



VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from French): The first speaker is the representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Dimiter Kostov, who, as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, will introduce the report of the Commission (A/42/42).

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria): I should like on behalf of my delegation, Sir, to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. I am fully confident that with your experience and wisdom you will guide us efficiently through the weeks of challenging work that lie before us. My best wishes go also to the other officers of the Committee and members of the Secretariat who will assist you in carrying out your responsibilities.

In my capacity as current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Commission on its 1987 session (A/42/42). As at previous sessions, the report consists of four chapters and two annexes reflecting the results of the Commission's deliberations on various disarmament subjects on the agenda of its substantive session in 1987. In particular, chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations which duly reflect the progress on disarmament issues achieved by the Commission in May 1987.

The 1987 session was organized in accordance with the mandate of the Disarmament Commission as set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in keeping with the guidelines set by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh and forty-first sessions in resolutions 37/78 H and 41/86 E respectively. In those resolutions the Commission was requested to direct its attention at each

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

substantive session to specific subjects and to make every effort to achieve concrete recommendations on such subjects to the General Assembly at its subsequent session.

After arduous deliberations during its 1987 substantive session, the Commission adopted by consensus the concrete recommendations it has made to the General Assembly at its forty-second session, as noted in paragraph 38 of the report. Those recommendations were either adopted by the four working groups and the contact group, or by the informal consultation groups, which were responsible for the various substantive items of the agenda. In that connection, it should be pointed out that during its session the Commission had been requested to deal with seven substantive items, an unprecedented number. Among them, two were new items: the question of conventional disarmament and the question of verification in all its aspects, both of which were priority subjects in the field of disarmament.

As members may recall, the Commission again encountered difficulties at its 1987 session, not only in procedural matters but also in bringing about substantive results and concluding its work on some agenda items: this has indeed been a part of the Commission's heritage. The work of the Commission and its results, as recorded in the report, truly reflect the present state of affairs in international relations.

On the other hand, I wish to point out that during this year the Commission was able to reach consensus on texts in a number of important areas in the field of verification and to make substantive progress on that subject. Moreover, considerable progress was made also in connection with the question of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, and some consensus texts were adopted. It should also be noted that some progress was made on the subject of conventional disarmament, an issue of universal concern.

Dr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

But regrettably the Commission could not conclude its work on the item on the question of reduction of military budgets, despite the fact that there was only one paragraph left outstanding. I hope it can be finalized at the current session of the General Assembly. On the question of the nuclear capability of South Africa, the Commission made only nominal progress this year. I still maintain that success could have been achieved had delegations approached this question with less inflexibility and with greater reasonableness. I hope the Commission will be able to conclude its work on the subject at its next substantive session. The item regarding the arms race and nuclear disarmament is generally considered to be the most difficult on the agenda: the Commission was practically required to formulate, in miniature, a comprehensive programme of disarmament. At this juncture, it might be advisable for delegations to concentrate on certain specific issues in the nuclear field.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

The recently announced agreement in principle between the Soviet Union and the United States on the elimination of intermediate- and short-range nuclear weapons might inspire some thought in this regard, so as to promote the multilateral negotiation process on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that during this session the Commission undertook substantive consideration of the question of naval armaments and disarmament, to which a number of delegations attached importance, and achieved some progress.

Many members of the Commission have recently pointed out that the Commission should limit the number of items on its agenda and devote maximum effort to a few items for which chances of success are greater than on other items. It is probably true that some of the questions under consideration have been kept on the agenda of the Commission for too many years with no conclusion, although it is duly acknowledged that the absence of a favourable international situation has contributed to such an outcome. To achieve even a modicum of success on those subjects, it is indispensable that all members of the Commission devote effort to them with sincerity of purpose and in a spirit of co-operation and accommodation. Indeed, the improvement of the relationship between the two super-Powers and their allies, as currently demonstrated, would significantly expedite the process.

With respect to the organization of work of the Commission in 1987, we note with regret that the Commission was again not free of procedural and organizational difficulties - namely, the question of the equitable distribution of chairmanships among subsidiary bodies and the duration of the session. As members of the Commission are aware, to spend valuable time on devising ambivalent work formats to satisfy the conflicting interests of various political and regional groups amounts to a negation of our responsibilities. I hope that the experience of this year will not be repeated in the future.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

In this regard, the necessary pre-session consultations would be extremely useful. Furthermore, owing to the current financial crisis of the United Nations the meeting services the Commission previously enjoyed have been considerably curtailed, thus posing difficulties for the appropriate arrangement of meetings with full services for subsidiary bodies. A concrete recommendation has been made in its report to correct this situation.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, despite the difficulties the Commission encountered in organizing its programme of work and subsidiary bodies, the Commission was able to allocate the limited time available in a balanced manner to various subsidiary bodies, particularly in light of the difficult times for the United Nations.

