1. The Twelve welcome the unanimous decision by the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-first session to hold the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in New York from 24 August to 11 September this year.

2. This Conference has been the subject of lengthy and painstaking preparations on a scale befitting the importance of the meeting. It will take up a series of the most pressing issues of our time, any settlement on which must involve the entire international community. The Twelve are fully aware that the credentials of international solidarity with the developing countries are being challenged. Many highly elaborate studies have taken up the problem of disarmament, development and the connection that may be established between the two concepts. Available figures and statistics show that, indeed, there is an imbalance between the growing sums spent on armaments and the enormous socio-economic needs that remain unmet.

3. Despite this connection, however, disarmament and development are phenomena which, albeit convergent, differ in their logical underpinnings, practical application and ultimate purposes.

4. The Twelve believe that a realistic approach reveals the connection between disarmament and development to turn on the third element in a triangular relationship—security, which can be maintained only by means of independent contributions from the other two. Enhanced security at the international level
could, on the one hand, create conditions conducive to disarmament and, on the other hand, stimulate a number of factors that will boost development. The development process, by enhancing security, could accelerate arms reductions and disarmament. The outcome might be to release additional resources for economic and social development.

5. Disarmament, however, is impractical except in conditions of mutual trust and undiminished security. The right of nations to security is inherent in their existence, and a certain level of military expenditure is thus inescapable. Security is a stabilizing element that contributes to the emergence of conditions conducive to a country's development.

6. The Twelve are striving to promote an improvement in international relations, opening the way to arms limitations or disarmament through balanced, realistic and verifiable agreements that will ensure a balance in weaponry at the lowest possible level.

7. It would be quite wrong, however, to regard disarmament and development as two concepts which are entirely dependent on one another. Both objectives must be pursued in proportion to their respective merits, for otherwise the interdependence that is argued to exist between them risks producing the opposite effect. By seeking to associate disarmament too intimately with development, one may end up setting security against development. Development assistance cannot be viewed as a function of possible disarmament accords which cannot be put into practice except in the long term and (lest it be forgotten) will not necessarily, at least at first, lead to significant cuts in defence spending. It may seem paradoxical to assert that disarmament will entail substantial outlays, but it is a well-established economic fact.

8. The Twelve would point out that they have not awaited the outcome of current disarmament efforts before allocating substantial sums to development assistance in a large number of developing countries. Direct official assistance by the European Community and its member States in 1986 amounted to €12 billion, 13 per cent of which was granted by the Community itself, not counting the other types of aid and assistance of all kinds arranged by European institutions. The Lomé Convention is just one example. These commitments to development in developing countries without fear or favour will undoubtedly increase in the future. The member countries of the European Community realize that their world-wide commitment to assisting poorly-endowed nations in their development efforts also contributes to the maintenance of peace and security, one of the conditions that favour disarmament. But they also believe that those nations should devise more solutions to their own development problems.

9. Emphasis is rightly put on the enormous volume of military spending needed to provide a degree of security which in many cases, unfortunately, is still too fragile. The figures also show that the problem of growing military expenditure is not just the concern of the militarily most important countries or alliance members, but also of many countries facing economic and social problems that hamper their development. The problem of military spending and its disproportionate growth thus affects all countries.
10. What is needed is a reassessment of ideas and the political will to embark upon a rearrangement of priorities. It is in the general interest of all nations for the underlying causes of continued growth in military expenditure around the world to be discussed.

11. Some attention must be given to the problem of data on military budgets and their comparability. There can be no conclusive discussion on the problems of disarmament and development until an exact definition of the specific content of military budgets and their implications is available.

12. This major obstacle was signalled in a report drawn up by the United Nations as long ago as 1981. For some years now, one group of countries has been supplying sets of data on their military budgets in order to encourage greater "transparency" in this area.

13. The Conference will need to consider all these aspects of the problems posed by disarmament, development and military budgets.

14. It is appropriate to point out, in regard to the composition of military budgets, that the accent should not be put on nuclear disarmament alone. Expenditure on conventional weapons far outstrips nuclear budgets. This is a matter of simple fact.

15. Disarmament is not a final panacea for all development-related problems. It is a gargantuan and complex undertaking which will require a great deal of time.

16. Transfers of funds released as a result of disarmament and arms-limitation agreements cannot be envisaged except in the long term. The financial resources that are released could be used for development purposes where they will have maximum impact at the national and international levels. The United Nations agencies have proved their value and expertise in this field.

17. Working towards disarmament in order to redirect substantial financial and human resources towards development is not enough; more emphasis also needs to be laid on the need for a world development strategy, a vital stabilizing element in international relations.

18. Despite the inevitable complexity and controversial nature of the subjects at hand, the Twelve are confident that the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee can produce results in the form of recommendations, so that the Conference can advance beyond discussions of principle on disarmament and development.

19. To that end, the Twelve would like to make some specific recommendations, notably:

(a) On agenda item 9 (consideration of the implications of the level and magnitude of military expenditures, in particular those of nuclear-weapon States and other militarily important States, for the world economy and the international economic and social situation, particularly for the developing countries, and formulation of appropriate recommendations for remedial measures):
The idea of creating an "observatory" to follow the growth of military budgets merits more thorough consideration;

(b) On agenda item 10: (consideration of ways and means of releasing additional resources, through disarmament measures, for development purposes, in particular for the benefit of developing countries):

Besides the other essential further steps emphasized in particular in the joint declaration by the panel of eminent personalities on 12 May 1986, consideration could be given to the possibility of using the human and technical resources and the expertise of countries' armed forces in emergency humanitarian relief operations.

20. The Twelve are convinced that if it does prove possible to establish a relationship between disarmament and development, the one element will be as worthy of attention as the other.

21. Heartened by their experience in both areas, the Twelve will make every effort to contribute constructively to the work of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.