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

Second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 June 1976, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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76-82629 /...
The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (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 ORGANIZATIONS 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.1-5; A/AC.181/L.1-5) (continued)

1. Mr. GALLAGHER (Canada) said that the people and Government of Canada were frustrated by the lack of progress towards disarmament. The complexities of the problem and the difficulties in reaching agreement were no argument for inaction, and his Government was determined to support all measures that might lead to progress in disarmament.

2. Drawing attention to his Government's reply in the Secretary-General's report
(A/AC.181/1), he said that the United Nations was ideally suited to play a catalytic role in encouraging the examination of disarmament problems in other international forums. He reiterated his Government's view concerning the need for greater political will on the part of all States, particularly militarily significant States, to resolve their differences of view concerning a reduction in armaments without sacrificing national security. It was difficult to see how major changes in the mandates, structure, methods of work or interrelationships of existing forums would solve that problem.

3. The Ad Hoc Committee should consider ways in which the United Nations could improve its ability to compile and disseminate information on disarmament questions. That could be achieved by introducing additional measures within existing over-all resources. Consideration might also be given to strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat, so as to provide, if asked, assistance to parties to arms control negotiations or treaties. In that respect, the United Nations might be particularly well placed to provide assistance, on request, to countries seeking to negotiate or implement regional agreements. The Ad Hoc Committee might explore ways of enhancing the ability of the United Nations to respond to such requests within existing resources. It might also consider ways of improving the Secretariat's ability to assist, when requested to do so, in the periodic review of agreements.

4. With regard to improving the methods of work of the First Committee, his Government took the view that the work of that Committee would be enhanced if certain resolutions were presented less frequently than every year and if more time were allowed for other forums and ad hoc committees to study problems in depth.

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5. Canada regarded the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament as the most appropriate forum in which to negotiate universal arms control agreements. It was a matter of deep concern that, owing to the lack of political will, the Conference had been unable to produce a major arms control agreement in recent years. The value of the Conference would be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of all nuclear-weapon States, and Canada would support close consideration of any structural changes that might lead to their participation. Nevertheless, the Conference was ideally suited to the negotiation of international arms control agreements whenever the obstacles to such negotiations could be surmounted.

6. Finally, the Ad Hoc Committee should consider whether the Secretary-General's role in disarmament could not be expanded to include the depositary function for future agreements, since the reasons for assigning that function to specific Governments no longer seemed to be valid, except in very special circumstances.

7. In conclusion, he reiterated that all States must strive vigorously to ensure international security at reduced levels of military forces and armaments. His Government pledged its best endeavours towards that end.

8. Mr. IONESCU (Romania) suggested that the Ad Hoc Committee should proceed as soon as possible to the preparation of its report, on the basis of the documents before it, in time for submission to the General Assembly at its thirty-first session.

9. In his delegation's view, the increased efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field reflected an awareness that the lack of tangible results from disarmament negotiations represented a serious danger and that political will must be embodied in effective disarmament negotiations conducted within a democratic framework.

10. By virtue of the Charter, the United Nations had a central role to play in the disarmament field. Accordingly, the Ad Hoc Committee's task did not lie in contemplating abstract organizational plans, but rather in considering future action and putting forward proposals related to the instruments available.

11. To that end, the Secretariat could prepare a complete list of proposals made over the years which, arranged in groups, could give a clear idea of the structures required for their discussion, negotiation and solution. In order to improve their effectiveness, those structures must then be arranged in the most appropriate way. Particular attention should be given to those bodies that satisfied the fundamental requirements of disarmament negotiations, namely, the participation of all States on an equal footing and respect for the views and interests of all countries. The General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission should be paramount in future disarmament negotiations.

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12. Since a disarmament strategy must be approved by the international community as a whole, the United Nations must give consideration either to grouping under its auspices, or to establishing close links with, all bodies outside the Organization that were involved in disarmament negotiations.

13. To that end, the organization of an international meeting in an appropriate form and under United Nations auspices, enabling all States to participate, would also be useful. In addition, his Government supported the convening of a special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of drawing up principles that could be applied to all disarmament negotiations, establishing a strategy for such negotiations and redefining structures for disarmament negotiations under United Nations auspices.