To conclude, I wish to echo the sentiment expressed by members of the Commission that, as part of the overall disarmament process, the efforts undertaken in recent years to strengthen the role of the Commission and improve its capacity to deal effectively with the questions within its purview must be pursued, so that the Commission may serve as effective machinery for the promotion of negotiations on urgent and vital disarmament issues, particularly those of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war, which are closely linked to the survival of all mankind. The progress made during this year on some agenda items may pave the way to revitalizing the function assumed by the Commission.

Finally, I should not fail to express my gratitude to all delegations for their understanding and the businesslike manner in which they have conducted the work of the Commission with a view to fulfilling the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Special tribute should be paid to the members of the Bureau of the Commission - particularly the Rapporteur, Mr. Nashashibi of Jordan, and the Chairmen of the various working groups, the contact group and the consultation

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groups, namely, Ambassador Teja of India, Mr. Tinca of Romania, Mr. Fischer of Uruguay, Ambassador Engo of Cameroon, Ambassador Alatas of Indonesia, Ambassador Melhin of Denmark and Ambassador Roche of Canada - for their co-operation and assistance. On behalf of the Commission, I should also like to express thanks to the Department for Disarmament Affairs for its invaluable assistance to the Commission, particularly by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Kuo-chung Lin, as well as their colleagues who serve as secretaries of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission. Thanks are also due other members of the Secretariat.

Mr. PHAM NGAC (Viet Nam): At the outset, Sir, I wish to extend to you our warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. I am convinced that with your dedication and diplomatic skills you will facilitate the success of the work of the First Committee this year.

I should also like to extend our felicitations to the other members of the Bureau and our sincere gratitude to Ambassador Zachmann of the German Democratic Republic for his efforts in guiding the work of the First Committee during the last session of the General Assembly.

On the threshold of the third millennium, much has been said about the fateful options for the future - survive together or perish together. The sole rational joint option is interaction and co-operation. We strongly reject the opposite course, towards confrontation. We are firmly convinced that peace and co-operation should be securely built on a foundation of disarmament and security for all.

To our dissatisfaction, a complicated international situation still prevails. In their continued search for military superiority, some forces are accelerating the arms race, attempting to spread it to outer space. With the very accelerated pace of development of military technology, there is less and less time for

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

peoples, States and politicians to become aware of the real danger and the limits of mankind's possibilities for stopping the slide towards the nuclear abyss. The choice for the future must therefore be made boldly and responsibly by all States together, regardless of their social systems and levels of economic development. The time has come for us all jointly to make the greatest possible effort to rid humankind of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction.

The recent important agreement on medium and shorter range missiles achieved in principle between the Soviet Union and the United States was warmly welcomed by the whole international community. If the agreement is realized, it will be the first step in the process towards eliminating nuclear weapons since the Second World War, and the imminent summit between General Secretary Gorbachev of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and President Reagan of the United States will doubtless bring about other accords more significant in the field of strategic offensive weapons and non-extension of the arms race into outer space, as well as in many other areas which insistently call out to be included in the agenda of international dialogue, thus directly creating conditions to help avoid a nuclear catastrophe and build a world free of nuclear weapons and violence.

In spite of disquieting aspects that threaten seriously to aggravate the international situation, the current encouraging trend is gaining strength. This momentum towards peace and disarmament should be sustained. Given political will, disarmament measures can become a reality. While the Soviet Union and the United States are practically moving towards the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, a decision by other nuclear-weapon Powers to eliminate this kind of weapon would be an important contribution to the promotion of peace.

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

Experience in past decades and current new developments show that in the nuclear and space age the concept of security through nuclear deterrence is outdated and that if persisted in could only lead to an all-out conflagration and the complete extermination of life on earth.

In this connection we fully share the assessment of the Non-Aligned Movement contained in the Final Document of the eighth summit Conference, held in Harare last September, that

"The idea that world peace can be maintained through nuclear deterrence, a doctrine that lies at the root of the continuing escalation in the quantity and quality of nuclear weapons and which has, in fact, led to greater insecurity and instability in international relations than ever before, is the most dangerous myth in existence." (A/41/697, p. 24)

New thinking is rejected by conservative forces. There are all manners of dogmatists and sceptics in the same camp, for it is not easy to overcome the age-old view of the purpose of foreign policy. There is a host of problems and log-jams. But time demands a constructive answer to the question, what is to be done; it demands an alternative to power politics, to nuclear deterrence and to military doctrines based on intimidation.

Our concept of security is based on a comprehensive system providing equal security for States in a nuclear-free and secure world, without violence in international relations. We share the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that a State's peace and security cannot be ensured through the accumulation of armaments. As the Harare Appeal on Disarmament states:

"In fact, the alternative today is not between war or peace, but between life and death. This makes the struggle for peace and for the prevention of nuclear war the principal task of our time." (p. 157)

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

The philosophical and moral basis of last November's Delhi Declaration is the priority of universal human values at a time when the problem of mankind's survival has become disturbingly tangible and is dictating the vital need for new thinking in world politics.

