Letter dated 17 August 1987 from the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General of the Conference

On behalf of the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and in accordance with the decision taken by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU at its twenty-third ordinary session (resolution AHG/Res. 3 (XXIII)), I have the honour to transmit the attached document (CM/1432 (XLVI) A/Rev.1) reflecting the viewpoint of African States on the question of the relationship between disarmament and development, as a working document for the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.

Accordingly, it is requested that the attached document be circulated in the official languages of the United Nations.

(Signed) Peter Dingi ZUZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Annex

[Original: Arabic/English/French]

DOCUMENT REFLECTING THE VIEWPOINT OF AFRICAN STATES ON THE QUESTION
OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. The tragedy of the world today revolves around the combination of persistent
overarmament and increased underdevelopment. Indeed, there is a flagrant imbalance
between the ever-increasing military expenditure, on the one hand, and the great
economic needs that are not met, on the other. In 1985, for example, world annual
military expenditure was over $US 900 billion, whilst the total debts of the
developing countries amounted to about $US 950 billion; even more, at the same time
more than 800 million human beings were living below the poverty line. The major
problems still persist: poverty, famine, illiteracy, drought, indebtedness and the
slow pace of economic growth.

2. African States welcome the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to
convene the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and
Development. It underscores the recognition by the international community of the
dynamic relationship between these two vital issues and the desire to examine them
at a high political level.

3. African States wish to recall that they acknowledged the close and
interdependent linkage between the objectives of security, disarmament and
development even before the decision to convene the Conference. As early as 1963,
they adopted the charter of the Organization of African Unity and established their
continental organization, entrusted, inter alia, with the promotion of the
above-mentioned objectives. In 1964, the African Heads of State and Government,
meeting in Cairo, declared Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, convinced as they
were not only that peace was a prerequisite for development, but also that the
latter was a guarantee for the maintenance of peace. Their action in this area was
also translated into the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action (A/S-11/14, annex I),
the Lomé Declaration and Programme of Action on Security, Disarmament and
Development in Africa (A/40/761-S/17573, annex), and their firm resolve, in spite
of the difficulties to carry out structural adjustments in pursuance of the United
adopted by the General Assembly at its thirteenth extraordinary session, devoted to
the critical economic situation in Africa (resolution S-13/2).

4. The United Nations has played a central role in promoting disarmament and
development. In fulfilment of the Charter of the United Nations, it continues to
be the appropriate body to undertake international efforts for the establishment of
a more just and equitable world order, the prevention of war and the promotion of a
better life. The Organization has, for many years, carried out the study of the
interdependent relationship between disarmament and development. The convening of
the present International Conference is, therefore, a significant step and comes at a decisive stage in the process.

5. Considered in its relationship with development, disarmament takes on a profound dimension for humanity. By consolidating peace and providing maximum security for all States, it creates an environment conducive to economic growth and development and also releases additional valuable resources for development.

6. African States remain hopeful that the International Conference will achieve concrete and positive results through the constructive contribution of all States. It is in this connection that they hereby make the following comments and proposals for inclusion in the final document of the conference.

COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS

7. Security is central to the concerns of all States in the world. It is therefore necessary that the military and non-military threats to national and international security be duly taken into account.

8. The continuing arms race, particularly in the nuclear field, exacerbates political tension in the world and diverts from the international community invaluable human and economic resources that are indispensable for socio-economic development and thus has serious repercussions on regional and international security. Similarly, it should be underscored that foreign intervention, interference, and aggression of all types, as well as violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of States constitute threats to international peace and security.

9. In Africa, in particular in the southern African subregion, the threats posed by the policies of aggression, oppression and destabilization as well as the nuclear-weapon capability of the racist Pretoria régime create a climate of permanent insecurity in the continent and compels the front-line States to incur additional military expenditures. Concern about security diverts the national efforts and the very limited resources those countries need for the promotion of their economic development, towards the solution of their defence problems.

10. The quest for security through armament has resulted in the distraction of attention from essential priorities for the improvement of human well-being. It is high time the greatest attention was paid to the numerous non-military threats affecting security, such as the gradually worsening prospects for economic growth, drought, desertification, famine and the increasingly untenable burden of indebtedness.

11. The developing world is facing a crisis of unprecedented gravity. In many developing countries the development process has collapsed. The serious exogenous factors that have aggravated the crisis include the slow economic growth, the decline in commodity prices, adverse terms of trade, the decline in financial flows, increased protectionism and high interest rates. The heavy burden of debts and debt-servicing obligations also constrain prospects for economic growth in the developing countries.

/...
12. The continuing critical economic situation in Africa has worsened since the beginning of the 1980s. The collapse of the international market for commodities has undermined Africa's dependence on trade as a viable instrument for the promotion of economic growth and development. In 1985 Africa's export earnings stood at $US 60.6 billion but declined in 1986 to $US 44.3 billion. Coupled with this, is Africa's debt service which is estimated at $US 25 billion a year between 1986 and 1990. Faced with inadequate resources, African Governments' budgetary allocations for imports, investments and employment generation have been drastically reduced. The deterioration of the economic and social situation in Africa, in particular in the least developed countries, is most acute and there is a need for urgent action to transfer additional external resources to African countries for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and particularly to alleviate the situation faced by the least developed countries. As a result many of our peoples continue to face acute food shortages and are therefore threatened by starvation and malnutrition. It is true that disarmament alone cannot secure development, but development must not be jeopardized by an unending arms race.

