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WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Letter dated 17 March 1972 from the Permanent Representative
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United
Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations must draw attention to the fact that the letter of the Secretary-General transmitting General Assembly resolution 2833 (XXVI) on a world disarmament conference, paragraph 2 of which invites all States "to communicate to the Secretary-General, before 31 August 1972, their views and suggestions on any relevant questions relating to a world disarmament conference", has still not been circulated.

It has been learned that the reason for the delay in the circulation of the letter of the Secretary-General transmitting the above-mentioned resolution is an attempt by certain responsible officials in the United Nations Secretariat to limit its circulation only to States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations and not to have the letter transmitting resolution 2833 (XXVI) circulated to States which are not Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Such an arbitrary attitude to this question is absolutely unjustified and is not in keeping with the letter and spirit of the resolution on a world disarmament conference.

In this connexion, we must draw attention to the extremely important circumstance that apart from the above-mentioned invitation by the General Assembly of the United Nations to all States to communicate their suggestions concerning the convening of a world disarmament conference, paragraph 1 of that resolution specifically refers to a world disarmament conference open to all States and contains no restrictive clauses. In itself, the formula that the conference would be "open to all States" in the context of resolution 2833 (XXVI) on a world

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disarmament conference is absolutely new and is here adopted for the first time by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the basis of the principle of the universality of the world disarmament conference. Accordingly, in the case of the circulation of the above-mentioned General Assembly resolution, the so-called "usual practice", which was arbitrarily and unjustly introduced under the influence of a certain group of States Members of the United Nations in the days of the "cold war", cannot be applied. Since the world disarmament conference, as its very name implies, would be a world conference, it would, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the resolution, be open to all States, that is to say irrespective of their membership in the United Nations or the specialized agencies.

It was, of course, at the initiative of the Soviet Union that the proposal for a world disarmament conference was submitted for consideration at the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In introducing this proposal, the USSR proceeded from the assumption that the conference would be genuinely universal in character and this view met with support from an absolute majority of delegations to that session of the General Assembly. Of 48 delegations which spoke at the plenary meetings of the General Assembly during the consideration of this question, more than 40 expressed support for the principle of universality. That point of view was also supported by the sponsors of the above-mentioned resolution, as was apparent from their statements in the Assembly. When the draft resolution was introduced in the plenary meeting of the General Assembly, they made no reservations.

In this connexion, it must also be noted that in such an important area as disarmament, which directly concerns the question of the safeguarding of international peace and security, the transmission of the above-mentioned resolution only to a limited circle of States would be a distortion of the purposes, principles, spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations, Article 2 (6) of which states specifically that "the Organization shall ensure that States which are not Members of the United Nations act in accordance with these Principles so far as may be necessary for the maintenance of international peace and security".

The application of the so-called "Vienna formula" to determine to which States the Secretary-General's letter should be circulated would be a direct violation of the principle of universality, which is of primary importance for a world disarmament conference. Its purpose would be to debar from participation in the preparations for a world disarmament conference a number of States which are playing an important role in the struggle for the strengthening of international security and disarmament. Such States include the German Democratic Republic, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

It would be inadmissible and contrary to the Charter of the United Nations to debar, for example, the German Democratic Republic, a country which is one of the ten most economically developed countries in the world and which is a party

to all international agreements concerning the limitation of the arms race, from participation in the preparations for a world disarmament conference or to discriminate against that State in any other way in that connexion. The same also applies to the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam has always been considered by Members of the United Nations and by the Organization as a whole as a sovereign State not only on the strength of its international connexions but also on the strength of its participation in extremely important international agreements and talks such as the Geneva Agreement on Indo-China and the four-Power Paris talks on a peaceful settlement in Viet-Nam. The discussions at many sessions of the General Assembly on questions relating to Korea unquestionably show that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is considered by Members of the United Nations and by the Organization as a whole as a sovereign State and many Members of the United Nations have diplomatic, consular and trade relations with that country. The recently established People's Republic of Bangladesh has already been recognized by more than 50 States throughout the world, including three of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Accordingly, it is not hard to see that discrimination against those States in the circulation of the resolution on a world disarmament conference would be very unfavourably received by many States and would be seriously detrimental to the solution of those important international problems which are the reason for the convening of a world disarmament conference.

In this connexion, the Permanent Mission of the USSR to the United Nations cannot fail to draw attention also to the fact that the so-called "Vienna formula" has nothing whatsoever to do with the Charter of the United Nations. Under the Charter, all States are divided only into two categories - Members and non-members of the United Nations. Any other division is contrary to the Charter, arbitrary and discriminatory and, consequently, cannot promote the development and strengthening of international security.

In view of the foregoing, the Permanent Mission of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations expresses the hope that the letter of the Secretary-General of the United Nations transmitting General Assembly resolution 2833 (XXVI) will be circulated to all States in the world without any exceptions and without any discrimination.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to circulate this letter as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Y. MALIK
Permanent Representative of the
USSR to the United Nations