We hold that all States, and above of all nuclear-weapon States, bear a responsibility to contribute to the common cause of the complete abolition from our planet of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The comprehensive disarmament programme put forward last January by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, which provides for the phased elimination of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction by the year 2000, constitutes an important contribution to the process of radical and comprehensive disarmament and demonstrates new political thinking and a great sense of responsibility for the destiny of mankind.

The issue of the immediate cessation and complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests is of great importance. In this connection the forty-first session of the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions, and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have taken a number of bold steps to facilitate movement along this path, including the USSR's 18-month unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions. The willingness of the Soviet Union to restore the moratorium at any time on a reciprocal basis with the United States keeps the door open for the immediate cessation of nuclear explosions. At the 1987 summer session of the Conference on Disarmament the socialist States members of the Conference submitted a document entitled "Basic provisions of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests." Viet Nam is in favour of the immediate solution of the problem of a complete nuclear-test ban and, to that end, the beginning of full-scale negotiations involving the Soviet Union and the United States.

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

In the struggle to bring about a nuclear-free and non-violent world, such regional efforts as the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones also have an important role to play. The implementation of the proposals to establish zones completely free of nuclear weapons depends on the political will and joint decision of the States concerned in the particular regions. Agreements on establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones must be in accordance with the generally recognized norms of international law and must ensure faithful observance of their truly non-nuclear status, with suitable verification. The establishment and effectiveness of nuclear-weapon-free zones also depends to a large extent on the attitude of other States, particularly the nuclear Powers, with regard to such zones.

As a consistent advocate of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam supports the agreements in force in this field: namely, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America - the Treaty of Tlatelolco - and the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone-Treaty - the Rarotonga treaty, and actively promotes the burgeoning process of transforming other regions of the globe into nuclear-weapon-free zones. In this spirit Viet Nam has reiterated its support for the idea of making South-East Asia a nuclear-free zone.

The role of the United Nations in disarmament would be substantially enhanced if General Assembly resolutions calling for material steps to turn back the arms race and establish a moral and political climate in which it is possible to embark on genuine moves to limit and reduce military capabilities were actually put into practice. The Charter requires every State Member of the United Nations to fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by it under the Charter and to give the United Nations assistance in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Because of the interdependent nature of survival, which has become a reality of our nuclear space age, all States have a vital interest in ensuring that nuclear

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

weapons are eliminated and that the arms race does not spread to outer space. Co-operation among all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, large and small, has now become a vital necessity and constitutes a guarantee of the successful solution of this very important problem. The potential of the United Nations must be used as effectively as possible to this end.

My statement would be incomplete were I to fail to refer to recent developments at this session. The deliberations of the Committee have, as usual, the benefit of the momentum of the general debate in the Assembly. This year, it has been even more significant. The Heads of State or heads of delegation addressing the Assembly have given the highest priority and devoted an important part of their statements to the agreements between the USSR and the United States on medium- and shorter-range missiles. Their approval and endorsement can hardly be considered merely symbolic, for the agreements affect not only peace and security in Europe but international peace and security as a whole. For this reason, the agreements have become a common asset, and every nation is in duty bound to ensure their implementation. In the final communiqué of their meeting held earlier this month in New York, the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement called upon the United States and the USSR to avail themselves of the present momentum and to advance towards the achievement of agreements in order to halt and reverse the nuclear-arms race. In this spirit we appreciate the information on the Soviet-United States accords provided in the statement of 12 October by Mr. Petrovsky, the deputy head of the USSR delegation. We are firmly convinced that the successful materialization of those agreements and the following accords will be a practical contribution to promoting the establishment of a nuclear-free and non-violent world.

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

I commit my delegation to the co-operative and resolute search for success in our deliberations. You, Mr. Chairman, as well as all delegations, may count on our flexibility and open-mindedness in the definition of our methods of work and in the language to be adopted. This is a clear indication of my country's firm support for the cause of world peace and disarmament.

Mr. MANINI RIOS (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all, Mr. Chairman, I wish to join in the well-deserved congratulations that have been expressed to you by many speakers.

I am not going to add anything new with regard to the position of Uruguay on disarmament. My country, a relatively small country in terms of size, population and limited resources, has never had an interest in arms. It has been interested in mandatory arbitration and the rule of law in relations among States.

Eighty years ago at the peace conference held at The Hague in 1907, Uruguay proposed that this should be the case. Seventy years will have lapsed since we included in our Constitution compulsory arbitration for international conflicts.

We are not involved in international disputes nor do we have any regional conflicts. We maintain the most peaceful, cordial relations with our two neighbours - Argentina and Brazil. With both we have embarked on an active process of integration.

But neither our location in South America nor our geographical location far removed from the major centres of tension are sufficient refuge, since there is no area of the world free from the threats posed by modern means of destruction and annihilation.

