PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
New York, 1-11 April 1986

Letter dated 31 March 1986 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations

The provisional agenda of the forthcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, to be held at New York from 1 to 11 April 1986, provides for the "Preliminary consideration of the three substantive items (8, 9, 10) included in the agenda of the Conference".

Desiring to make an active contribution to the coming debates on this subject, the Government of France has decided to submit a number of proposals, contained in the attached document.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this text as an official document of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

(Signed) Claude DE KEMOULARIA
Annex

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

PARIS, 15 JULY-2 AUGUST 1986

French proposals for the Preparatory Committee

New York, 1-11 April 1986

Disarmament and development are two different objectives, and the relationship between them should be determined with prudence and realism.

The recognized disproportion between arms expenditure and development aid represents a moral and political challenge. At the present time, all those involved in the issue are not fully aware of the facts. The indispensable effort by the international community to create the political conditions necessary for an eventual transfer of the potential "dividends" of disarmament for use in development should be made in conjunction with an immediate effort to formulate concrete measures to ensure the effective and symbolic use in emergency situations of part of the funds now earmarked for military use.

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1. The forthcoming New York session of the Preparatory Committee should provide an opportunity to address all the problems relating to the convening of the Conference. In this spirit, General Assembly resolution 40/155 emphasizes that the Conference, scheduled to be held at Paris from 15 July to 2 August 1986, should be preceded by thorough preparation.

Accordingly, that preparation should not be limited to questions of procedure. It should also address substantive questions: what the goals of the Conference are, what is the relationship between the three items on the agenda, what results can be expected from its work and what form those results will take.

2. In order to define more precisely the objectives that the Conference can realistically pursue, it may be useful to recall first of all the broad agreement that already exists on what the Conference should not be:

(a) While the Conference should rely on the work already accomplished at the international level, its objective cannot be to continue the inconclusive debates among experts on the various aspects of the complex relationship between disarmament and development, or on attempts to quantify the value of resources that could conceivably be released by future disarmament agreements.

(b) Nor should the Conference be regarded a priori as a forum for pledging voluntary contributions. At present, there is no international consensus regarding timetables and methods for translating into concrete terms the allocation to economic and social development projects of part of the resources that could be made available through disarmament measures.
(c) Lastly, it is clearly not the purpose of the Conference to lay down a timetable for disarmament measures or to establish a programme to that end.

3. The extent of the global disparity between the resources devoted to arms and those allocated to development, which has often been noted in the United Nations, leads to the conclusion that the international community should consider those two problems from the perspective of their interrelationship.

The affirmation that a link exists between disarmament and development does not mean, however, that the solution to the problems of disarmament and development can or should necessarily be implemented simultaneously. No one can say with certainty that progress in the field of disarmament would bring a parallel solution to the difficulties existing in the area of development. In any event, one cannot speak of a linear or automatic process that would enable the international community to dispense with a deliberate effort in this area.

4. Disarmament is not intended primarily to release new resources for development.

Its principal objective is to maintain or restore a balance of forces at the lowest possible level. Furthermore, it is not certain that improved security at a lower level of armaments will necessarily result in a lower level of expenditure and a possible allocation of resources to other purposes. Maintaining a defence effort, even in the context of substantial reductions of present arsenals, would continue to be necessary, even for developing countries.

It is true that the strengthening of international security is also likely to create a political climate that would help make international co-operation for development more effective.

Only in a context of assured security can States freely and with complete sovereignty determine and apply those methods of development which they deem most appropriate in the light of their own situation.

International relations today continue to be marked by conflicting national interests and a lack of confidence between States. In so far as the international community has been unable to make the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter a reality, it is normal and legitimate that States, whatever their level of development, should seek to guarantee their right to security and to protect themselves against threats by devoting substantial resources to the maintenance of their defence systems.

Thus, the arms build-up in the world and the high level of armed forces appear to be a consequence of international tensions rather than their cause.

Establishing a climate of international security that goes beyond mere armed coexistence and promotes co-operation in all its forms would therefore, in itself, constitute an important factor for development.

Consequently, the objective of the Conference should not be limited to a description of what "dividend" disarmament could produce tomorrow or the day

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after. The process of disarmament negotiations will continue to be slow, difficult and unpredictable. Hence another task of the Conference - and it may even be regarded as a priority task - should be to elicit a commitment from everyone on specific proposals for development as of today, without waiting for actual disarmament to come about.

Among the specific decisions and recommendations that the Conference should examine under the three items on its agenda, the following proposals could be adopted:

(a) Agenda item 8 ("Review of the relationship between disarmament and development in all its aspects and dimensions with a view to reaching appropriate conclusions"):  
- Recognition of the complexity of the relationship between arms expenditure and development problems, at the level of the entire international community, and of the very great diversity of the individual situations of States in the context of regional security. Emphasis should be placed on the triangular relationship between security, development and disarmament;

  - Determination of the particular needs (e.g. humanitarian aid, urgent economic assistance) of the countries directly affected by international conflicts and of the desirability of stronger international solidarity with them;

  - Development of United Nations assistance to the efforts of regional organizations with a view to ensuring the peaceful settlement of disputes and the restoration of a climate of security favourable to development;

  - Recognition by the United Nations that disarmament and development are matters of equally high priority today. Neither of these two objectives should be regarded a priori as more important or more urgent than the other. Each must retain its own justification, although it is clear that development can only benefit from an improved climate of security.

(b) Agenda item 9 ("Examination of the implications of the level and magnitude of the continuing military expenditures, in particular those of the nuclear-weapon States and other militarily important States, for the world economy and the international economic and social situation, particularly for developing countries, and elaboration of appropriate recommendations for remedial measures"):  
- Establishment of a United Nations "observatory" to assess the level of military expenditures. (The co-operation of regional institutions should also be sought.);

  - Encouragement of the current work of experts at the United Nations on the comparison of military budgets;
Recommendations to Member States, and in particular to the permanent members of the Security Council, to submit to the United Nations periodically a detailed report on the development of their defence expenditures. (The document should include a section on the economic effects of arms spending in the countries in question.)

(c) Agenda item 10 ("Consideration of ways and means of releasing additional resources through disarmament measures, for development purposes, in particular in favour of developing countries"): 

- Consideration of the means for allocating to the benefit of developing countries, if necessary, a share of the resources gradually released by the implementation of disarmament agreements, in accordance with the commitments that the States parties to those agreements feel able to make for development aid. (This item is not expanded, in view of the studies and debates already undertaken.);

- Assignment of personnel and existing equipment from national armed forces to the countries concerned and to the United Nations for purposes of development and humanitarian assistance;

  (i) Establishment of procedures for co-ordinating United Nations actions of this type;

  (ii) Examination of conditions under which the use of military personnel and equipment for humanitarian purposes (food aid, medical assistance, natural disasters) could be developed;

  (iii) Organization of regular training courses for military personnel for medical assistance and emergency operations;

  (iv) Making satellite monitoring and data-transmission facilities available to the countries concerned in the event of natural disasters or emergency situations affecting civilian populations.

- Special provisions regarding aid to countries directly affected by a conflict. The countries or organizations contributing bilateral and multilateral aid could join with the countries concerned in ad hoc bodies to co-ordinate their efforts and initiate the drafting of regional plans for rehabilitation and development (RPRD). The special aid allocated to those programmes could be disbursed through existing channels, so as to avoid having to set up new international bodies;

- Recommendations to Member States, and in particular to the permanent members of the Security Council, to submit periodically to the United Nations a report on their proposals in the disarmament talks in which they participate, including all data that would help in making an initial assessment of the savings and other results expected from the completion of those negotiations.