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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway)

CONTENTS

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GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

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Statements were made by:

Mr. Tsvetkov (Bulgaria)
Mr. Gauci (Malta)
Mr. Murin (Czechoslovakia)
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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 43 to 48, 50, 51, 54, 56, 58 to 63, 139, 141
143 and 144 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. TSVETKOV (Bulgaria) (interpretation from French): I wish first, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee for the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that your rich political experience and your diplomatic ability will contribute to the success of the Committee's work. I congratulate also the other officers of the Committee.

During the general debate which has just ended in the Assembly the States Members of the United Nations expressed their deep concern about the situation which has been created in the world during the past two or three years. Indeed, mankind is going through an extremely alarming period. A new and particularly dangerous spiral has begun in the arms race. It affects all types of weapons and military activities on a global scale extending even into outer space. The shadow of war looms over the world.

As is mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, military expenditures are constantly increasing and have reached astronomic figures. The arsenals of deadly weapons are growing, even though they have long been powerful enough to annihilate all life on our planet. Approximately 50,000 nuclear devices have already been stockpiled. New means of mass destruction - such as laser and radiation weapons - radiological, chemical, biological and neutron weapons - are being developed at an accelerating pace. Given the constantly growing tension we are witnessing at present, a single spark would be sufficient to hurl mankind into a cataclysm unprecedented in human history.

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

This dangerous situation is not the result of some fortuitous element or fatal chance. It is the result of a clearly determined policy of aggressive imperialist factions of the United States and of NATO which are continuing to step up the arms race and stubbornly aspiring to strategic superiority on a world-wide scale, so as to be able to impose their domination upon other peoples and countries. The increasingly adventurist concepts and doctrines elaborated by these factions demonstrate that in order to achieve their purpose they are openly admitting the possibility of conducting a nuclear war. The character of the military and political situation in the world, the existence of unimaginable means of destruction, the fatal turn that could be taken at any given moment by developments in international affairs - these are what make the preservation of peace a vital necessity for all peoples and countries. In the struggle for the survival of mankind it is impossible to be neutral. This struggle is a duty for every Government, for each State and for every people.

At this critical moment the socialist countries, aware of their responsibility, are demonstrating by their action their approach of principle to the key problems of the difficult times in which we are living. In recent months they have adopted documents concerning important initiatives designed to improve the political climate and halt the arms race.

The Prague and Moscow declarations, respectively of January and of June 1983, have again forcefully drawn the attention of the world public to the danger of nuclear catastrophe and have brought about wide discussion on ways of preventing such a catastrophe.

The profound and sincere concern of the socialist countries about the fate of peace found new expression during the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty which was held in Sofia on 13 and 14 October. At this meeting a profound analysis was conducted of the present situation throughout the world as well as of the nature and the sources of the military danger.

The need to prevent sudden aggravation of the situation of nuclear confrontation in Europe and to look for ways to eliminate the ever-increasing threat of a world-wide nuclear conflict were the focal point of the attention of those participating in the meeting. Thus, in the communiqué published following the Sofia meeting, it is stated that

"the participants in the meeting expressed their Governments' alarm and concern in connection with the fact that the situation has become even more tense and dangerous.

"Further steps are being taken to whip up the arms race, steps which are increasing the threat of nuclear catastrophe. As was pointed out in the joint statement issued in Moscow, the United States and some of its allies do not themselves conceal that their actions pursue the aim of gaining military superiority.

"The imperialist policy of resorting to force and diktat, consolidating and redistributing spheres of influence, and making direct use of military power against States and peoples is being toughened even further. Old military conflicts are being rekindled and new seats of tension are being cultivated. Actions are being carried out to further heighten political confrontation and attempts at external interference in the internal affairs of States are being stepped up. The position of the military-industrial complex of the most reactionary militarist forces are being strengthened, and a military psychosis is being fomented.

"Statements are made whose aim is to call into question the territorial and political results of the Second World War and post-war developments. More obstacles are erected to the attainment of agreements on pressing international issues and to the development of equitable economic relations free of any discriminatory restrictions. The gap in the economic development of States is being widened and the economic position of developing States is being worsened."

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

In thus describing the international situation, the participants in the meeting emphasize that if a new escalation of the arms race in Europe is not prevented it will inexorably lead to a sudden exacerbation of the situation in the European continent and throughout the world. They stress the exceptional danger flowing from the intention to proceed in the near future to the deployment in certain Western European countries members of NATO of American intermediate-range nuclear missiles, the practical preparations for which are already under way.

In order to reverse this dangerous trend of events, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty have come out firmly in favour of the conclusion as soon as possible of a mutually acceptable agreement in the negotiations on this question, which have already entered a decisive phase. In this connection, the Sofia communiqué states the following:

"Confirming their position on the substance of the matter, which was set forth in the joint statement adopted at the Moscow meeting on 28 June 1983, they believe that such an agreement should provide for the renunciation of the deployment of new medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe and for a corresponding reduction of the existing medium-range nuclear systems, with the reduced missiles to be scrapped, as has been proposed by the Soviet Union. The agreement on medium-range nuclear systems in Europe should be based on the principle of equality and equal security and should make for the stability of the strategic military situation and the balance of forces. This balance should rest, not on the build-up of nuclear arms, but on their reduction to ever lower levels."

In the meeting document we can clearly see the constructive position of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, which are proposing that the maximum use should be made of every opportunity to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. In the same communiqué it is emphasized in this connection that

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

"The participants in the meeting expressed the conviction that there is still a possibility of achieving agreement in the Geneva talks that meets the interests of the peoples. In this connection they pointed out that if agreement is not reached in the talks by the year's end, it is essential that the talks should be continued with a view to reaching it, on condition of the renunciation by the United States and its NATO allies of their schedule for the deployment of new medium-range nuclear missiles. Attention was called to the fact that the Soviet Union's readiness in these conditions to continue to maintain its unilateral freeze on the medium-range missile systems deployed in the European part of its territory and carry out the unilateral reduction of such systems, which was started at the same time as the introduction of the freeze, is an important contribution to creating the prerequisites for the successful completion of the talks."

Taking into consideration the exceptional importance of the elimination of the danger of a nuclear confrontation in the European continent, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty appeal urgently to the member States of NATO to concentrate all their efforts in order to exclude the possibility of the deployment of new medium-range missiles in Europe and to reduce the number of medium-range nuclear systems already in that continent. They also urge the other European States to do all they can to help prevent this danger and to contribute actively to the success of the Geneva negotiations on the limitation of nuclear weapons in Europe.

In the communiqué the socialist countries remind their Western partners that the interests of peace and security in Europe demand, above all, the maintenance of the existing balance. They say:

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

"The Ministers confirmed once again that their States have never striven and are not striving for military superiority for themselves, and recalled the statement of 28 June 1983 by the States participating in the Moscow meeting that they will never permit military superiority over themselves. The Governments of NATO countries would be making a serious mistake if they underestimated the significance of that statement of the socialist countries and refused to give a positive answer to their call to promote the strengthening of peace and security on the basis of a balance of forces and at ever lower levels of armaments."

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

If one studies carefully the whole range of initiatives of the socialist countries contained in the document I have just mentioned it is clear that together with considerations regarding medium-range weapons that document contains a broad range of timely measures designed to halt the arms race that is threatening to escape human control. The People's Republic of Bulgaria considers that all those measures are urgently and imperatively necessary.

In this connection we should mention, inter alia, the extremely relevant proposal that the nuclear Powers should commit themselves, if they have not already done so, not to be the first to use nuclear weapons: the idea of a freeze, both quantitative and qualitative, on nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon States and, in the first instance, the United States and the USSR; the proposal for a general and complete prohibition of all test explosions of nuclear weapons; the initiative designed to prevent the militarization of outer space and the use of force in outer space and from outer space against the earth and the initiative aimed at eliminating chemical weapons in Europe as a first step towards their complete prohibition and eradication.