Nations, rich and poor, those with enormous arsenals and great armies and the weak ones, those located at the sensitive centres of conflict and the peripheral nations - all face the risk of annihilation; and this brings about more interest in disarmament. The greater the war potential of a State, the greater the risks, the

(Mr. Manini Rios, Uruguay)

responsibilities and the interest in disarmament. No new power or infatuation with power could free them from catastrophe.

While those who predict the future reflect on cosmic avatars which in thousands or millions of years will put an end to our galaxy, man's annihilation on earth at the hand of man is almost upon us, not since today but since yesterday.

Intelligence and science, which created our civilization in 20,000 years, have gotten out of control and could finish us in a matter of days or hours. This is not fiction. It is saying out loud what we all think and fear.

When in the fourteenth century the Plague descended on Europe, the great and powerful lords sought refuge within their castles in order to survive, mocking death in their arrogant isolation while seeking diversion in the Decameron. But today, with growing destructive forces and a new range of weapons, there is no possibility of isolation, refuge or protection. Century after century, defences have crumbled. Walled cities have only touristic value. The Maginot Line of 1940 was an example. No longer do the seas protect the islands, nor the mountain ranges protect what they surround. All distances are outdated. The threat is everywhere and risk is certain.

Only deterring one Power vis-à-vis another Power has provided a fragile shield for mankind, more or less localizing the 10 declared or undeclared wars that are devastating various parts of the world, while the United Nations has not been able to control them. Each one of these conflicts has the potential to be the spark that will make the planet explode.

Let us be realistic. Let us be pragmatic. Of this forty-second session of the General Assembly we can expect only smaller steps. The seven-league boots continue to be in the possession of the major Powers, the States which pride themselves on being members of the Atomic Club or preparing to join it.

(Mr. Manini Rios, Uruguay)

Uruguay - which is neither armed nor a producer of weapons, which has neither embarked on an atomic race nor possesses any nuclear power-plants - reiterates that it will support unreservedly any positive initiative to limit the risks of a militant weapons build-up and any tentative efforts at improving prospects, wherever they originate.

On this road, no step, however small, should be despised. All of mankind's progress has been based on small inventions and discoveries. Would that we had great leaders whose wisdom would help us to achieve more substantive goals!

The present agreement or convergence in principle between the rulers of the Soviet Union and the United States of America to explore the partial dismantling of missiles sends forth a ray of hope in this dense jungle.

Of great importance are the concrete guidelines published in Pravda on 17 September last by the Soviet leader, Mr. Gorbachev. But it is timely to recall here that a week later, in our General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union added details and spoke of

"unity of word and deed, of thought and its realization and the positions that are in fact adopted".

In the meanwhile the United Nations should persevere in preparing a political and juridical infrastructure for effective disarmament.

We agree with the previous Chairman of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Siegfried Zachmann, who said that, to that end, we must perfect and simplify our method of work. In 1986, some 72 draft resolutions were submitted, of which less than one third were adopted by consensus. The results were not in keeping with our good intentions or efforts.

(Mr. Manini Rios, Uruguay)

Let us make each step sure. Let us take one step at a time. Let us not forget the counsel given by Don Quijote de la Mancha to his valet, Sancho Panza, in entrusting him with the government of the Barataria Island: "There are few pragmatic guidelines, Sancho, but they must be enforced."

Mr. ISLAM (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, it is deeply gratifying to me, and to my delegation, that a person of your eminence should be presiding over our Committee. I have no doubt that, with your prodigious qualities of head, heart and intellect, you will succeed in guiding our deliberations to fruitful results. May I offer you and the other officers of the Committee our warm felicitations. I assure you that within our modest capabilities my delegation will assist you in the performance of your onerous responsibilities in every possible way.

In an area where dark clouds of despair have always marked the horizon, the perceptible silver lining of optimism gladdens our heart. I refer to the sense of growing understanding between the major global protagonists on certain specific issues pertaining to arms control negotiations. We are happy at the prospect of an early agreement eliminating medium- and short-range weapons. We hope that the spirit that this will generate will propel the parties concerned towards deeper cuts in strategic weaponry.

Such rays of hope appear to have penetrated and illumined the multilateral forums as well. The success of the Stockholm Conference on disarmament in Europe is indeed heartening. It is our sincere expectation that this will be followed by efforts at conventional arms reduction and disarmament in Europe. Europe in this respect has truly provided an example worthy of emulation. The Geneva Conference on Disarmament is edging towards an understanding on the convention banning chemical weapons. We welcome this, as we welcome unilateral decisions and gestures of States designed to further our goal of arms reduction. After all, the 23 nuclear explosions conducted last year were the lowest in number since 1961. We are optimistic about the results of the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, scheduled for next year, to which my delegation will contribute as best we can. Perhaps we are not inexorably hurtling towards

(Mr. Islam, Bangladesh)

mutual annihilation; perhaps our destiny is not inevitably leading towards Armageddon.

