Letter dated 25 August 1987 from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and head of the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development addressed to the President of the Conference

I have the honour to enclose the text of the message from the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. M. S. Gorbachev, to participants in the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

I should be grateful if you would have the text circulated as an official document of the Conference.

(Signed) V. PETROVSKY
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and head of the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development
MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

My warmest greetings to you all. It is my hope that the International Conference will help reveal new possibilities of approaching a solution of this cardinal problem of today's world.

The obstacles the opponents of disarmament have placed on the road towards the Conference have confirmed once again the interdependence of disarmament and development and the urgency of the task.

The time has come for everyone to realize that by deliberately or inadvertently keeping the peoples of some regions, or even entire continents, in a position of being exploited and dispossessed, mankind is running the risk of an explosion no less devastating than a thermonuclear conflict.

The Conference is meeting at a propitious time for discussion of the issue - at a point where a pressing need and already existing possibilities converge. Quite recently, before Reykjavik and the "double global zero" option, this point appeared very far off. But today the roads leading to disarmament and development are merging not only in wishes, but in real policies as well.

I have in mind the emerging agreement on the complete elimination of two types of nuclear missiles which could be signed even tomorrow if the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany removed the obstacle of which you are all aware.

I have in mind the possibility of a substantial reduction in the strategic offensive weapons of the two major nuclear Powers under a strengthened ABM Treaty.

The progress achieved at the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, where representatives of 40 countries have come close to signing a convention on prohibiting chemical weapons and eliminating the stockpiles of such weapons, also gives grounds for a measure of optimism.

The principle of development through disarmament is an integral part of the concept of establishing a comprehensive system of international peace and security proposed to the world community by the group of socialist countries. The fact that this concept enjoys the moral and political support of many States can also, I think, be regarded as one of the propitious conditions for the work of the Conference.

And finally, the acute concern of the world public and influential political circles about economic conditions in the developing countries has become obvious. Nowadays many people see the link between the unprecedented indebtedness of those countries brought about by that new form of colonial plunder, inequitable trade, and the growth of the imperialist States' military budgets. Also obvious is the...
monstrous unfairness of the fact that the former to a substantial degree cover the military expenses of the latter.

We and our friends propose sure ways and means of putting an end to this situation. I hope the Conference will take into account the document adopted in Berlin by the countries of the socialist community "On overcoming underdevelopment".

The work of the world community in this area will be a ground-breaking exercise. I am convinced that the Conference can make a substantial and expert contribution to the internationalization of efforts aimed at making disarmament a factor in development.

The participants in the Conference can count on our active co-operation and support. The Soviet Union has already given practical evidence of its support for stepping up the activities of international forums dealing with the problems of the arms race, including the Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

We shall continue to do our utmost to strengthen the prestige of the United Nations and its role in promoting development through disarmament. We believe that the Security Council should also come to grips with the issue.

It would be useful to discuss the problems of disarmament and development in fundamental terms at a special meeting of top leaders of the States members of the Security Council.

Implementation of the fundamental principle of "disarmament for development" should and could unite mankind and help to develop a way of thinking in planet-wide terms.

We are in favour of wider glashnost and openness as regards military activities and military expenditures, and we have been persistently proposing a comparison between the military doctrines of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. This would also enable us to come up with a realistic comparison of military budgets, with a view to stopping their further expansion and keeping them within the bounds of reasonable sufficiency.

The process of militarization must be halted and reversed. An important step in this direction, and a means of strengthening international trust, would be the preparation by every State of a national resource redeployment plan testifying to its resolve to curtail military production.

To transfer to the countries in need the resources that would be released through disarmament, it would be advisable to set up within the framework of the United Nations an international "Disarmament for Development" Fund open to all States. The USSR is prepared to participate in such a fund.

Mankind wants to be assured that it has a future. Your decisions will help strengthen confidence that it does.

M. GORBACHEV