



General Assembly

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AD HOC COMMITTEE OF THE
TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION
Working Group I

INTRODUCTION*

1. The threat to the very survival of mankind posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the continuing arms race, which already in 1978 gave rise to the justified alarm of the General Assembly, far from disappearing has considerably increased during the four years that have elapsed since the celebration of its first special session devoted to disarmament. It was thus natural not to unduly delay the convening of the second special session, which, with the same purpose as the first, had been explicitly provided for in the Final Document.
2. Both in the general debate of this second special session of the Assembly, in which an impressive number of Heads of State or Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs participated, as well as in the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Working Groups, it became evident that there had been no erosion in the support of all fundamental conclusions of the Final Document, such as the following:
 - (a) The objective of security, which is an inseparable element of peace, has always been one of the most profound aspirations of humanity. Yet the accumulation of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, today constitutes much more a threat than a protection for the future of mankind, since far from helping to strengthen international security, it on the contrary weakens it and since existing arsenals of nuclear weapons alone are sufficient to destroy all life on earth.
 - (b) The arms race, particularly in its nuclear aspect, runs counter to efforts to achieve further relaxation of international tension, to establish international relations based on peaceful coexistence and trust between all States, and to develop broad international co-operation and understanding. The arms race impedes the realization of the purposes, and is incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially respect for sovereignty, refraining

* Draft prepared by the Chairman of Working Group I.

from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. On the other hand, progress on détente and progress on disarmament mutually complement and strengthen each other.

(c) Military expenditures are reaching ever higher levels, the highest percentage of which can be attributed to the nuclear-weapon States and most of their allies, with prospects of further expansion and the danger of further increases in the expenditures of other countries. The hundreds of billions of dollars spent annually on the manufacture or improvement of weapons are in sombre and dramatic contrast to the want and poverty in which two thirds of the world's population live. This colossal waste of resources is even more serious in that it diverts to military purposes not only material but also technical and human resources which are urgently needed for development in all countries, particularly in the developing countries.

(d) Enduring international peace and security cannot be built on the accumulation of weaponry by military alliances nor be sustained by a precarious balance of deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority. Genuine and lasting peace can only be created through the effective implementation of the security system provided for in the Charter of the United Nations and the speedy and substantial reduction of arms and armed forces, by international agreement and mutual example, leading ultimately to general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

3. It was undoubtedly for reasons like the above that, in one of the last paragraphs of the Programme of Action outlined in the Final Document, the General Assembly decided that the implementation of the priorities defined therein should lead to general and complete disarmament under effective international control, which "remains the ultimate goal of all efforts exerted in the field of disarmament". The Assembly completed this statement adding that the negotiations on general and complete disarmament shall be conducted concurrently with negotiations on partial measures of disarmament and deciding that, with this purpose in mind, the Committee on Disarmament should undertake the elaboration of a "comprehensive programme of disarmament encompassing all measures thought to be advisable in order to ensure that the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control becomes a reality in a world in which international peace and security prevail and in which the new international economic order is strengthened and consolidated".

4. The General Assembly did not only stress several times the importance of this goal which it called the "ultimate goal" of all disarmament efforts. On more than one occasion it stated also its opinion as to which should be the "immediate goal" defining it as "the elimination of the danger of a nuclear war and the implementation of measures to halt the arms race and clear the path towards lasting peace".

5. Bearing in mind those antecedents and taking as the main basis for its deliberations the draft transmitted by the Committee on Disarmament, the General Assembly has elaborated this Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, which received

the approval by consensus of all the States Members of the United Nations which participated in its second special session devoted to disarmament. In addition to the present Introduction, the Programme comprises five chapters whose titles, clearly indicative of their contents, are the following: Objectives, Principles, Priorities, Measures and Stages of Implementation, Machinery and Procedures.

6. It has not been possible to reach agreement for the Comprehensive Programme to become a treaty, as some States would have preferred in order to make legally binding its provisions. There has been, however, unanimous support for the idea that all necessary steps must be taken to enhance the political and moral value of the Programme. It has thus been agreed that a special copy of the Programme shall be carried by a personal representative of the Secretary-General to the capitals of all States Members of the United Nations, in order to have it signed by the respective Heads of State or Government. This symbolic act will be a clear sign that this time there is the required "political will" to proceed along the road of uninterrupted good faith negotiations in the field of disarmament. Should there be some States where constitutional obstacles prevent recourse to the above procedures, alternative methods of similar significance should be employed. Thus the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, although not a treaty in itself, would indeed become a source of numerous successive treaties thanks to which mankind may start the twenty-first century in conditions totally different from those it has to endure at present with deepest concern.