Such confidence, however, must not be translated into complacency. Let us not forget that last year 36 wars and armed conflicts were being waged, involving 5 million combatants from as many as 41 nations and resulting in the death of 3 million to 4 million people and suffering for many more.

Let us not forget that significant nuclear and conventional modernization programmes are under way, and thousands of new warheads will be added to the nuclear arsenals of nations over the next few years.

Let us also not forget that even a single nuclear test explosion, however confined, would incrementally add to the calamitous pollution of the air we breathe.

And let us not forget that a painful fratricidal war is even now being relentlessly waged in one of the most sensitive areas of our planet, sparks from which might yet set the globe aflame.

Let us, therefore, reflect, assess and deliberate soberly as to how rationality can guide our conduct in the years ahead, particularly in a sphere in which chances that can be taken are few and results of risks are horrendous.

It is no secret that my country, Bangladesh, has many constraints. It is small in size, large in population and inadequate in resources. Our development efforts, therefore, engage all our energies. So it is not surprising that we should want an ambience of peace, both in the region and the globe, so that we can devote ourselves totally to the solution of our manifold problems - hence our total commitment to the Charter and unequivocal dedication to the cause of peace, though not at the sacrifice of principles. All our positions on disarmament issues are influenced by this criterion.

(Mr. Islam, Bangladesh)

It is true that our world is, as it always has been, far from ideal. There is no need, however, to live always on the brink of a precipice, constantly haunted by the fear of a slip and a plunge into oblivion. We shall live in such fear if we hold our civilization hostage to the infallibility of a single doctrine: deterrence. There are, of course, many who hold that it has precluded a global conflict over the last four decades. Others argue that deterrence can be stable in the 'short run, but not in the long run. If it were stable in the long run, it would cease to deter in the short run, for if there were no probability of the use of nuclear weapons in the long run they would not deter anybody in the short run. I do not wish to enter into a theoretical discussion on the subject. All that I wish to stress is that deterrence is no substitute for disarmament.

No one is so naive as to believe that disarmament can be so easily achieved. Our age is remarkable for the rapidity of the spread, rather than the curtailment, of destructive weaponry. However, there is a happy development in the burgeoning belief that the acquisition of nuclear weapons does not necessarily enhance security. The proliferation of this idea needs to be encouraged, and if this can be achieved, non-proliferation will become a corollary.

If States are to be encouraged to forsake nuclear weapons, they must be provided with adequate security against the use or the threat of the use of such weapons against them by those that possess them. My own country is a signatory of the non-proliferation Treaty. But how can recalcitrants be persuaded to accede to the Treaty if bigger Powers, while harping on the need for horizontal proliferation, continue relentlessly in their pursuit of vertical proliferation, or if nuclear Powers systematically continue to ignore article VI of the Treaty, under which they are committed to pursue arms reduction?

(Mr. Islam, Bangladesh)

To that end, a major and necessary requirement is a comprehensive test-ban treaty. It would be a major deterrent to the development and qualitative improvement in nuclear weapons, and would send clear, positive signals regarding the political will of the major Powers. May I point out that in the Dhaka Declaration of South Asian Heads of Government in December 1985, the leaders called upon the nuclear-weapon States for urgent negotiations for such a treaty leading to the complete cessation of testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

While it is indeed true that nuclear weapons pose the gravest threat to world peace, as has been so clearly enunciated in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, it is also a fact that the current miseries of war-torn peoples derive from conventional conflicts.

Bangladesh believes that the maintenance of conventional capabilities in excess of the legitimate security needs of a State can have destabilizing ramifications for the region and the world. States must not indulge in the acquisition of arms beyond perceived needs. This heightens suspicion and encourages the arms race.

Where such excess capabilities exist, there must be reductions. Reductions must of course be balanced and equitable so as not to affect adversely the security requirements of any State, and so that stability is enhanced at lower military levels. The principal aim of disarmament efforts is, after all, to increase and not to diminish security needs. My delegation would also urge due recognition of the need for appropriate weighting in additional capabilities for weaker States.

Verification plays an undeniably important role in all of this. Bangladesh wishes to place on record its deep appreciation to Canada for its interest in, and contribution to, this particular field. There is need to draft appropriate universal and non-discriminatory provisions for this purpose. The United Nations system can and should play a relevant, effective and upgraded role. There should

(Mr. Islam, Bangladesh)

also be adequate transparency and exchange of data or information so as to generate an atmosphere of peace. Trust is the greatest deterrent to conflict.

My delegation firmly believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of various regions constitutes a very important positive measure. In this respect, the States of Latin America that forged the Treaty of Tlatelolco deserve our praise. We welcome the recent entering into force of the Treaty of Rarotonga in the South Pacific. We wish to see the creation of concentric circles of such zones, together with zones of peace, in every region of the world until such time as they encompass the entire globe.

In our own area, we are engaged in the task of implementing the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. As a member of the Ad Hoc Committee established for the purpose, Bangladesh will work towards convening the proposed Conference in Colombo next year. Should the preparatory work not be completed in time, we urge that the Conference be convened at a date not later than 1990. I express my delegation's appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for offering Colombo as the venue for the preparatory session next year.