The Soviet Union has submitted to the present session of the United Nations General Assembly three new initiatives, with which the Committee is already familiar. In the view of the Bulgarian delegation, those proposals are fully in keeping with the urgent need to strengthen peace and security now and they deserve attentive examination and support from the world Organization.

The communiqué of the Sofia meeting includes an appeal to the States members of the two principal military-political groups to reach an agreement on the freezing and reduction of military expenditures. Participants in the Sofia meeting once again proposed the conclusion of a treaty open to all the countries of the world on the mutual non-use of military force and on the maintenance of peaceful relations between the Warsaw Treaty and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members.

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

My delegation has already had occasion to express its views on the capital importance of that proposal. Nevertheless, I should like to emphasize once again that the conclusion of such a treaty, together with the mutual renunciation of the first use of nuclear weapons, would have particularly beneficial effects on overall stability in Europe and would establish a solid basis for progress in the field of disarmament. What is more, it would be a starting point for overcoming the division of the continent into two opposing military groups.

By their very nature such initiatives respond to the interests of the whole of the international community. Unfortunately, there has still been no adequate response from those to whom they are addressed.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria, faithful to its socialist foreign policy of peace, fully appreciates the idea of creating zones of peace and nuclear-free zones in various regions of Europe and of the world in general where this would be in the interest of strengthening international security. Located in the Balkan Peninsula, which from the geographic point of view is at the crossroads of three continents, we are vitally interested in transforming our region into a nuclear-free zone. Furthermore, we are very conscious of the importance of establishing a situation of peace and lasting co-operation throughout the Mediterranean as a whole.

I should like to reaffirm the importance Bulgaria attaches to the strengthening of the régime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as its interest in the conclusion, at the earliest possible date, of a convention on the strengthening of security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States.

In view of the destabilizing effect of the use of military vessels in various parts of the world -- particularly in the pursuit of the well-known gunboat diplomacy -- it is extremely important to limit the activities of military vessels, to reduce naval armaments and to extend confidence-building measures to the seas and oceans. This would contribute to reducing the risk of the outbreak of a nuclear war, in which, as everyone knows, fleets would play a particularly important role.

(Mr. Tsvetkov, Bulgaria)

There is an objective basis for achieving agreement on many of the problems to which I have just referred, especially since in the majority of institutions machinery and multilateral and bilateral forums have already been created for negotiations on these questions.

My country, like the other socialist countries, has always been in favour of wide ranging, fruitful consultation with all countries with regard to disarmament. It has always welcomed and shown keen interest in any idea, whatever its source, designed to contribute to progress in this vital area.

It is imperative that those who bear responsibility for the destiny of peoples in our nuclear age heed their voices and take into account their aspirations. At the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New Delhi, it was clearly stated that the policy of confrontation and the arms race is contrary to the national interests of the peoples. The arms race is encountering opposition from the biggest peace movement since the Second World War. Politicians, men of the arts and culture, members of the clergy, representatives of every level of society, millions of human beings, are rising up against the nuclear threat. It would be a fatal illusion to think that mankind could live for ever on top of nuclear powder-kegs.

In conclusion, I should like once again to assure you, Mr. Chairman, and the representatives present, that my country will continue to work, within the limits of its possibilities, both within the United Nations and in other international forums, for the fulfilment of the most important task mankind has ever faced - that of removing the threat of self-destruction and eliminating the danger of nuclear war.

Mr. GAUCI (Malta): In the interest of progress, I for one promise not to repeat our own previously stated positions, contenting myself with a brief but definite reaffirmation. I shall also strive to search for consensus on each of the issues before us. It seems evident to me that this is our wisest course, and I am convinced that you, Mr. Chairman, will do your best to inspire us all to achieve positive results. Your realistic opening address was a clarion call commanding respect. No man can do more and, therefore, I congratulate you and the other officers of the Committee on your election.

Permit me first a general observation expressive of the concern we all must surely feel. Today I am reminded of the sobering truism expressed with charming simplicity by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in his poem "The Brook": "For men may come and men may go, But I go on forever." If we apply that to our disarmament debate, we uneasily feel the analogy, that "sessions may come and sessions may go, but the arms race goes on forever".

There is a significant difference, of course. The brook, a thing of beauty, rightly goes on, and therefore remains a joy for ever. But the arms race, especially its nuclear dimension, has become monstrously repugnant. It is an insult to man's intelligence, and, if it goes on, will cease only after it has destroyed the world, thus depriving itself of the sinews that have sustained it so far.

Apart from this reminder, and as promised, I shall refrain from repeating the familiar refrain of our previously stated positions on specific disarmament items, but will instead today raise two different aspects of the disarmament debate which, it seems to me, have not yet received the concentrated attention that they deserve, despite their fundamental importance. Both aspects derive from the same single incident.

The recent tragic shooting down of a civilian airliner, which has caused such a severe setback in international relations, nevertheless provides an opportunity for us to analyse objectively and - to the extent possible - dispassionately two important factors essential for informed public debate on current developments in this present dangerous phase of the nuclear arms race.

(Mr. Gauci Malta)

The first point that clearly emerges is the susceptibility of communications systems to error, even when there is no undue stress. Errors can, of course, be caused by several factors, either singly or in combination, each of which could lead to unintended tragedy and, in the nuclear age to unprecedented catastrophe.

The President of the United States was among the first to recognize this when he remarked:

An act of this kind reveals how easily there could be an accidental start to conflict.

No doubt the same sentiments may have been expressed or pondered over by many different national leaders. It should certainly encourage us to probe this important aspect in greater depth.

Before entering into specific details, I must in all candour observe, in the first place, that on the basis of the law of probability this danger must have been as evident a decade ago as it has been demonstrated to be real today. Yet over the same decade, realization of this danger did not prevent the further deployment and amassing of nuclear weaponry whose cumulative destructive power can be measured only by the number of times it could destroy all life on this planet. This build up by both sides took place even though then as now a sufficient plateau of nuclear deterrent power had already been reached, in relative parity, by the two major military alliances.

Nor, unfortunately, in the second place, can I fail to observe that, as usual, even while we debate here, this realization has not prevented new authorizations of billions of dollars for enhanced nuclear weapon deployment. Therefore we are not only on the verge of repeating the same mistakes but, worse, these new deployments are having incalculable long-term and short-term repercussions even on the basic premises on which the theory of deterrence is founded, to the extent that the very future of arms control negotiations is in jeopardy.

Almost as if what is now deployed is not already known to be overabundant, these new weapons systems even envisage the use of outer space for military purposes and, additionally, provide for a vast increase in chemical weapons procurement.

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

Let me recall here that, macabre as are the total number of deaths and the ratio of civilian to military deaths in the case of nuclear weapons, they are even higher in the case of chemical weapons. Instead of increasing national security, these new weapons and systems are further exacerbating global insecurity.

Once again, it was the President of the United States, in his address to the General Assembly last month, who rightly reminded us that "people do not make wars, Governments do" (A/38/PV.5 p. 5). But people all over the world are now coming back into the picture. If debate on the nuclear arms race has not hitherto featured as a major issue of national concern in all countries today it has become an issue of overriding importance. It is therefore all the more essential that the encouraging current public outcry at the folly and danger of the nuclear arms race should benefit from a full disclosure of the present dangers so vividly brought to our attention by the latest incident. What is even more important, of course, is that the lesson should be heeded by all Governments.

The people of all nations are now worrying over what their leaders are doing. Certainly, no person anywhere in the world can be indifferent to what is happening today. The more the debate is opened up the more the revulsion spreads the greater the cumulative resistance to the spiralling expenditure recklessly and dangerously devoted to massive destruction, to the detriment of the satisfaction of pressing social needs. This revulsion and consequent protest know no national boundaries. The present situation has never been worse, it calls for emergency action.