14. The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament should be democratized and reorganized in order to ensure that it could perform the tasks for which it had been established, to guarantee open negotiations and to ensure the participation of all States on an equal footing. If the Conference continued to be ineffective, the matter should be considered by the General Assembly.

15. With regard to the Secretariat's role in disarmament negotiations, his delegation shared the view that it was possible to go further than the provisions of General Assembly resolution 34/44 B (XXX), in view of the great need for disarmament negotiations and the Secretariat's particularly valuable contribution thus far.

16. He hoped that the Ad Hoc Committee would make a useful contribution towards breaking the deadlock in disarmament negotiations. His delegation, for its part, pledged its efforts to that end.

17. Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria) said that his delegation's support for the Swedish proposal to review the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament was guided by its belief in the great value of a thorough consideration of ways to strengthen the procedural and organizational possibilities of the United Nations in that field. The Ad Hoc Committee's deliberations would in no way divert Member States from substantive disarmament issues; on the contrary, its work should improve the United Nations disarmament machinery. The ample material before the Committee constituted a sound basis for its discussions. It should concentrate on seeking a consensus for its recommendations to the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

18. Many Governments, in their written proposals, had expressed their concern as to the working methods of the First Committee. It should therefore be possible to agree upon measures to improve the way in which that Committee's annual disarmament debate was organized. His delegation strongly supported proposals calling for the preparation of a more precise agenda at the beginning of each session.

19. In his Government's comments in document A/AC.181/1/Add.1, various means had been proposed for concentrating the First Committee's work, thereby increasing the...
impact of the resolutions adopted each year. Consideration must be given to
limiting the ever-increasing number of items and to amalgamating closely related
items. Furthermore, the possibility of considering specific items only every
second year should not be discarded; that method had already proved feasible in
other committees. A biennial but thorough discussion of a specific item would
certainly enhance its significance. Naturally, those proposals did not imply any
restriction for delegations wishing to comment on, or submit draft proposals
concerning, new aspects of the general problem of disarmament.

20. As stated in section C of its reply in document A/AC.181/1/Add.1, the
Austrian Government continued to support the proposal for a world disarmament
conference, and felt that ways should be found to accelerate the decision-making
process with regard to convening that conference. At the same time, the possibility
of revitalizing the United Nations Disarmament Commission should be discussed,
provided it was given a concrete mandate.

21. His delegation was very interested in the current efforts of the Geneva
Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to review its own modalities. It was to
be hoped that that review would enhance its ability to contribute further to what
should be the main disarmament item, namely, general and complete disarmament. The
General Assembly would greatly profit from the work of the Conference if it was
presented annually with a more detailed and, if possible, analytical report,
which should be made available to all delegations at Headquarters as early as
possible.

22. His delegation hoped that the Committee would recommend increasing the
capacity of the Secretariat to carry out comprehensive studies of disarmament
issues, which would be of enormous significance for all delegations, especially
those with limited research facilities. In that connexion, he warmly welcomed the
Secretary-General's suggestions (A/AC.181/3, annex B) concerning a Disarmament
Bulletin and a Disarmament Yearbook.

23. The Secretariat could also play a vital role in assisting, at their request,
States parties to multilateral or regional disarmament agreements in ensuring the
effective functioning of such agreements. The Committee should therefore adopt
recommendations which would enable the United Nations to carry out that role.

24. At the same time, the Secretariat should be in a position to provide
conference services and other assistance at the request of States participating in
multilateral or regional disarmament negotiations. It might also play an expanded
role in connexion with periodic review conferences. Such conferences could greatly
assist in ensuring the continuous functioning of disarmament agreements,
guaranteeing their flexibility in the light of subsequent developments.
25. It was essential to adopt recommendations calling for the necessary measures to enable the Secretariat to accomplish all the services entrusted to it. Efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the disarmament field were closely linked to improvement of the Disarmament Affairs Division's financial and organizational infrastructure, including an increase in its professional staff.

26. Mr. CARRANCO AVILA (Mexico) said that an example of his Government's long-standing interest in strengthening the United Nations role in the field of disarmament was Mexico's active participation in the "comprehensive programme of disarmament" (A/8191), submitted to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session. As stated in its introduction, the programme should embrace all negotiations and other acts relevant to disarmament and should include effective procedures in order to facilitate the co-ordination of such activities and ensure that the United Nations be kept informed on their progress so as to permit it the proper performance of its functions, including the constant evaluation of the situation. The implementation of those ideas presupposed a clear distinction between the deliberative and negotiating functions of the bodies dealing with disarmament questions.

