OVERVIEW OF EVENTS IN THE DISARMAMENT-DEVELOPMENT
RELATIONSHIP FIELD SINCE 1985

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1. Looking back over the time that has passed since document A/CONF.130/PC/INF/9
was issued, it seems that further activities in this field have been carried out
mainly in terms of opinion building. This may be partly due to the dissatisfaction
among the concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) over the postponement
of the International Conference which was originally scheduled to take place in summer
1986. This brief paper concentrates on some major public events in the year 1986,
and some others which will be taking place in 1987.

2. During the period when the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the
International Conference was held, i.e., from 1 to 11 April 1986, the NGO Committee
on Disarmament and the NGO Committee on Development (New York) jointly organized a
three-day NGO Forum. The Forum took advantage of the presence in New York of the
delегations of States members of the Preparatory Committee. During the panel
discussions as well as question-and-answer periods, representatives of the NGOs met
with politicians and diplomats, economists and scientists, researchers and
officials of the United Nations in an exchange of views which covered the various
themes and subjects to be dealt with at the Conference. The report of the Forum
was published in autumn 1986 in co-operation with the United Nations
Non-Governmental Liaison Service.

3. The NGO Forum represented a valuable contribution to the efforts at
elucidating the many complex political, economic, social and human issues that are
to be found within the dynamic triangle of disarmament, development and security.
It also shed light on the fact that there is as yet no full understanding of the
interlinkages between the gigantic tasks constituting the three corners of that
triangle, as well as between the military and non-military threats to the security of peoples and nations creating interdependence not only between countries but also between issues. It is hoped that the report of that event will further stimulate interest among the non-governmental community to play an active and forceful role at the International Conference. Attention needs to be drawn, in this context, to the very comprehensive conceptual framework for the relationship between disarmament, security and development as given in chapter 2 of the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/36/356).

4. In accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 40/155 of 16 December 1985, the Secretary-General of the International Conference convened, in spring 1986, a panel of eminent personalities. The task of the panel was to issue a joint statement aimed at serving as a point of reference at the Conference. All the 15 panelists, who met from 16 to 18 April 1986, participated in their personal capacity only. On 18 April, a unanimously adopted Joint Declaration was presented in an afternoon public session at Headquarters of the United Nations which was addressed by the Secretary-General.

5. The Joint Declaration (A/CONF.130/PC/INF/17 and Corr.1) consists of four main parts, under the following headings:

   I. Peace is more than absence of war;

   II. Disarmament, development and security: a triad of peace;

   III. Building on common interests;

   IV. Courses of action.

The Declaration elaborates these themes which have been continuously emphasized during years of international debate on the subject. Within the framework of its mandate and its format, it had to be worded in almost a shorthand language. Yet it is the impression of the author, who acted as moderator of the panel, that the Declaration dealt more extensively with the plight of the developing countries in the context of the political, economic and human realities in the world of today than is usually the case in documents on the relationship issued thus far. It thus underscored the fundamental need for considerably increased development efforts world-wide. Special attention is also drawn to paragraph 22 of the Declaration in which the panel formulated four conclusions on how disarmament and development processes may relate to each other and on which, it was felt, Governments of Member States should be able to agree.

6. Finally, it is worthwhile to quote the already much-quoted final paragraph 29 of the Declaration:

   "Our small planet is becoming endangered: by the arsenals of weapons which could blow it up; by the burden of military expenditures which could sink it under; and by the unmet basic needs of two thirds of its population which subsists on less than one third of its resources. We belong to a nearly universal constituency which believes that we are borrowing this earth from
our children as much as we have inherited it from our forefathers. The carrying capacity of the earth is not infinite, nor are its resources. The needs of national security are legitimate and must be met. But must we stand by as helpless witnesses of a drift towards greater insecurity at higher cost?"

7. The author cannot refrain from referring, in this overview of events in the disarmament-development relationship field since 1985, to a truly non-governmental project which emanated from Sweden and has grown into a world-wide event, i.e., The Great Peace Journey: Five Questions to Governments, as it relates closely to the disarmament-development relationship issue. The philosophy on which The Great Peace Journey is based is the following:

"The opening words of the Charter of the United Nations: 'We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours ...', reflect the fact that when Governments of Member States act in the United Nations, they act on behalf of their peoples. Therefore the peoples have the right to question their Governments on what they have done and not done to preserve peace, to implement genuine disarmament measures, to convert resources now used for military purposes to constructive and meaningful civil use, including the promotion of economic and social development in developing countries, and to solve conflicts among States by peaceful means, in accordance with and in obeyance of Article 33 of the United Nations Charter."

8. The initiators of The Great Peace Journey, as well as its thousands of committed and devoted participants throughout the world, are not so naïve as to imagine that the world will be transformed, overnight as it were, by positive responses from Governments to their five questions, the issues involved being extremely serious, complicated and difficult. But they believe in the need for new thinking and new initiatives in matters of life and death for human beings on earth. They therefore also believe in having the peoples intervene in the political process by opening a direct dialogue with their Governments. And finally, they believe that The Great Peace Journey, which has by now visited more than 100 Governments, on every continent, demanding written and signed answers to their questions, may contribute to a strengthening of the basis for meaningful international negotiations, mainly through the United Nations.

9. In conclusion, mention should be made of the NGO initiative to organize an international NGO conference in Stockholm from 15 to 17 May 1987. This conference is to be held subsequent to the additional session of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference, to be convened from 21 April to 1 May 1987, and is intended to prepare the NGOs for their activities during the International Conference itself.