suggested that, instead of holding a general debate, the First Committee should set aside a limited time for considering each of the items assigned to it. In the same context, it would be logical to consider the possibility of establishing disarmament priorities and, in that connexion, his delegation felt that top priority should be given to the cessation of all nuclear tests.

22. Mrs. CASTRO DE BARISH (Costa Rica) reviewed the resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations on the subject of disarmament and noted that Costa Rica, whose hostility to armaments could be seen from its governmental structure, had always supported those resolutions and decisions enthusiastically.

23. With regard to evaluating the working methods of United Nations bodies dealing with the question, her delegation felt that it was necessary to rationalize the consideration of disarmament items in the First Committee so as to work more concretely and effectively and enable greater participation by delegations. During the informal consultations which would have to be held, it would be necessary to study the reasons why, despite the large number of resolutions adopted, the arms race was intensifying each day, both with regard to conventional arms and nuclear arms. In general, the momentum for dealing with the world armaments situation, which had existed in the first years of the United Nations, appeared to have been lost and it seemed therefore necessary to revitalize the relevant procedures so that the General Assembly, on the one hand, and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, on the other, could deal with those matters in an adequate and efficient manner.

24. With regard to the role of the United Nations, she felt that it would be appropriate for the Secretariat of the United Nations to assist States parties to multilateral disarmament agreements in their duty to ensure the effective functioning of such agreements. She also felt it appropriate to suggest that the Secretariat publish annual reports on the status of conventions and multilateral agreements relating to disarmament. It would also be useful for the Secretariat to disseminate information on disarmament to the public at large. The non-governmental organizations concerned could also make a very positive contribution in that connexion, and her delegation therefore felt that the links between the Secretariat and those organizations should be tightened by, for example, furnishing them regularly with documents dealing with the various aspects of disarmament.

25. In conclusion, her delegation welcomed the ideas contained in the working paper submitted by the Swedish delegation (A/AC.181/L.5) and felt that it would constitute a positive basis for the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

26. Mr. JÓZAI (Hungary) said that his delegation, in common with those of other socialist countries, attached particular significance to all measures aimed at curbing and ending the arms race and working out effective arrangements conducive to general and complete disarmament.
27. The United Nations, despite its value as a forum for studying disarmament matters, had seen a reduction in its effectiveness owing to its lack of universality. It was necessary to recognize the limitations of the United Nations in such a specialized and particular field as disarmament and not lose sight of the realities of the question, namely the fundamental link between security and disarmament.

28. For that reason, his delegation felt that two organizational frameworks should be adopted. Firstly, an organizational framework consisting of a reasonably limited number of participants representing the various geographical regions of the world, the States militarily allied with the two leading Powers and the countries outside those alliances. In the 14 years of its existence, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament had satisfied those requirements in an exemplary manner and, in the opinion of his delegation, any attempt to replace it would be a move into unknown territory. In addition, there would be an increased risk that the consideration of practical disarmament measures would be replaced by unrealistic debates.

29. Secondly, parallel to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, there was need for a forum where all States of the world, including non-Members of the United Nations, could state their views and present proposals on all questions relating to the reduction and cessation of the arms race and on measures conducive to general and complete disarmament. In the opinion of his delegation, such a forum could be provided by the World Disarmament Conference proposed by the Soviet Union in 1971. The proposal had received the support of the overwhelming majority of the Members of the United Nations. However, the convening of the conference had been postponed owing to the reluctance of certain Powers to consider the question of disarmament, whether partial or general and complete. Although some speakers had argued that the difficulties encountered were due to an alleged lack of organizational forums, his delegation very much doubted whether that was the case. There was nothing to indicate that an increase in the number of bodies responsible for studying the question of disarmament or a strengthening of the services of the Disarmament Affairs Division of the Secretariat would win the enthusiastic support of those opposed to concrete disarmament measures, or that the elimination of time-tested bodies such as the Geneva Committee would benefit the cause of disarmament. It was not the organizational framework but rather the lack of political will of certain Powers which prevented the achievement of progress in disarmament negotiations. Therefore, although there was no reason to doubt the good intentions of those who advocated the introduction of organizational reforms, his delegation was firmly convinced that the interests of disarmament would be best served only if, instead of devoting time and energy to fruitless debates, attention were focused, both in the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference and during the coming session of the General Assembly, on practical steps leading to the convening of the World Disarmament Conference.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.