Recently, the United Nations Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development produced a Final Document. But that is not its most significant product. It is the idea giving currency to the concept that will henceforth continue to be debated again and again by those who matter and even by those who do not. Whatever philosophical position we may take on this issue, I believe that it has been unequivocally demonstrated that reduced military spending can contribute significantly to development.

If nations must wage war, let it be on hunger and disease. If weapons kill many, poverty kills many more.

(Mr. Islam, Bangladesh)

This Committee provides a forum where all States, big and small, can air their views. And so they shall. My delegation will endeavour to participate, as effectively as we can, as we progress in our deliberations. The goal we seek is not an easy one to achieve.

The Roman Senator, Cicero, summoning up his audience to action in a particular enterprise said:

"If I told you that the way was not rough nor steep, nor beset with dangers and traps, I should deceive you."

Our path is similarly hazardous. Yet it must be trod, and the journey must be undertaken. Let reason and caution guide us on our way.

Mr. CHATURVEDI (India): It gives me great pleasure to felicitate you, Sir, on your assumption of the office of Chairman of the First Committee of the forty-second session of the General Assembly. Your diplomatic skills and great experience will, I am sure, bring new insights into our deliberations. We look forward to your stewardship of our work and assure you of the full co-operation of the Indian delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities. I should like to avail myself of this occasion to congratulate all the other members of the Bureau of the First Committee on their election and also to express our appreciation for the competent manner in which Mr. Zachmann of the German Democratic Republic guided the work of our Committee last year.

The First Committee is meeting at a very significant moment in the sphere of disarmament negotiations. Last month we concluded the first International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development ever held. A certain amount of scepticism had been expressed about the possible results of such

(Mr. Chaturvedi, India)

a Conference; in fact, even about its validity. The positive results are clear proof that such doubts were unwarranted. The Final Document adopted by consensus states:

"Disarmament and development are two of the most urgent challenges facing the world today. They constitute priority concerns of the international community in which all nations - developed and developing, big and small, nuclear and non-nuclear - have a common and equal stake. Disarmament and development are two pillars on which enduring international peace and security can be built." (A/CONF.130/39, p. 14)

(Mr. Chaturvedi, India)

The discussions, conducted at a high political level, deepened our understanding of this relationship and its bearing on human welfare. The triangular relationship between security, disarmament and development was explored, leading to a convergence of views that security can no longer be visualized in purely military terms. In fact, the non-military threats to security have assumed increased significance in today's interdependent world. The action programme emphasizes the need to strengthen the central role of the United Nations in this field and lists a number of activities to be undertaken.

This reaffirmation gives us a sense of optimism with which to approach the forthcoming third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. A decade has passed since the first such special session was held in 1978, but the results of our efforts since have fallen short of our expectations. The forthcoming third special session will provide us with a collective opportunity once again to impart the necessary political impetus to multilateral efforts towards disarmament. The First Committee therefore bears a heavy responsibility this year and our deliberations assume special importance.

Other positive trends are also in evidence. In the bilateral framework, the recent understanding between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an encouraging sign. The conclusion of an agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces in the near future would be a step in the right direction. Its implementation would be the first nuclear disarmament measure requiring the actual scrapping of a certain class of nuclear weapons. It would indeed be an accomplishment if it were to open the way to further and much larger reductions in nuclear weaponry. We see it as a positive first step in the direction of ridding the world of the menace of nuclear weapons. Given the

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political will, nuclear disarmament does not pose an insurmountable obstacle in terms of either security doctrines or practical difficulties, such as verification. The limited global double zero must lead to a genuine, comprehensive global zero.

On the multilateral side, the progress made at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament in negotiations towards developing a chemical weapons convention deserves mention. A number of complex issues which had seemed rather intractable a couple of years ago now seem much closer to resolution.

These are but small steps, but I draw attention to them in the hope that our work in the First Committee can take advantage of its wider representation to build upon them. Our agenda gives us the scope and symbolizes our commitment to the issues of disarmament.

In this context, my delegation attaches the highest priority to the prevention of nuclear war, and the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons are postulated by some as instruments to maintain peace. As far as we know, no scientist or strategist has been able to distinguish between a nuclear weapon intended for use as a deterrent and one for offensive use. The Final Document adopted by consensus at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament states unequivocally:

"Removing the threat of a world war - a nuclear war - is the most acute and urgent task of the present day." (S-10/2, para.18)

In this context, it urges all States, especially nuclear-weapon States, to consider measures designed to secure the avoidance of the use of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear war through international agreement, thereby ensuring that the survival of mankind is not endangered.

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One such measure could be a ban on the use of these weapons through specific legal obligations assumed by all nuclear-weapon Powers. This is what India proposed at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and this is what the General Assembly has recommended since, by an increasing majority, year after year.