It has clearly become timely to examine, albeit briefly, at least some of the considerations which determine the real capability of civilian leaders to exercise control over their nuclear forces through the appropriate military command and control channels - as we are told they all do. Further, we could consider their ability to make well-informed, prudent judgements based on available information not in normal circumstances but under conditions of great stress and within severe time constraints. This aspect has certainly not received the consideration that it merits.

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

In this examination and to put matters in simple perspective, it is a sobering reflection that in the last quarter-century the warning time from launch to target has declined from approximately 10 hours in the case of an aerial bomber to 30 minutes for an intercontinental ballistic missile, and down further to 15 minutes for a submarine-launched ballistic missile. With the Pershing 2 missile, and under the dangerous doctrine of "launch on warning", it will drop to around seven or eight minutes.

How much further can we go? The shorter the interval, the greater the chance of genuine error, let alone of deliberate misinformation. And yet it seems to me that, unfortunately, none of the spate of current proposals -- submitted, of course, with extraordinary fanfare in attempts to assuage an alarmed public opinion -- seems to address this potentially fatal weakness.

Let us then consider some of the principal elements involved. It is known that maintaining command and control over extremely sophisticated weapons has always presented a problem to the military alliances, because very quick and decisive military responsiveness is needed as a fundamental prerequisite for such a system.

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

On the basis of the evidence available and from actual experience, we can speculate on what might have been the outcome if a command and control system had encountered an off-course military missile rather than a civilian airliner. And then the crucial question arises: would there have been time for the political leadership to assume responsibility for control of any considered retaliatory military action, under the extreme pressure of the speed differential between the forthcoming generation of missiles and the conventional civilian passenger aircraft?

Unfortunately, once the system did not work in the case of the civilian aircraft, it is - to put it mildly - difficult to have absolute confidence that it will work in the case of a nuclear dilemma.

It is true, of course, that we can only speculate and that none of us has a certain answer, although perhaps some are better informed than others in considering this question. It is perhaps little consolation to observe that none of us in any case knows how we ourselves would react if a situation were to get out of hand.

But most certainly it is a chilling aspect of the present stage of the nuclear-arms race to consider how potential human error or human error based on a machine malfunction could accidentally lead to nuclear war.

It need hardly be stressed that preventing a nuclear exchange or controlling one that has unfortunately started is among the most difficult and complex operations that a Government can undertake, and yet at the same time it is an operation which, by the very notion of deterrence, cannot be tried out in practice and is one in which the possibilities for rapid improvisation are minimal, and yet it is an operation in which the slightest breach of discipline, departure, from set procedure or human error would be disastrous for all mankind.

We all know one important lesson derived from past conflicts and crises: command and control systems never perform in practice the way they are designed to do according to military specialists, and even less according to manufacturers' manuals. It is also known that communications systems and procedures often fail, frequently at the most crucial moment, simply because of human error or fatigue

This aspect is complex and highly technical, so perhaps the Committee will permit me to give some practical examples, though by no means a complete list.

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

It will be appreciated that reliable information is highly sensitive and therefore difficult to come by but, even in those countries where such information is allowed to come under public scrutiny, it becomes available only after a lapse of some years, and this will explain why available information is somewhat dated.

There are indications, for instance, that between October 1967 and April 1969 one super-Power lost two ships, and an aircraft loaded with the most sophisticated communications equipment, during incidents in which general problems of communications as a mechanical operation and of command and control as a human operation were readily apparent.

On 8 June 1967 a communications post and signal intelligence ship, on a delicate assignment in the midst of hostilities, was attacked and sunk by aircraft of a country friendly to the super-Power owning the intelligence vessel.

Three urgent messages from headquarters instructing the ship to abandon station apparently were never received, despite the fact that they were of the highest priority and employed the most sophisticated equipment available at that time. That incident, once again, took place in a conventional situation, 16 years ago.

It goes without saying that the possibilities of human error are greatly compounded in today's nuclear environment as compared to the more conventional situations of the past.

Missile launch control officers must have the discretion to determine whether a launch command is genuine. Furthermore, a simple human mistake of entering an erroneous digit into a launch control computer - quite possible under the extreme duress and the tense psychological conditions endemic to a potential nuclear exchange - could escalate a catastrophe to even broader dimensions. It could, for instance, spell the difference between retaliation against an intended target - perhaps an intercontinental ballistic missile silo or a remote oil refinery - and one directed against the wrong target, such as a heavily populated civilian centre.

In this connection it is pertinent to observe that the most likely explanation of the cause of the unfortunate change in direction of the civilian airliner was in fact a wrong entry punched into its navigational guide which in-built

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

computerized systems failed to check and rectify in time. In this particular instance, moreover, there appeared to be no major stress either of time, events or weather conditions; and yet the unpredictable happened with calamitous results to innocent civilians.

Today's policy-maker has to depend upon a vast array of machines to supply him with necessary information. The more machines and the more electronic links between the policy-maker and the firing mechanism on the nuclear weapon, the greater the likelihood that something, somewhere along the process, could go wrong.

As an indication of the complexity of the command and control systems, it might be sufficient to mention that the fundamental core of one such system consists of approximately 35 computers at 26 command posts, necessitating 43 separate communications systems. This in turn governs some 600 facilities consisting of more than 30 million miles of electrical wiring and connects five aerial satellites to more than 100 satellite ground-receiving terminals.

In a simulated exercise on this system, which attempted 124 times to obtain or to send information through the computer network, 54 failures occurred as a result of abnormal shutdowns of the computers -- an almost 48 per cent failure rate. Another system tried 295 times with 122 failures, while a third had only 19 successes out of 63 attempts. In yet another test, a major system could receive and send information only 43 times in 290 attempts. Overall, the computers tested worked only 38 per cent of the time. It is on this uncertain accuracy factor that the so-called stability of modern nuclear calculations are based.

One more technical example might suffice. Each missile launch control capsule has what is referred to as a user terminal element. Demands on one system in 1976 included more than 171,000 electronic displays, both printed and wall screen, per month, or about 5,700 daily. Computer-to-computer traffic averaged more than 1.87 million messages per month, more than 62,000 daily. That translates into more than 2,500 per hour. Highly trained personnel were involved in the input or output of 850,000 messages per month, or 28,000 daily, nearly 1,800 per hour.

It is not difficult to imagine a malfunction occurring in this computerized communication system or that bewildered operators might become bemused with so many messages being transmitted that they fail to act when they should or act on erroneous data when they should not.

Moreover, there is now additional concern that computer systems, previously held to be virtually impregnable, are susceptible to tampering and espionage. Even the closely guarded secrets of Swiss bank accounts have apparently been breached. A recent study has surprised experts by revealing that computer scientists who tried to break into sensitive computers succeeded on every single occasion. The New York Times of 14 October reported that even teenagers managed to gain unauthorized intrusion into sensitive systems.

These systems are of course supplemented by others, but they too are not immune to human or mechanical error. The whole world has recently seen evidence of the fragility of an advanced conventional system under peacetime conditions. We simply have no certainty of how even more complex systems would work in a conflict situation under very short notice, possible bad weather, deliberate electronic jamming, changes in the earth's magnetic field and other powerful complicating factors.

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

The only conclusion we can reach is that there is no certainty in uncertainty. And yet uncertainty seems to be one unintended characteristic of communications, on which a tenuous world peace at present rests. As Shakespeare's Prospero might have exclaimed in a modern-day version of "The Tempest": "These are such stuff as nightmares are made on."

In all fairness it should be added that in order partly to remedy these shortcomings much expenditure and much thought have been given recently to improved and continuous communications links between the two super-Powers.

These clearly are necessary to make possible clarification of confusing events and would provide a channel for regulating super-Power behaviour in regional crisis and for controlling an escalation of tensions and preventing their evolving into a nuclear exchange. The hot line between Moscow and Washington plays an important role in these respects. But even the hot line itself has been subject to interruption.