13. To consolidate the disarmament process, and within the framework of the global objective which is to promote international peace and security, States must reaffirm their faith in the goals and objectives of the United Nations and the system of collective security provided for by the Charter. The ultimate objective should be to rise above the illusion of security through armament, and to arrive at the assurance of unarmed security essentially based on mutual confidence and co-operation to the advantage of one and all the collective future of nations. The quest for new dynamics of peace must be a process characterized by great care and determination.

14. However, it should be noted that whereas disarmament and development are related, there are two distinct processes. Thus, the measures to be implemented both at national and international levels to promote development must neither be suspended nor delayed because of the slow pace of progress in the area of disarmament.

15. The release of additional resources through disarmament measures for the benefit of development should neither be conceived as a burden to be carried by a State or group of States, nor as a work of international charity. On the contrary, it should be a collective endeavour for the benefit of all, a necessary contribution that nations make together for the consolidation and preservation of the supreme common goal that is peace.

16. It is, therefore, necessary to explore concrete ways and means of enhancing the disarmament process and to direct resources released as a result of disarmament measures towards economic and social development.

17. The quest for general and complete disarmament should be placed under an effective system of international control. In this process, the particular responsibilities of the nuclear powers must be underscored. Attention should also be paid to the growing concern over the increasing expenditure on conventional weapons.
18. The extremely high proportion of human and technical resources now engaged in the arms industry should be diverted to the promotion of pressing socio-economic needs of all peoples, particularly those of developing countries. Such action calls for the exercise of the necessary political will.

19. The various proposals on the establishment of a disarmament fund for development constitute positive steps in the disarmament process. The concept of the fund should be given further consideration with a view to evolving a common framework on which such a fund could be established.

20. Peace is an indivisible whole. It is a universal aspiration whose attainment requires, today more than ever before, greater pragmatism and sustained effort as well as the commitment of all nations. Political will on the part of all nations is therefore indispensable to reverse the present trends. In the conduct of their international relations States should fully respect and abide by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. States equally have the duty to strive to attain this objective, that is, less arms and more development in all the regions of the world, through the adoption of practical measures to establish a dynamic relationship between disarmament and development. In that regard, States must rise above rhetoric and generous declarations fleeting as they are, to endeavour to translate into reality the following recommendations and proposals:

(a) Member States must solemnly reaffirm the commitments they have made concerning the objectives of disarmament and development, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, particularly the commitment to devote part of the resources released through arms limitation and disarmament measures to socio-economic development, especially in the developing countries;

(b) Member States should also commit themselves to promoting initiatives for the peaceful settlement of disputes and situations of conflict, where appropriate, at subregional and regional levels. This should take the form of various measures to guarantee confidence between States as well as zones of peace and nuclear-weapon-free zones, and to encourage the creation, where appropriate, of subregional and/or regional machineries and the strengthening of those that already exist. Moreover, Member States must commit themselves to respecting nuclear-weapon-free zones;

(c) States should refrain from any collaboration with apartheid South Africa that contributes to its policies of aggression, oppression and destabilization against its neighbouring States and the people of southern Africa, threatening their security and to the detriment of their development prospects. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the implementation of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa, and in view of the dangerous regional and global implications of the acquisition by South Africa of nuclear weapons, States should reaffirm their commitment to the establishment and respect of such a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The United Nations Security Council should also take appropriate effective measures whenever necessary to prevent the frustration of this objective;

(d) The Conference should also envisage, under the auspices of the United Nations, the creation of an international system of monitoring the limitation,
reduction and destruction of armaments and the reconversion of arms industries. Such monitoring is already possible because of the consideration progress made today in science and technology;

(e) The Conference should envisage the creation of an international financial machinery to facilitate the transfer of resources made available through appropriate, verifiable and well-balanced measures for arms limitation and disarmament towards the promotion of socio-economic development;

(f) Member States should make all efforts to include, in all future disarmament or arms-limitation agreements, appropriate provisions to facilitate the release of resources arising from the implementation of such agreements, for socio-economic development, particularly in the developing countries;

(g) Member States should commit themselves to reinforcing the role of the United Nations system by upholding the concept of interdependence between disarmament and development. The United Nations should deploy greater efforts for the promotion of collective knowledge about the non-military threats to international security;

(h) Under its programme of action the Conference should also adopt appropriate measures for providing immediate assistance to those developing countries that experience difficulties due to natural calamities, which is particularly the case in Africa where natural phenomena such as drought, cyclones and desertification are worsening the already difficult conditions of the States in that region of the world;

(i) Member States should commit themselves to actively pursuing studies in the area of reconversion and to supporting the activities of the United Nations and its agencies in this area;

(j) A well-informed public opinion could play an invaluable role in the promotion of the objectives of disarmament and development, through enhancing the awareness about the relationship between security, disarmament and development. Governments must commit themselves to keeping public opinion well informed in this area;

(k) The Conference should devise the appropriate ways and means to ensure the follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of its programme of action.