27. The General Assembly was the only forum in which the international community could express its justified alarm regarding the problems of the arms race and exert pressure, if only moral pressure, on all States to make further efforts for the adoption of effective measures of disarmament and, more particularly, nuclear disarmament.

28. The growing complexity and multiplicity of international problems had not permitted the General Assembly to study items on disarmament with the thoroughness which they deserved. The Government of Mexico remained convinced that the best way of strengthening the "deliberative machinery" would be to convene a world disarmament conference, the main objectives of which would be to recommend to the General Assembly that in future there should be three main organs for the promotion of disarmament: the General Assembly, the World Disarmament Conference and a negotiating body of about 30 members, preferably the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

29. Since 1971, the Government of Mexico had continually stressed the need for the early convening of a world disarmament conference open to all States. However, as his delegation had stated at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly, in view of the meagre results achieved to date, unless more tangible progress could be achieved by the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference during 1976, the General Assembly must at the thirty-first session decide to convene a special session for the purpose of considering, inter alia, the question of convening a world disarmament conference. The recommendations and proposals to be made by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament would provide the General Assembly with an additional input for its discussion of the question of convening a world disarmament conference, a matter on which a decision must be taken in 1976.

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30. The working paper submitted by the Swedish delegation (A/AC.181/L.5) would no
doubt greatly facilitate the work of the Committee. His delegation agreed with
the recommendation in paragraph 12 (a), (b) and (d). With respect to
subparagraph (c), the proposed Centre for Disarmament should be headed by an
official who was a national of the third world and whose rank was no lower than
that of Assistant Secretary-General.

31. Since the end of the Second World War, it had been the countries of the third
world more than others that had seen the most terrible weapons from the
industrialized countries used against their peoples and it was who stood to
lose the most from unrestrained nuclear rivalry among the great Powers, especially
the super-Powers. It was perhaps for that reason that the third world countries
had played a key role in arousing world public opinion by emphasizing the dangers
of the arms race.

32. His delegation fully agreed with the proposals in paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 of
the Swedish working paper. All were aware of the importance of the report of the
Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and, in that connexion, his delegation
believed that the recommendations in paragraph 8 (a) and (b) were essential. He
requested the delegation of Sweden to explain the meaning of the words "show
restraint" in paragraph 8 (c) in greater detail.

33. His delegation fully endorsed the recommendations in paragraph 7. However,
with respect to paragraph 6, it believed that it should be left to the General
Assembly to study the future role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission at
such time as it considered convenient, at either a regular or a special session.
His delegation also fully agreed with the suggestion in paragraph 5.

34. The working paper suggested practices already established in the General
Assembly which, in some cases, had facilitated the work of that body. He referred in
particular to paragraph 3 (b) of the working paper. With respect to paragraph 3 (a),
his delegation noted that the First Committee had for years simultaneously discussed
all items on disarmament without a resulting proliferation of general statements;
rather, each delegation had felt free to refer to the items which it considered
most important. His delegation feared that the distribution of items on disarmament
into subgroups would make delegations feel obliged to refer to each subgroup. The
ostensible purpose of the suggested procedure was to limit the number of draft
resolutions submitted at each session of the General Assembly. While acknowledging
the increase in the number of draft resolutions adopted in recent years by the
General Assembly, his delegation believed that that proliferation of resolutions
was only a reflection of the growing concern of the international community about
the dangers of the arms race.

35. With respect to paragraph 3 (c), his delegation believed that the frequency with
which certain items were considered should not be imposed from outside but should
depend, as it had thus far, on the interest of delegations in those items. Of
course, that would not prevent delegations more directly concerned from deciding
that it was more appropriate, in order to achieve the desired objectives, to

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consider certain items every second or third year instead of annually, as had already been done in the case of certain items on the agenda of the First Committee. Lastly, his delegation believed that the Ad Hoc Committee should recommend the established practice to the effect that the Chairman of the First Committee should suggest possible methods of work in consultation with its members.

36. His delegation would spare no effort to ensure that the Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly resulted in the strengthening of the resources of the international community in order to achieve the difficult objective of general and complete disarmament, in particular, nuclear disarmament.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.