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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL
AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

SCIENTIFIC WORK ON PEACE RESEARCH

Letter dated 21 July 1971 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to request you to include an item entitled "Scientific work on peace research" in the provisional agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum is attached to this letter.

(Signed) E. LONGERSTAEY
Permanent Representative of Belgium

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. Peace research is a new branch of the human sciences and many national and international institutions have devoted work to it. At the present time, more than one hundred scientific institutions throughout the world are engaged in research on this subject or closely related subjects. They have amassed a considerable sum of knowledge which has not always been put to adequate use. These diverse scientific activities are worthy of the attention of the United Nations. The rational use of such activities would help to solve many of the problems confronting the United Nations, which could, in fact, assist in guiding and promoting subsequent activities.
2. The principal role of the United Nations, according to its Charter, is to save mankind from the scourge of war and a substantial part of its activity is essentially concerned with the problem of the maintenance and restoration of peace. Its ideal extends even further - to the establishment of a genuine peace resulting from a world structure in which the tendency to resort to violence would be practically non-existent.
3. The Department of Political and Security Council Affairs - a substantive branch of the Secretariat - is concerned with peace research activities undertaken by national and international institutions. The Department conducts studies and prepares papers on problems relating to the development of the United Nations as an effective instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. UNESCO, too, has conducted studies of research undertaken throughout the world in connexion with problems relating to the maintenance of peace. It has published an "international repertory of institutions specializing in research on peace and disarmament"^{1/}. It is noted in the introduction to this publication that the sector of peace research has not been clearly defined and that the dissemination of the results of such research has not always been adequate. UNITAR has also been concerned with the problem of the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

^{1/} UNESCO Collection: Reports and Papers in the Social Sciences Series, 1968.

4. Peace research is primarily concerned with international relations and questions relating to disarmament. However, as peace is indivisible and inseparable from the manifold facets of life in society, the work devoted to it inevitably assumes an interdisciplinary character which underlines the need to take an over-all view of the problems involved. Consequently, some years ago now, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, noting the progress achieved in the research undertaken in many countries, suggested that the Secretary-General of the United Nations should consider the possibility of co-ordinating all those activities. The United Nations should not confine itself to dealing with conflicts as and when they arise.

5. As a member of the Security Council since the beginning of the current year and thus bearing an increased share of responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Belgium is anxious to give practical form to the suggestions which it made in 1968 and 1969 by proposing an item relating to peace research for inclusion in the agenda of the forthcoming session of the General Assembly. It regards such research as a significant contribution to the attainment of the primary purpose of the United Nations, namely, to safeguard international peace and security. If conducted with the seriousness which they deserve and in accordance with strict scientific methods, such studies might eventually assist States and the United Nations to take appropriate action to avoid conflicts.

6. The Belgian Government considers that such a prospect would encourage scholars in various branches of learning to co-ordinate their activities in order that each of them may pursue those activities in greater depth by concentrating on specific problems. Moreover, through the agency of the United Nations, the results of scientific research would be communicated to States which might benefit from them in the conduct of their external affairs. A deeper knowledge of the mechanisms of war, its causes and its effects would undoubtedly enable them to avoid errors which science would have established as likely to produce conflicts. Any activity undertaken by the United Nations has the effect of increasing public awareness of problems which already exist or may arise.

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7. It is desirable that an effort be made to co-ordinate and organize activities in this sphere despite the diversity of the principles involved in peace research. This task could of course most appropriately be undertaken under the direct supervision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. A report submitted by him every two years would certainly arouse very great interest. In this computer age, it would certainly not be asking too much to arrange for the systematic registration with the United Nations of all publications relating to peace research; to use that procedure as the basis for a fruitful compilation of such publications for the general good of mankind would be one of the loftiest tasks which the United Nations could undertake.

8. The Belgian Government therefore has the honour to propose an item entitled "Scientific work on peace research" for inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly.
