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Agenda item 32

REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

Report of the First Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Ronald Listeri KENSMIL (Suriname)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled:

"Reduction of military budgets:

(a) Report of the Disarmament Commission;

(b) Report of the Secretary-General"

was included in the provisional agenda of the thirty-fifth session in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 33/67 of 14 December 1978 and 34/83 F of 11 December 1979.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 1980, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 3rd meeting, on 9 October, the First Committee decided to hold a combined general debate on the items allocated to it relating to disarmament, namely, items 31 to 49 and 121. The general debate on these items took place at the 4th to 28th meetings, from 15 October to 4 November (see A/C.1/PV.4-28).

4. In connexion with item 32, the First Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Disarmament Commission; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/35/479).

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/35/42).

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS A/C.1/35/L.9 AND A/C.1/35/L.10

5. On 5 November, Austria, Indonesia, Ireland, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden and Uruguay submitted a draft resolution (A/C.1/35/L.9) which was subsequently sponsored also by the United Republic of Cameroon. The draft resolution was introduced by the representative of Romania at the 29th meeting, on 7 November. On the same date, Austria, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Romania and Sweden submitted a draft resolution (A/C.1/35/L.10), which was subsequently sponsored also by Belgium, Canada and the Niger. The draft resolution was introduced by the representative of Sweden at the 29th meeting.

6. At the 37th meeting, on 20 November, the representative of Romania orally proposed a revision to draft resolution A/C.1/35/L.9, under which a new paragraph would be inserted after the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution to read as follows:

"Reaffirming that it is possible to achieve reductions in military budgets without affecting the military balance to the detriment of the national security of any State,".

At the same meeting, draft resolution A/C.1/35/L.9, as revised, was adopted without a vote (see para. 10, draft resolution A).

7. On 20 November, the Secretary-General submitted a statement (A/C.1/35/L.51) on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/C.1/35/L.10.

8. At the 36th meeting, on 20 November, the representative of Sweden, on behalf of the sponsors, orally revised operative paragraph 4 (b) of draft resolution A/C.1/35/L.10 by replacing the word "in" with the word "between".

9. At its 40th meeting, on 24 November, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/35/L.10 by a recorded vote of 106 to none, with 25 abstentions (see para. 10, draft resolution B). The voting was as follows:

In favour: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Democratic Kampuchea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka,

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Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Against: None.

Abstaining: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cape Verde, Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Viet Nam, Zambia.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

10. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Reduction of military budgets

A

The General Assembly,

Expressing its deep concern about the ever-spiralling arms race and growing military expenditures, which constitute a heavy burden for the economies of all nations and have extremely harmful effects on world peace and security,

Deeply convinced that the common aspirations of mankind for peace, security and progress require the urgent cessation of the arms race, particularly of the nuclear arms race, and the reduction of military expenditures, as well as the adoption of effective measures leading towards general and complete disarmament,

Reaffirming the provisions of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly according to which gradual reduction of military budgets on a mutually agreed basis, for example, in absolute figures or in terms of percentage points, particularly by nuclear-weapon States and other militarily significant States, would be a measure that would contribute to curbing the arms race and would increase the possibilities of reallocation of resources now being used for military purposes to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries, 2/

2/ Resolution S-10/2, para. 89.

Reaffirming that it is possible to achieve reductions in military budgets without affecting the military balance to the detriment of the national security of any State,

Recalling its resolution 34/83 F of 11 December 1979, in which it, inter alia, stipulated that, in the light of the above-mentioned provision of the Final Document, a new impetus should be given to endeavours to achieve agreements to freeze, reduce or otherwise restrain, in a balanced manner, military expenditures, including adequate measures of verification satisfactory to all parties concerned and, to this end, requested the Disarmament Commission to undertake during 1980 to examine and identify effective ways and means of achieving such agreements,

Having considered the report of the Disarmament Commission on the work accomplished during its 1980 session in pursuance of resolution 34/83 F, 3/

Noting also the recommendation of the Disarmament Commission concerning the elements of the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade, which provides that during the Decade renewed efforts should be made to reach agreement on the reduction of military expenditures and the reallocation of resources from military purposes to economic and social development, especially for the benefit of developing countries,

