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

WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Letter dated 6 September 1971 from the Minister for Foreign  
Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics addressed  
to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, I hereby request the inclusion in the agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, as an important and urgent item, the question of a "World Disarmament Conference". In submitting this question to the United Nations General Assembly, the Soviet Government is guided by the following considerations.

Among the problems which arouse the concern of all the peoples of the world and which require the speediest possible solution, the problem of disarmament is one of the highest priority. The international situation of the future will to a great extent depend upon its solution, which may lead, on the one hand, to a lessening of international tensions and a slowing of the arms race or, on the other hand, to continuing preparations for war at an ever-increasing pace and an increased threat of another world war.

In recent years a few agreements have been reached which to some extent limit the dimensions of the arms race. Such agreements include: the Moscow Treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; the Treaty on the principles guiding the activities of States in outer space, and the Treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the

sea-bed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof. Negotiations currently in progress between States have led to the consideration of several other specific measures aimed at the limitation of the arms race and disarmament. However, it must be admitted that fundamental progress towards controlling the dangerous practice of stockpiling and improving armaments has yet to be made.

This cannot fail to arouse the concern of those peoples who are vitally interested in the strengthening of peace and international security. The Soviet Union fully shares this concern. For that reason, it has constantly and persistently advocated, in the United Nations as well as elsewhere, a broad programme of disarmament, even general and complete disarmament.

Guided by unfailing desire for effective measures to put an end to the arms race, especially the nuclear arms race, the Soviet Government has recently proposed the calling of a conference of the five nuclear Powers, who bear special responsibility for the maintenance of international security and on whom, above all, the success of nuclear disarmament depends. The Conference would take concrete and practical steps towards the solution of this problem. The Soviet Union believes that the conference of nuclear Powers, provided of course that all nuclear Powers prove willing to work towards an agreement, could be a major success in working out a broad spectrum of measures for nuclear disarmament or individual measures which would gradually lead to that end. This approach to the solution of the problem of nuclear disarmament is the most realistic and is best in keeping with the interests of all peoples.

At the same time, the course of events on the international scene makes it desirable to encourage more active efforts on the part of all countries in the world, both nuclear and non-nuclear, to solve the problems relating to disarmament.

This goal also, in the opinion of the Soviet Government, could be served by the calling of a world disarmament conference. The conference could become a forum where all countries of the world without exception could jointly discuss the problems of disarmament in all their ramifications and attempt to find feasible and generally acceptable means of solving those problems. In order to be successful, such a conference must be truly universal. All countries should be represented at the world disarmament conference on the basis of equality. Of special importance would be the participation in the conference of all States which possess significant armed forces and armaments.

The Soviet Union believes that the world disarmament conference could consider the whole complex of problems relating to disarmament, with regard to both nuclear and conventional armaments. At the same time, inasmuch as the nuclear armaments race arouses the greatest anxiety among peoples, primary attention could be devoted to the questions of prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons, if the majority of the participants in the conference should so desire.

The Soviet Government hopes that the General Assembly will express itself on the question of a world disarmament conference and take such decisions as would facilitate agreement between States concerning the calling of the conference.

I would ask you, Mr. Secretary-General, to view this letter as an explanatory memorandum, as provided under rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, and to circulate it as an official document of the United Nations General Assembly.

(Signed) A. GROMYKO  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics