

Statement at the Plenary Meeting of the Committee on Disarmament  
on 25 March 1980 by a Group of Socialist States

The Committee on Disarmament has before it several pressing tasks, the effective and early solution of which is awaited by international public opinion and demanded by the interests of strengthening international peace and security.

Almost two months have elapsed from the beginning of our 1980 session. It would be just to expect the Committee - having accepted the detailed rules of procedure at the beginning of its session of last year, thus establishing the framework for its future activities, and having tried it successfully in practice - to start discharging its urgent duties. However, the Committee has failed not only to start considering substantive issues on its agenda, but instead it is indulging in fruitless debates on artificially created problems which deviates it from its basic tasks.

It becomes evident that certain member States of the Committee, pursuing a militarist course in their foreign policy, fuelling arms race and resisting any real measures directed to the cessation of the arms race, try to complicate or even to block the work of the Committee. They hide their intentions by imposing on the Committee discussions on artificial, irrelevant issues, including those of procedural nature.

Under such circumstances, a group of socialist States considers it necessary to voice their firm disapproval of this sort of obstruction by certain delegations of the Committee, which in fact may lead to the paralysation of its work.

One can not but qualify as obstruction the efforts by certain delegations to block the consideration of requests made by States non-members of the Committee to participate in the consideration of issues of particular concern to them. This act of obstruction is clearly proved, among others, by the fact that the consideration of those requests has been intentionally delayed for long. We would like to remind that consideration of similar applications last year was done expeditiously without complications.

One may wonder what has changed in the rules of procedure of the Committee that makes it possible to leave unconsidered the application of Finland made on 21 February, that of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam of 27 February, or the request of Denmark of 3 March, etc. when during last year's session it was a matter of days to consider such requests.

Trying to justify their tactics of deferring the consideration of requests by non-members certain delegations are referring to the necessity to decide the question of establishing working groups after which - they say - it will be possible to consider the requests.

This argument obviously lacks credibility since so far not all the non-member States have applied for participation in a subsidiary body of the Committee.

One of the obvious consequences of deferring the consideration of the requests made by non-member States is that those States having expressed their desire to speak on the subject of the prohibition of chemical weapons have been prevented to do so in plenary meetings especially allotted for the consideration of this subject. One may recall that the programme of work accepted by the Committee has earmarked the period of 13-14 March and 20 March for the consideration of the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Now, when the decision on working groups has been taken, proposals are made, obviously in breach of the rules of procedure, to consider the applications in a "package deal". Rule 34 of the rules of procedure clearly states that "having considered such a request, the Committee will, through its Chairman, transmit an invitation to that effect to the State or States concerned". The rules of procedure speak of "a request" and not requests, and "an invitation" and not invitations.

How could one speak of considering all the request in a package when the contents of requests made by various non-member States differ in subject as to what makes a "particular concern" for them as well as in the level of participation whether it concerns formal, informal meetings or subsidiary bodies.

That is why there has been not a single precedent in the work of the Committee to consider applications by non-members in a package. Last year such requests were considered in strict accordance with the rules of procedure individually according to the contents of each request.

Thus, any demand for a "package deal" is entirely a breach of the rules of procedure and can be taken only as an effort to complicate the normal work of the Committee.

Taking into account the concern of peoples in solving the problems of disarmament, the Committee, guided by the resolution of the Special Session of the General Assembly, made appropriate provisions for the participation of non-member States in the work of the Committee. Attempts to defer or block the consideration of such requests under any pretext can seriously damage the very basis of the normal functioning of the Committee, which is to be an effective forum for negotiations on the questions of disarmament.

The socialist countries deem it indispensable that the Committee should return at the earliest to its normal functions and should immediately start the consideration of requests made by non-member States in strict accordance with its rules of procedure in the sequence of their submission. The socialist countries stand ready to co-operate in a constructive manner with other delegations of the Committee in order to fulfil the tasks before it.