The cable and radio links that constituted the hot line from 1963 to 1978 were quite vulnerable to accidental interruption as well as to possible sabotage or direct attack. For instance, six separate accidental interruptions were publicly reported over the period 1964 to 1965.

Since 1978 the hot line has been improved by replacing the cable and radio teletypewriter links with a satellite communications system comprising two independent and parallel circuits and four ground stations. The satellite link is probably more secure and reliable than the cable from the point of view of accidental interruption, but it is also vulnerable to electronic jamming disruption and to anti-satellite weapons platforms such as killer satellites or miniature homing vehicles, the latter being impossible to stop because of their speed and small size. In any event, anti-satellite technology will soon progress to the point where satellites are as vulnerable as the cable and ground links of the command and control systems were. Thus effective counter-measures to improvements in command and control systems have only further increased the possibility that such systems can be either jammed or destroyed, adding yet another element of instability.

And of course, once again, we cannot but conclude that in the recent airline incident, in conventional circumstances, the system apparently was not used - and if it was it did not prevent a tragic incident.

If we can at least derive some lesson from this tragedy, then the loss of life may have served a higher purpose. Certainly the wider and deeper study of crisis prevention and management -- of war prevention and war ending -- is deserving of concentrated and priority attention, attention much deeper than it has currently received.

This is the first lesson to emerge, to be discussed and to be pursued.

The second lesson, in essence, comprises the other side of the same coin. The demonstrated capability of one super-Power to monitor with reasonable accuracy the entire sequence of ground-to-air communications in a sensitive area within the airspace of the other super-Power provides further proof, if any were needed, that each side does possess intelligence capabilities able to monitor sensitive actions of the other. The emphasis on verification possibilities for compliance with arms-limitation agreements -- one of the long-standing primary obstacles to arms control and eventual disarmament -- has been proved to be less of an obstacle than is publicly claimed.

After all, it seems reasonable to assume that if the super-Powers have the technical means to eavesdrop electronically on each other, and such sophistication as to allow for the recording of sensitive air traffic communications and of the military procedure followed, then the verification of stationary missile deployment is also technologically feasible at the present time and should constitute less of an obstacle to any equitable, effective and verifiable arms-control agreement.

Even if a certain element of risk is involved in this aspect, certainly it is a much lower percentage than the proven failure rate of command and control systems. If, as it seems, we cannot as yet escape from the world of nuclear deterrence, surely we can at least invest in and even gamble more on reducing its dangers, rather than incur the higher risks involved in a blind and unyielding continuation of the present error-prone course. If we do not change direction, there will not be a black box to tell the world how it drifted to disaster. There will only be the radioactive ashes and dust which will have buried life on this earth in the stillness of death.

I hope that at this session and under your guidance, Mr. Chairman, we can take a small step back from the abyss yawning at our feet. What I have said will be sufficient to explain why my country, amongst others, attaches so much importance and urges that priority be given to the development of an international

(Mr. Gauci, Malta)

satellite-monitoring agency. To repeat just one phrase from what I said last year, we urge those who are at present dragging their feet on this matter to join in and make their best contribution to the realization of this project, commensurate with their tremendous potential and in the interests of peace.

I look forward to another opportunity to address this Committee on specific aspects of regional and international security when those items are taken up.

Mr. MURIN (Czechoslovakia) (interpretation from Russian): First of all may I welcome you, Sir, and wish you, on behalf of the delegation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, every success in your work in the responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee. I can assure you and the other officers of the Committee that you will have our full support and our constructive co-operation.

Our Committee is starting its work on the discussion of a broad range of questions relating to disarmament in a difficult and alarming international situation, which has become even more tense and dangerous. Never in the past has the arms race, in particular the nuclear arms race, reached such threatening proportions as it has today. All the channels for negotiations on the limitation and reduction of armaments are being blocked and new armaments programmes are being carried out. New and even more dangerous forms and systems of weapons of mass destruction are being designed. The threat of the extension of the arms race to outer space is increasing. The peoples of the world are having forced upon them the possibility of using nuclear weapons and of waging a limited or even an extended nuclear war.

As a result, during the past year mankind has come one dangerous step nearer the nuclear abyss. That opinion is universally held. It is an unquestionable fact. This demonstrates where mankind is being led by the proponents of militarism and of world reaction, who are advocating the use of force in international relations. The United States and certain of its allies do not conceal the fact that by their actions they are pursuing the achievement of military superiority.

Our task is to find a way out of the explosive situation that has been created and to find realistic ways to remove the threat of nuclear war, put an end to the arms race, ensure the development of all States in an atmosphere of peace and security, and turn the trend of world events in a more peaceful direction, in particular by ending the deadlock in disarmament negotiations and adopting measures designed to eliminate the threat of nuclear war.

In this respect, much depends upon the future situation in Europe and the direction in which relations between the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty and the States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) develop. Will they follow the course of retaining the existing approximate balance of forces, with negotiations aimed at maintaining the balance at the lowest possible levels of armaments, in the spirit of the results of the recently concluded Madrid Conference, or will there be, on the contrary, a further intensification of the arms race and an increased level of military confrontation, in the spirit of the well-known NATO so-called dual track decision of 1979 on the deployment in a number of Western European countries of hundreds of new medium-range American nuclear missiles? Apparently, this very important question will be answered this year.

The appearance of new American nuclear weapons in Europe will bring in its wake the establishment of a qualitatively new strategic and political situation. It will lead to a sharp deterioration in the situation on the European continent and throughout the world. It will increase the threat of nuclear war, with catastrophic consequences for the peoples of the world.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

As was stated in the communiqué of the meeting of the Committee of Foreign Ministers of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, on 14 October this year:

"Those States which would allow the stationing of new medium-range nuclear missiles in their territories would assume grave responsibility before all peoples for the ensuing consequences for peace and tranquillity in Europe, as this would precipitate another round of the nuclear arms race in the continent."

The Foreign Ministers of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty also confirmed at the meeting of the Committee of Foreign Ministers, held in Sofia:

"Their States never strove and do not strive for military superiority for themselves, and they recall the statement of the States parties to the Moscow meeting on 29 June 1983 that they will never allow military superiority over themselves."

It must also be emphasized that the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, including Czechoslovakia, would be obliged to adopt counter-measures to guarantee their security. The time to prevent a new, dangerous step in the arms race in Europe is very limited, but there is still time. One thing is necessary - that the United States renounce making bald statements such as those we have heard during the present session of the General Assembly. It must approach the Geneva negotiations on the basis of respect for the principles of equality and equal security, in the interests of the peoples of all the countries of the world. The question of European security cannot be isolated from global security.

This year started with an important event - the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, held in the capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague. At that meeting the highest representatives of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty put forward proposals to conclude a treaty on the mutual non-use of military force and the maintenance of peaceful relations between the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty and the States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The relevance of the conclusion of such a treaty, in the light of the present international situation, is obvious. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty have on numerous

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

occasions confirmed their readiness to have exchanges of views with the States members of NATO and all other countries on various aspects of it and to embark upon its timely consideration in a businesslike way.

The exclusion of force in relations between the States members of the two basic military and political groupings of the world would be a genuinely historic act, which would contribute to a radical improvement in the international atmosphere and to the elimination of the threat of war. That is why we again address ourselves here as well to the States members of NATO, calling upon them to demonstrate a responsible, constructive approach to this important issue. We hope that these countries will, in view of the need to strengthen certain principles of the United Nations Charter, heed the appeal of the socialist countries.

Scarcely anyone will cast any doubt upon the proposition that the central question of our time is the prevention of nuclear war. That task is of great concern to all the peoples of the world, which are alarmed by the prospect of a world-wide conflagration. The participants in the World Assembly for Peace and Life, Against Nuclear War, representing the peoples of 132 countries, 1,984 national organizations for peace, trade unions, student and church organizations, political parties and more than 100 non-governmental organizations, stated firmly:

"Mankind is now at its most important crossroads in history.

One step in the wrong direction, and the world can find itself hurled, without any possibility of turning back, into the abyss of a nuclear war."

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

The participants at this world-wide conference unanimously and categorically condemned nuclear war as being the most heinous crime against mankind. They also condemned the policy which increases the possibility of unleashing a so-called limited, or possibly even general nuclear war, and stated that such a war would lead to the destruction of civilization and life on our planet.

This unquestionably important statement of the most authoritative forum of representatives of world public opinion pointed the way for Governments represented at the present session of the General Assembly of the United Nations - and which are even taking part in its work at this very meeting to eliminate the threat of nuclear war. These people are awaiting from their Governments not fruitless and most frequently confrontational rhetoric but are looking for concrete, concerted action, for political and material measures aimed at the elimination of the ever-increasing direct threat of nuclear war and the threat to human life.

The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, including the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, have always systematically spoken out in favour of the adoption at the international level of effective measures aimed at the elimination of the threat of nuclear war and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this respect they have also submitted their own concrete proposals at the United Nations forum. The initiatives taken to secure implementation of these measures are precisely the hallmark of the foreign policy of the countries of the socialist community. The adoption of these proposals would give rise to a whole range of practical measures - including the most radical steps toward disarmament - aimed at the elimination of the military threat and would ease tension in international relations.

It should be pointed out that one of the most important premises for co-ordinating such measures, of course, is a clear, definite, categorical condemnation by Governments of nuclear war and doctrines leading to its outbreak. It is unrealistic to expect any substantive progress on the question of the limitation of nuclear arms and nuclear disarmament if the international community ignores the fact that theories of waging nuclear war are official doctrines of specific States possessing nuclear weapons.

I wish to remind members of the Declaration, adopted in 1981 on the Soviet Union's initiative, on the prevention of a nuclear catastrophe, which stated that the first to use nuclear weapons would be committing the gravest crime against humanity. However, in contrast to this the circles of the military-industrial complexes, in collusion with the most reactionary forces of the West, have during the past two years stepped up the pace of their implementation of a programme for the elaboration, development and production of increasingly more sophisticated types of nuclear weapons aimed at achieving unilateral military superiority by the United States and designed to undermine international stability.

Washington confirmed in a document published for the military command that the escalation of the conflict to the level of nuclear war remains the most important element of United States military strategy. In July of this year several billion dollars were allocated to the production of the first series of MX rockets and thereby the United States made a further step towards building up weapons for a nuclear first strike.

The promotion of such programmes, as was pointed out by the Consultative Committee of the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty conference, which took place in Prague in January of this year, stated that:

"This was closely linked with the strategic concepts and doctrines of first nuclear strikes, of limited nuclear war, of a prolonged nuclear conflict, and that all of these aggressive doctrines which threaten the world are based on the premise that apparently it is possible to become a victor in a nuclear war by being the first to use nuclear weapons."

The position of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and of the other socialist States with respect to such theories is unambiguous and clear beyond any doubt. Any inference to the effect that by unleashing nuclear war it is possible to come out the victor is devoid of any reason. If a nuclear war were to be unleashed, there would be no victors. Such a war would inevitably lead to the annihilation of whole peoples, colossal destruction and catastrophic consequences for civilization and life itself on earth. As was stated in his speech at the present session of the General Assembly by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of our country, its targets would not be individual cities but entire continents and the whole of Europe might become one gigantic Hiroshima.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

That is why the delegation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic firmly supports the draft declaration submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Andrei Gromyko, which set forth a new initiative on the condemnation of nuclear war as "the most hideous crime against the peoples." This is included at the present session of the United Nations as an important and urgent item. The firm and unqualified condemnation for all time by all States Members of the United Nations of nuclear war and preparations for its unleashing through the deployment, development and spreading of doctrines and concepts designed to validate the use of nuclear weapons, as provided for in the draft declaration, would unquestionably be an act of political significance of the first order. This would also contribute to the necessary stabilization of the international climate and to the establishment of premises for a more effective series of negotiations on disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament.

The delegation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic believes that this highly humane and very relevant proposal, which is in keeping with the vital interests of the whole of mankind, will meet with the broadest support of States Members of the United Nations and will become the basis for the adoption by the United Nations of radical measures aimed at the elimination for all time of the threat of nuclear war and of the threat to human life.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

The problem of the prevention of nuclear war is complex and has many facets. There are as many components of its final solution as there are channels for the unleashing of a nuclear conflict. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is of the opinion that the most effective means of eliminating the threat of nuclear war and its catastrophic consequences would be for all States possessing nuclear weapons to agree to end the production of those weapons and to reduce and ultimately eliminate their stockpiles of such weapons.

The proposal of the countries of the socialist community in this regard is well known. The first step - an extremely important one - could be a freeze, both quantitative and qualitative, on all existing nuclear facilities and weapons, including all components of nuclear arsenals and all types of nuclear weapon delivery systems, by countries possessing such weapons. This is precisely what is suggested in the new proposal submitted by the Soviet Union as an important and urgent item for the consideration of the present session of the General Assembly. The purpose of that proposal is that consideration be given to the possibility of stopping the build-up of nuclear arsenals and the further improvement of nuclear weapons as a precondition of the subsequent reduction of nuclear weapons.

The most important element of the Soviet proposal relates to the need for a moratorium on all nuclear tests and the cessation of production of fissionable materials for the production of nuclear armaments. The draft envisages appropriate control measures and calls for joint efforts to bring about a radical reduction and ultimately the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

This, in our view, is a most relevant, justified and realistic proposal which is in keeping with the vital interests of the whole of the international community and with the frequent appeals of the world community. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, as is well known, expressed the conviction as early as the meeting of their leaders in June of this year that in the interest of the peace and security of peoples it is urgently necessary for all the nuclear Powers, and in particular the USSR and the United States, to put a freeze on nuclear weapons, as well as to take other urgent measures.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

The idea of a freeze of nuclear weapons is now widely discussed throughout the world, including within the United Nations. Its merit lies in the clarity of the objective and the fact that it would block further proliferation of nuclear weapons and the improvement of such weapons, as well as in the fact that it would be very easy to implement, whatever arguments might be adduced by the militarists for the purpose of discrediting the idea of the freeze of nuclear weapons, in particular by opposing a freeze on the ground of the impossibility of controlling it, and so on. However, the lack of consistency in their position is obvious even to the peoples of their own countries.

It is our profound conviction that the freeze on nuclear weapons is today a key element in the efforts to avert the threat of nuclear war. Last year, the General Assembly, on the initiative of India, Mexico and Sweden, qualified the freeze of nuclear weapons as a matter of "the utmost urgency" (resolution 37/100 B).

In appealing to the nuclear Powers, in the first place the USSR and the United States to implement this measure, we welcome the important initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement at the New Delhi Conference at the beginning of this year in calling for the adoption of "urgent and practical measures for the prevention of a nuclear war" (A/38/132), including the cessation of the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

Thus the primary task facing the present session of the General Assembly and our Committee is to examine and adopt a detailed programme for a freeze on nuclear weapons throughout the world. A draft resolution has been submitted by the Soviet Union, the State which has unilaterally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. We hope that other countries which have not done this so far will assume a similar obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Such a step by the nuclear States, especially the United States, which possesses a gigantic arsenal of nuclear weapons, would be equivalent to the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

I hope that the discussion of the questions of the condemnation of nuclear war and the nuclear-arms freeze, and all the other priority items on our agenda relating to the curbing of the arms race and disarmament, will this year lead to substantive and positive results in the interest of the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of the security of the peoples.

The solution of these important, complex problems of our time calls, first of all, for the political will of States to engage in a constructive exchange of views and to co-operate in the preparation of agreements based on mutual respect for the principles of equality and equal security.

For our part, we sincerely desire the achievement of this objective.

The delegation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has limited its statement today to a few extremely important aspects of the question of the prevention of nuclear war and the solution of other problems connected with nuclear armaments. We reserve our right to speak later to set out our position on other items on the agenda.

Mr. QIAN Jiadong (China) (interpretation from Chinese): First of all, Sir, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to extend to you my hearty congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of our Committee. This is the first time I have taken part in the work of this Committee and it gives me great pleasure to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee, as well as all the representatives present. I shall certainly try my very best to further the work of this Committee.

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

Over the past year, the world situation has continued to be beset with tensions and turmoils as a result of the intense rivalry between the two super-Powers. While old issues remain unsettled, new issues keep emerging one after another. Some regions remain to be engulfed by war flames, and armed aggression and occupation are being continued. The independence and sovereignty of many States have not been given their due respect and world peace and security are under serious threat.

In the field of armaments, the arms race between the super-Powers has become even more acute instead of being relaxed. Under the pretext of "maintaining parity", each side is trying to seek and maintain military supremacy over the other. Both sides are expanding, improving and renewing their arsenals at an unprecedented rate and scope. A new round of arms race is under way. The two sides are increasing the variety and quantity of their nuclear weapons, raising the hitting accuracy, survival capability and destructive power of their nuclear weapon systems and improving the means of commanding, control and communications for a nuclear war. To complement their nuclear strike force on the earth, they have furthermore in recent years been enthusiastically developing outer space weaponry based on the latest scientific and technological developments. At the same time, continuing their efforts to strengthen their conventional armaments, they are also developing heavy conventional weapons using newer technology and employing greater destructive power. These are by no means exaggerated descriptions, but a reality witnessed by the average people every day. The arms race has become an important component in the super-Powers' endeavour to realize their strategic targets.

The super-Powers' arms race has not only posed a direct threat to the peace and security of all States, but has also increased the danger of the outbreak of a new world war. This cannot but arouse the grave concern of the people throughout the world. Peace-loving countries and peoples strongly demand that aggression, expansion and the arms race be halted. They have worked tirelessly for disarmament. It is not at all accidental that in recent years a massive peace movement has emerged in some countries, the mainstream of which reflects the just desire for peace of the broad sections of people in these countries.

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

However, contrary to the wishes of the peoples of the world, the super-Powers have shown no sincerity in disarmament, verbally professing disarmament only for the purpose of covering up their frenzied arms race. No progress at all has been made in the field of disarmament despite innumerable rounds of bilateral and multilateral disarmament negotiations and countless meetings and conferences devoted to disarmament. Fierce bargaining is going on between the two super-Powers in START and intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) negotiations. The proposals put forward by each side are all designed to weaken the other and maintain its own supremacy. Owing to the contention and confrontation between the super-Powers, the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva has achieved virtually no progress of substance on any item on its agenda. The number of resolutions that our Committee adopts each year has been on the increase, but they hardly provide solutions to real problems. It is fully justified for people of all countries to feel strongly dissatisfied with all this.

Like other peoples in the world, the Chinese people love peace and aspire to a peaceful international environment in which they can build up their own country. China has consistently pursued a policy of safeguarding world peace and opposing hegemonism. China favours disarmament. We are for genuine disarmament and against sham disarmament. We oppose arms expansion under the camouflage of disarmament. In order to promote disarmament, China put forward at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament a proposal for disarmament, outlining its objectives, measures, verification and negotiation. The basic principles underlining this proposal are as follows: First, disarmament cannot be separated from the struggle to safeguard international security and oppose hegemonism. Secondly, the two super-Powers should take the lead in disarmament. Thirdly, nuclear disarmament should go hand in hand with conventional disarmament. Fourthly, small and medium-sized States are entitled to maintain their necessary forces for national defence; the disarmament process should in no way jeopardize the independence, sovereignty and security of any State. Fifthly, disarmament agreements should include strict and effective measures for

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

international verification. Sixthly, all States should participate on an equal footing in the discussion, negotiation, and supervision of the implementation of disarmament agreements. In our view these principles are comprehensive and fair as they are based on the consideration of the interests of all sides.

As nuclear weapons have unprecedented and enormous destructive power, nuclear disarmament draws particular concern of the people of the world. In accordance with the above-mentioned basic principles, China put forward at the second special session on disarmament a proposal concerning the cessation of development, and reduction, of nuclear weapons by nuclear States, calling on the two super-Powers to **take** the lead in cutting, by a wide margin, their nuclear weapons and means of delivery of various types. In order to promote further nuclear disarmament, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian recently proposed before the General Assembly that after the Soviet Union and the United States have taken practical action to stop testing, improving and manufacturing nuclear weapons and agreed on reducing by half their nuclear weapons and means of delivery of all types, a widely-representative international conference should be convened with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States to negotiate the general reduction of nuclear weapons by all nuclear weapon States. The starting point of this proposal by the Chinese Government is to make nuclear disarmament a continuous, uninterrupted process so as to achieve the final goal of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons.

The final document of the first special session on disarmament correctly pointed out that States with the largest nuclear arsenals bear a special responsibility for disarmament. It is entirely reasonable that nuclear disarmament should start with the two super-Powers. They were the first to get themselves armed with nuclear weapons and then they launched a continuous nuclear arms race. It is therefore only natural that they should be asked to take action first in nuclear disarmament. They possess over

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

95 per cent of the nuclear weapons in the world. Only a substantial reduction of nuclear weapons on their part can render nuclear disarmament really significant. And even after a 50 per cent reduction on their part, they would still be left with nuclear weapons that far exceed the nuclear weapons of all the other nuclear weapon States put together, and they would still have the "overkill" capabilities.

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

Other nuclear States should, of course, also undertake their responsibility concerning nuclear disarmament. On the very day when China first successfully conducted its nuclear test, it undertook not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use them against non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones. China has developed a limited nuclear force for self-defence and for breaking the super-Powers' nuclear monopoly and promoting nuclear disarmament. China has just proposed that an international conference be convened after the super-Powers have agreed on reducing their nuclear weapons by half -- not after they have actually carried out such reduction -- to discuss matters concerning the reduction of nuclear weapons by all nuclear States, which will be implemented at a later stage according to a reasonable ratio and procedure, and lead to the complete destruction of all nuclear weapons. This further testifies to China's consistent and responsible approach towards nuclear disarmament.

China's proposal on nuclear disarmament is based on the reality of the nuclear armaments in the world today. It is therefore fair and reasonable, as well as practical. We hope it will receive serious consideration and a positive response from the parties concerned.

I should also like to say a few words on the proposals for a "nuclear freeze". We maintain that it is quite understandable for some non-aligned and neutral States to have proposed a "nuclear freeze" in order to make the super-Powers stop their nuclear arms race. However, the fact that a nuclear Power with a gigantic nuclear arsenal which is intensifying its efforts in every possible way to seek nuclear supremacy has also put forward a similar proposal cannot but make people ponder over its real motives. "Freezing" alone, if not accompanied by concrete measures for reducing and destroying nuclear weapons, could only in effect legitimize and perpetuate the nuclear arsenals of the super-Powers, which will enable them to maintain their nuclear hegemony and pose a menace to the people of various countries. This obviously is detrimental to genuine nuclear disarmament; nor is it conducive to the maintenance of international peace and security.

(Mr. Qian Jiadong, China)

People are now deeply concerned about the super-Powers' intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe and Asia. Naturally, China too is much concerned about it. We hold that all the nuclear weapons reduced, no matter from where, should not be moved to other regions but should be destroyed; the reduction of nuclear weapons should not be confined to the European region either. The Soviet Union should reduce by a wide margin the large amount of intermediate-range nuclear missiles already deployed in Asia and the Far East, so that the grave threat to which the countries in this region are exposed may be lessened.