Aware of the various proposals submitted by States and of the activities carried out so far within the framework of the United Nations in the field of the reduction of military budgets,

Recalling also paragraph 41 of the Final Document, which refers, inter alia, to the contribution of the unilateral measures to the attainment of the disarmament goals, and welcoming in this connexion such measures taken by States aimed at the freezing and the reduction of their military expenditures,

1. Reaffirms the urgent need to reinforce the endeavours of all States and international action in the area of the reduction of military budgets, with a view to reaching international agreements to freeze, reduce or otherwise restrain military expenditures;
2. Reiterates the appeal to all States, in particular the most heavily armed States, pending the conclusion of agreements on the reduction of military expenditures, to exercise self-restraint in their military expenditure with a view to reallocating the funds thus saved to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries;
3. Requests the Disarmament Commission to continue at its 1981 session the consideration of the item entitled "Reduction of military budgets", taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 34/83 F as well as those of the present resolution and, in particular, to identify and elaborate on the

principles which should govern further actions of States in the field of the freezing and reduction of military expenditures, keeping in mind the possibility of embodying such principles into a suitable document at an appropriate stage;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to invite Member States to express their views and suggestions on the principles which should govern their actions in the field of the freezing and reduction of military expenditures and to prepare on this basis a report to be submitted to the Disarmament Commission at its 1981 session;

5. Considers that this action to be carried out by the Disarmament Commission should be regarded as complementary to any other ongoing activity within the framework of the United Nations related to the question of reduction of military budgets as well as to any possible unilateral initiatives which may be undertaken by States in this field;

6. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-sixth session the item entitled "Reduction of military budgets".

B

The General Assembly,

Recalling the provision of paragraph 90 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, 4/ according to which it should continue to consider what concrete steps should be taken to facilitate the reduction of military budgets, bearing in mind the relevant proposals and documents of the United Nations on this question,

Convinced that reductions of military expenditures could be carried out without affecting the military balance to the detriment of the national security of any country,

Recalling its resolution 33/67 of 14 December 1978, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of an ad hoc panel of experienced practitioners in the field of military budgeting:

(a) To carry out a practical test of the proposed reporting instrument with the voluntary co-operation of States from different regions and representing different budgeting and accounting systems,

(b) To assess the results of the practical tests,

(c) To develop recommendations for further refinement and implementation of the reporting instrument,

Noting with appreciation the report submitted by the Secretary-General 5/ in

4/ Resolution S-10/2.

5/ A/35/479.

pursuance of resolution 33/67, containing recommended steps leading to the early implementation of the revised instrument in a general and regular system for the international reporting of military expenditures, ensuring an increasing participation with a view to universal reporting by an ever-widening set of States, and at the same time recommending that a further study should be undertaken of the problems of comparing military expenditures among different States and in different years as well as the problems of verification that will arise in connexion with agreements on reduction of military expenditures,

Recognizing with satisfaction that a carefully elaborated reporting instrument has now become available for general and regular implementation, in the course of which it may be further refined, in particular through its testing by a widening set of States,

Emphasizing the value of such a reporting instrument, once fully implemented in its refined form, as a means to increase confidence between States by contributing to greater openness in military matters,

Convinced that the systematic reporting of military expenditures is an important first step in the move towards agreed and balanced reductions in military expenditures,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements for the above-mentioned report to be issued as a United Nations publication and widely distributed;
2. Recommends that all Member States should make use of the reporting instrument and report annually their military expenditures of the latest fiscal year, for which data are available, to the Secretary-General, presenting their first report preferably not later than 30 April 1981;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to report on these matters to the General Assembly on an annual basis;
4. Requests the Secretary-General, with the assistance of an ad hoc group of qualified experts in the field of military budgets:
 - (a) To refine further the reporting instrument on the basis of future comments and suggestions received from States during the general and regular implementation of the reporting instrument;
 - (b) To examine and suggest solutions to the question of comparing military expenditures among different States and between different years as well as to the problems of verification that will arise in connexion with agreements on reduction of military expenditures;
5. Requests the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of paragraph 4 above to the General Assembly at its second special session devoted to disarmament;
6. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the group of experts with the necessary financial assistance and secretariat services;
7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-sixth session the item entitled "Reduction of military budgets".