Nuclear disarmament can in no way be carried out in isolation. It should be integrated with the struggle against the hegemonism of the super-Powers if it is to achieve any results. The super-Powers must change their course of behaviour and shoulder in earnest their special responsibility towards disarmament so as to reach agreement truly conducive to nuclear disarmament. China is ready to work together with all peace-loving countries and peoples for the urgent task of nuclear disarmament, which has a direct impact on world peace and security. We are convinced that nuclear weapons will eventually be destroyed by mankind, and not vice versa.

Mr. CALLEJAS (Honduras) (interpretation from Spanish): Since this is the first time I have spoken in the Committee, I should like, on behalf of my delegation, most warmly to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee, which is a guarantee that our work will be guided with your characteristic talent and dynamism.

The number of items on disarmament allocated to the First Committee is clear proof of the vital importance of this question for all the peoples of the world.

The fact that as long ago as 1959 the General Assembly set itself the final goal of achieving an agreement on general and complete disarmament under effective international control, defining this question as the most important one facing the world, also demonstrates the complexity of the problems involved in this issue.

(Mr. Callejas, Honduras)

Quite rightly, the efforts of the United Nations have been focused as a matter of priority on the conclusion of agreements to govern the manufacture, testing, stockpiling, transfer and prohibition of thermonuclear weapons. It is obvious that the use of such weapons would have devastating effects, and it would be pointless to dwell on these horrors.

However, since the military conflicts in the world today are being carried out with conventional weapons, in recent years the United Nations has also attached importance to regulating the use of such weapons, although limiting itself to those which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.

In the view of the Honduran delegation, and as it declared at the second special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, held in June last year, it is also urgent for us to achieve a reduction of all kinds of conventional weapons to the levels strictly necessary for the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity and for maintaining public order.

We believe that the search for attaining this objective must be supplemented by, and carried on simultaneously with, effective action by the international community to avoid illegal arms trafficking, and the strengthening of the peaceful means for the settlement of disputes. The effect would be to make truly effective the principle of the non-use of force in relations between States. My delegation is very happy to be able to say that with respect to Central America these aims have been reflected in the document of objectives adopted recently in September, in the context of the activities carried out by the Contadora Group, which constitutes a very encouraging starting-point to achieve peace in the region.

In keeping with this position, Honduras maintains that we must promote universal adherence to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Furthermore, we believe that the régime of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must be further strengthened by improving the methods of inspection and control of the transfer of nuclear materials for peaceful purposes and by obtaining a commitment by the nuclear Powers to undertake and conclude serious comprehensive negotiations designed to putting an end to the arms race and the development of the technology for producing new weapons of mass destruction.

(Mr. Callejas, Honduras)

Finally, we wish to reiterate our complete support for the promotion of nuclear-free zones in the Middle East, Africa and southern Asia, on the basis of the well-tested frame of reference provided by the machinery of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Those are some of the steps which, in the view of my delegation, would help to reduce the distrust and tension that now exist in various regions of the world and to increase the effectiveness of the lofty ideals proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

Mr. GDEMO (Ghana): It is with some hesitation that I take the floor at the beginning of the general debate in the Committee on the agenda items dealing with disarmament. I am hesitant because there has been such a glaring lack of any specific improvement in the disarmament and arms control negotiations since the end of last year, and one naturally runs the risk of repeating the same arguments as those which characterized the debate during the previous session. However, upon reflection, it is clear that none of us can afford to be silent or timid in the face of the ominous threat that nuclear arms proliferation poses to mankind. We must speak or else perish.

Since the debate on the same item last year, discussions have been held and innumerable articles written underlining the international community's common concern over the increasing threat to international peace and security. At the same time the super-Powers have traded harsh rhetoric. The East-West tension has been used as a pretext for bypassing the United Nations and for undermining internationalism. In spite of this regrettable development, it is already clear that those ad hoc alternatives are fraught with serious weaknesses and that no forum or initiative on conflict control will command the attention and respect of the international community as much as those negotiations held under the auspices of the United Nations. Even though little or no progress has been achieved, partly because of the transformation of United Nations forums into platforms for acerbic rhetoric, it is equally important for the attainment of the objectives of disarmament that United Nations

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

forums should remain the vehicle for important and meaningful attempts to reach international understanding and agreement. So it is with pride that my delegation again joins in the debate in the First Committee because we believe that this deliberative effort offers a reasonable promise of success.

It is unfortunate that the credibility of the United Nations has been especially undermined recently and its role in international affairs grossly misrepresented. The adversaries of the United Nations argue forcefully that the First Committee is not the negotiating forum for disarmament, that our debates here are not structured to produce concrete arms control results and that there is still hope that a breakthrough will be achieved solely through bilateral negotiations between the super-Powers. We wish also to emphasize, however, that disarmament is an international responsibility and therefore requires multilateral attention to assist negotiations. This is the reason that led the international community to assert during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament that the United Nations has a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament and arms control.

The First Committee, therefore, has a special and onerous responsibility, as the General Assembly's deliberative body on disarmament, to attempt to achieve an international consensus on the framework for disarmament issues, especially at a time when a nervous international community is bereft of any assurance that a nuclear catastrophe can be averted. We hope, therefore, that the debates in the Committee will create at least the right atmosphere and guidelines for attempting new initiatives in the arms limitation and disarmament talks.

These are laudable and legitimate aspirations, but we all know that the atmosphere in relations among the nuclear Powers could not be worse than it is at the present time. In terms of the objective conditions required for delicate disarmament and international security talks, the past 12 months have been very poor, to say the least. The period has been characterized by bitter rhetoric between the two super-Powers, an almost automatic rejection of each other's proposals for arms control, a surprising show of bellicosity and a gradual drift towards war. In this politically and militarily dangerous atmosphere, we have seen the heightening of cold-war

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

animosities to the point where it is no longer an exaggeration to say that any issue could touch off military conflict, with unimaginable consequences for the whole of the human race.

When we met at this time last year the concept of a limited nuclear war was very much in the minds and hearts of some nuclear Powers, even though the collective voice of ordinary men and women all over the world was strident in denunciation of that theory. Happily, today one does not hear too much of that theory, and, if our interpretation of events is correct, that belief will not be pursued with any fervour in the foreseeable future. My delegation welcomes this development, even if it is without absolute certainty, because it holds us back from one more ominous step towards total destruction. If nuclear war were to break out, it would, in our view, quickly degenerate into a global catastrophe, because it would involve the use of intercontinental ballistic missiles as well as the short-range and intermediate-range missiles in the arsenals of all the nuclear Powers. There can be no doubt therefore, that any outbreak of nuclear war would lead to the final destruction of our life and our planet.

At the same time last year we heard a reiteration of the almost universal desire for a nuclear weapon freeze on the part of the nuclear Powers. Unfortunately, the proposal has not been accepted yet by all sides and is therefore threatened with extinction. We have examined carefully the arguments and concerns of those who fear that a freeze would limit the forces on which they might call in time of war or destroy their bargaining powers in crucial negotiations but, while we are not insensitive to their fears, we fail to share their outright rejection of the freeze proposal.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

In our view, a freeze would in the beginning affect only existing missiles, which are more than sufficient to destroy all of mankind. Moreover, it is important to understand that a nuclear-weapon freeze is not an end in itself. It would have to be the beginning of an exploration of other follow-up processes that could lead ultimately to complete disarmament.

One of the other main arguments against a nuclear freeze concerns the perennial question of verification. It is, of course, legitimate and logical to raise the issue of verification when a truce is being arranged between antagonistic forces. However, our own study of the whole question of verification, coupled with the recent admission by certain highly-placed officials of nuclear countries, confirms that verification would not be as difficult to institute as we are often led to believe. Indeed, experts believe that a comprehensive freeze would be easier to verify than more limited arms control agreements. In any case, would it not be logical to expect that in such an exercise only verifiable missiles would be regarded as frozen? We believe that opposition to the nuclear-weapon freeze proposal ought to be seriously reconsidered, because the best hope for, and best beginning of, control of the nuclear arms race is a nuclear-weapon freeze. We once again urge the nuclear Powers, therefore, seriously to reconsider the issue and to heed the plea of world public opinion, which is unequivocally on the side of a freeze.

Another area with a realistic chance of success concerns the total cessation of nuclear-weapon test explosions. Ever since this proposal was placed on the international nuclear agenda, it has received only perfunctory consideration from the nuclear Powers, especially the super-Powers, which obviously do not see it as serving their vested interests. But it must be raised and pursued because it provides a litmus test of the sincerity of nuclear Powers when it comes to arms control. As long as test explosions are necessary for the qualitative development of nuclear arms and for the invention of new generations of such arms, the banning of all nuclear-weapon test explosions remains one of the best measures against any further proliferation. We believe that this option has not been pursued vigorously enough, and we wish to appeal to all States to attach the utmost importance to it and to accord it the highest priority.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

The proliferation of nuclear arms continues as nuclear Powers deepen their distrust of one another, beat the drums of war and deploy existing and new generations of nuclear arms the better to target them on one another. We are informed that one side exceeds the other in the number of lethal weapons in its arsenal and that there is therefore a need to overtake and outdistance it in the qualitative and quantitative development of new systems. The irony in this argument is that we all know that the disparity in the relative nuclear-weapon capacity of the two super-Powers is at best negligible. In other words, both sides some time ago achieved relative parity in their arsenals and do not need more warheads to catch up with each other. In any case, what is the wisdom of fashioning more deadly and numerous missiles when those already available are more than enough to blow this planet and its people into non-existence? We believe we express the anxiety of millions of men and women around the globe when we cry out to the super-Powers that their Pershing, Cruise, MX, Polaris, SS-19 to SS-23 and SSCX-4 missiles are more than sufficient to maintain their cynical balance of terror and that the international community should halt this dangerous and wasteful escalation. The arms race cannot and will not be won; rather, it will destroy us.

If the insatiable craving of the super-Powers for more and more missiles threatens our human existence, international peace and security are no less threatened by the now undisputed acquisition of a nuclear-weapon capability by the racist régime of South Africa. With the assistance and malevolent genius of countries such as Israel and Taiwan, the Pretoria régime has now acquired nuclear weapons with which to strengthen the bastion of its apartheid policy. This ambition of South Africa was detected by international observers almost two decades ago, but some influential States Members of the United Nations refused to heed the warning, either because they were themselves economically involved with South Africa or because they believed the simplistic explanation that the so-called communist threat to southern Africa was very real around the Cape of Good Hope and that South Africa's defence capacity needed to be strengthened in order to resist a takeover. Both reasons are historically and factually untenable. Through direct and indirect collusion, certain prominent countries of the West have armed that garrison régime with the most lethal of weapons, with which it can better terrorize the entire region of Africa and the shores of the Indian Ocean.

Quite apart from the apartheid stance of the racist régime, there are certain other objective reasons why South Africa should not be allowed to become a respectable member of the nuclear club if we are to be faithful to the Charter. First, South Africa has proved itself to be one of the most belligerent of States since the time of the Second World War, as shown by its incessant military aggression against African countries in the sub-region. Secondly, South Africa has demonstrated its resolve not to heed resolutions of the Security Council, which is the United Nations body charged with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Thirdly, it has refused thus far to place its nuclear programme under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Fourthly, since 1961 the General Assembly has supported the declaration of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

It is highly prejudicial to international peace and security, therefore, to continue to tolerate the nuclear-weapon activities of this garrison régime which has refused to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has conducted unwarranted aggression against its neighbours, and which publicly declared in 1977 that:

"If we are attacked, no rules apply if it comes to a question of our existence. We will use all means at our disposal, whatever they may be."

In such circumstances, I ask those Member States which assist South Africa in its nuclear programme to put their racial solidarity aside for a moment and ponder whether the interests of international peace and security are aided or jeopardized by the possession of a nuclear weapon by the racist régime. A nuclear war can be caused by the deliberate or irresponsible use of weapons. The mere possession of stockpiles by South Africa, and the tradition of its extremist military action against front-line States, could also lead to a nuclear catastrophe, since such an unthinkable phenomenon could be caused as much by miscalculation as by an improper safeguards régime. Those who underwrite this weapon should therefore think seriously about these things.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

As a member of the developing world, my delegation cannot conclude its remarks on disarmament and arms control without once again bringing to the attention of the Committee the irrationality of spending almost \$800 billion a year on the arms race while millions around the world are dying of hunger and malnutrition. The moral orientation of our generation is certainly perverted if we fail to see the connection between disarmament and development. It is to the discredit of the United Nations that for the selfish interest of a handful of its Member States which are also nuclear Powers, the international community has shelved the historical report of Inga Thorsson and her colleagues on the relationship between disarmament and development. The destiny of mankind will be better assured if we are able to marshal the political will necessary to turn our scientific, technological and financial resources from a dangerous and wasteful arms enterprise towards the global developmental effort sorely needed.

If my delegation has concentrated on the nuclear arms race, it is not only because it poses the greatest threat to mankind. Equally disturbing is the ever increasing escalation in conventional arms. The destruction that conventional arms continues to spread in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, should convince all of us of the wisdom to control the development and stockpiling of this deadly category of arms which has reached unbelievable levels of sophistication. In this regard, I wish to reiterate the appeal to our two brothers, Iran and Iraq, to lay down arms and to seek agreement and restitution through dialogue and arbitration. The havoc that war has brought on them is enough. Their respective peoples are now entitled to peace and security.

Certain international events in the last few months have clearly brought home to many how real and how close an outbreak of nuclear conflict can be. For the first time since the shooting down of the Korean Airline plane, many people around the world have been seized by genuine fear of a nuclear conflict and there are already signs that this fear is finding expression in the greater participation in anti-nuclear

(Mr. Gbelho, Ghana)

demonstrations. Nuclear weapons, under cold war conditions such as now envelop international relations, can only constitute an even greater threat to our very existence. It is our collective responsibility to find a way out of this situation, and we must jointly work towards complete and general disarmament, as well as the building of confidence between the super-Powers.

To conclude, my delegation wishes to place the following proposals before the Committee for consideration and recommendation to the negotiating parties and bodies involved in the search for arms control and disarmament:

First, we urge all nuclear Powers, especially the two super-Powers, publicly to reaffirm their commitment to the non-first-use of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, the nuclear super-Powers should commit themselves to a mutual and verifiable nuclear-weapon freeze, with immediate effect.

Thirdly, nuclear States should agree to develop a convention for the total cessation of nuclear-weapon test explosions by the end of 1984.

Fourthly, the European States should seriously consider setting up a European disarmament conference in the near future to consider the gradual removal of all nuclear missiles from Europe and to work out the modalities for a mutual reduction of conventional forces in order to diffuse the tension that Europe currently is experiencing.

Fifthly, to consider, as a matter of extreme urgency, a meeting at the summit level between the super-Powers, with a view to reducing the cold war tension that prevails between them and to working out certain concrete initiatives in confidence-building measures.

These measures must be accompanied, in our view, by a greater involvement in the multilateral effort to help reach early agreement. To this end, we endorse the United Nations system as an appropriate forum and recommend the re-introduction of the proposal to create subsidiary organs of the Committee on Disarmament, especially a body to handle matters pertaining to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament, and another body to consider the prevention of the spreading of the arms race to outer space.

These are not new proposals. They have been made individually at

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

different stages of the international debate and at different times. We believe, however, that, if taken together now as a package, they may constitute the most effective means of impacting upon the search for arms control and disarmament. We hope that they will at least spur serious thinking on this crucial subject which is of interest to all mankind.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.