While the most effective guarantee against nuclear war is nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the immediate impact of a non-use convention cannot be underestimated. It would remove not only the threat of nuclear holocaust that looms over our planet but the legitimacy attributed to nuclear weapons as a currency of power. The idea that world peace can be maintained through nuclear deterrence - a doctrine that lies at the root of the continuing escalation in the quantity and quality of nuclear weapons and has in fact led to greater insecurity and instability than ever before in international relations - is a dangerous myth.

It was this understanding which led the Conference on Disarmament to establish the subject "Prevention of nuclear war" as a separate item on its agenda almost five years ago. However, it is a matter of considerable regret that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to address the subject with the seriousness that it merits. It has not found it possible to establish an ad hoc committee even to consider, let alone negotiate, various measures which could lead us to an agreement on the prevention of nuclear war. It is to be hoped that the political commitment expressed at the highest level in November 1985 by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" (A/40/1070, p. 3) can be translated into concrete disarmament measures. Only the commencement of such an exercise will highlight the fundamental discord between the perceptions reflected in this joint commitment and the doctrine of nuclear deterrence which forms the basis of the continuing arms race.

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Closely linked to this issue is the appeal to the nuclear-weapon States to apply an immediate freeze to the production of these weapons and intended fissile material. Such proposals have already received the widest endorsement by Governments and people alike. The arguments advanced by some nuclear-weapon States and their allies that such a freeze would perpetuate existing imbalances are unacceptable. The achievement of parity in such circumstances becomes a mere game of numbers and ceases to have any practical relevance when each side possesses such substantial over-kill capacities.

The leaders of Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania, in the six-nation initiative, have repeatedly called upon the nuclear-weapon States to halt all testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, to be followed by substantial reductions in their nuclear forces.

At the eighth non-aligned summit, held in Harare last year, the leaders of the non-aligned countries emphasized the increasing risk of nuclear war as a result of the continuing escalation of the arms race, especially in the nuclear field. They stated:

"the greatest peril facing the world is the threat to the survival of humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. Since annihilation needs to happen only once, removing the threat of nuclear catastrophe is not one issue among many, but the most acute and urgent task of the present day." (A/41/697, pp. 23, 24)

Another issue very closely related to the qualitative aspects of the nuclear arms race is the nuclear-weapon-test ban. For more than three decades the nuclear-weapon States have ignored the repeated appeals of the world community to end nuclear-weapon testing and thus bring to an end the ongoing process of development and refinement of yet more lethal weapons.

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For a long time the inadequacy of verification was put forward as a justification for not undertaking such a commitment, but this can no longer be held to be true. Developments in seismic monitoring, the offer made by the leaders of the six-nation initiative to verify a moratorium, the results of the deliberations of the Group of Scientific Experts of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the possibility of the establishment of an international seismic network clearly indicate that verification can no longer be used as a pretext to delay the commencement of negotiations on a nuclear-test-ban treaty.

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The maintenance of confidence in stockpile reliability is also cited as a reason for continued testing. Such physical inspection, as part of a systematic and detailed surveillance programme, is the only way, according to some, to ensure stockpile reliability. Once again, scientific evidence indicates that such random testing would provide very little useful information. This is not to deny that there are technical issues associated with such a treaty, but we must emphasize that the basic question is not technical, but political. Given political will, the negotiations in an ad hoc committee in Geneva could help us to move closer to what is possibly the earliest appeal in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, which was first voiced by scientists, some of which had even worked on the Manhattan Project.

In recent years one of the central objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the six-nation initiative and a major concern of the United Nations has been the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The recent developments with regard to research into proposed weapon systems to be located or aimed at targets in outer space give cause for concern, as they are likely further to exacerbate the already precarious conditions created by the arms race on earth. What is more, pursuit of them will serve to unravel such existing arms-control treaties as the anti-ballistic missile Treaty and the outer-space Treaty. For an increasing number of developing countries, satellites provide access to a technology that can have immense benefits for economic development, especially in areas like remote sensing, meteorology and communications. The development of anti-satellite weapons is therefore a matter of great concern. That concern was suitably reflected in the Mexico Declaration issued by the leaders of the six-nation initiative, which states:

"It is particularly urgent to halt the development of anti-satellite weapons, which would threaten the peaceful space activities of many nations. We urge the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union to agree on a halt to

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further tests of anti-satellite weapons, in order to facilitate the conclusion of an international treaty on their prohibition." (A/41/518, p. 5)

To be comprehensive and effective such a treaty must not only ban testing, development and deployment of all anti-satellite weapons but also eliminate existing ones. The related sensitive issues of verification are complex enough today. Once such weapons are deployed, the problem will become even more difficult. Last year, in resolution 41/53, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 154 countries, the General Assembly requested the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee with a view to undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in outer space. The report of the Conference on Disarmament indicates that the Ad Hoc Committee established for this item has advanced and developed further in its work and recognizes the inadequacy of the existing legal régime applicable to outer space. It is to be hoped that following such recognition it would be possible to move forward and undertake specific and concrete measures which would prevent the extension of the arms race into outer space.

Like most resources at our disposal, time too is in short supply. We can hardly afford the luxury of devoting the limited time available to the Committee to less important matters and to partial measures of disarmament when the work on the most crucial issues of disarmament remains paralysed. Whole good is not the enemy of better, a choice does have to be made when both are competing for scarce time. We must underline our priorities. Issues such as expenditures by developing countries on conventional weapons, and nuclear-weapon-free zones, have their place for discussion but must not divert our attention from the central issue - nuclear disarmament.

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A number of independent findings by scientists have shown that a nuclear war fought on even a minimum scale will lead to a nuclear winter. Faced with such a scenario, declaring an area a nuclear-weapon-free zone is not necessarily the best guarantee that it will remain unaffected. So long as the nuclear-weapon Powers insist on ensuring their security by using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, in complete disregard of the security of non-nuclear-weapon States, no place on earth is safe, regardless of whether or not it has been declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The year 1986 was celebrated as the International Year of Peace. At its conclusion, the Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, said:

"Humanity stands today at a crossroad. One road, mapped in the Charter of the United Nations, can lead to peace through multilateral co-operation in resolving the problems of our interdependent world. The other road, well travelled throughout history, is marked by self-interest, by huge stockpiles of arms and by limited vision. In a nuclear world, this path can lead to self-destruction, while the first can lead safely to a new century that will be a century of progress and peace for all the world."

We would like to believe that on the evolutionary scale we have wrested from nature a certain control over our own destiny and, with that, freedom of choice. The issue is this: have we also similarly developed control over our own minds to enable us to make the rational choice? What is needed is a new way of thinking that must encompass a realization that nuclear weapons cannot lead to security, that no country can be secure if its potential adversaries are insecure, that security must be common, shared and indivisible. It is to be hoped that this new thinking lies behind the forthcoming agreement on intermediate-range nuclear

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forces, for only then can it generate the momentum so necessary to lead us to our commo. accepted goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): I should like to congratulate the Chairman on his election to his demanding office; my felicitations are also sincerely offered to the other officers of the Committee on their election to their various posts. I trust that under his chairmanship the Committee will effectively address the issues before it. I should also like to use this opportunity to extend to the former Chairman, Ambassador Zachman of the German Democratic Republic, appreciation for a job well done last year.

I wish, if I may, since this is the first time I have spoken in the Committee since our Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Akashi, took office, to pay a personal warm tribute to him for now being at the helm of the Department for Disarmament Affairs. I have had occasion to work with Mr. Akashi and his team of stalwart and educated staff members, and I have no doubt that we are in very capable hands.

The United Nations has envisaged disarmament and the regulation of armaments as among the key elements in the establishment of the international security system. Its first resolution, of 24 January 1946, was, it will be recalled, aimed at the elimination of the atomic weapon, the first explosion of which occurred barely two days after the signing of the Charter, as well as any other weapons of mass destruction which might be developed.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

Those hopes and aspirations, however, have not been realized. Four decades after the first explosion the world has not only witnessed countless nuclear explosions of greater destructive capacity than the explosion of 1946 but has also had to put up with a growing number of Member States which possess either the weapon or the potential for manufacturing it. It would seem, in the circumstances, that the bitter experience of the Second World War, with its human carnage and the vast physical destruction it caused, has suddenly been forgotten. Thus, the world continues to move perilously on a course of self-destruction, towards conflicts whose consequences could undoubtedly go beyond past experience and launch mankind on its final road to certain extinction.

In its search for a solution the United Nations has endeavoured over the years to address the problem through several approaches. While its ultimate goal has remained general and complete disarmament, it has moved from partial disarmament measures to the proclamation of disarmament decades, from the holding of special sessions to the implementation of regional disarmament measures, from the contemplation of confidence-building measures to the holding of an International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development. These various efforts to evolve an effective system for dealing with disarmament and its related issues show the international community's strong faith in the need for new attitudes and policies which alone can bring new life to the long-sterile disarmament scene.

In spite of the recent reports indicating a serious commitment on the part of nuclear Powers to take positive steps in this direction, the fact remains that the spectre of total nuclear annihilation continues to haunt humanity. It is therefore our shared responsibility to direct all our efforts to laying a solid basis for international co-operation which would eliminate the awesome threat that the arms race poses to humanity.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

In this regard, paragraph 45 of the Final Document of the tenth special session provides useful guidelines by designating priority disarmament issues which should be addressed. The General Assembly, in turn, has elaborated on these issues with specific recommendations, which have been transmitted to the Conference on Disarmament. Nine years after the adoption of these guidelines, however, negotiations over the priority issues continue to grind very slowly.

The reconstituted Conference on Disarmament is almost paralysed by its inability to devise a framework for consideration of these priority issues. In spite of concessions by the Group of 21, the Conference has been bogged down by ideological and domestic political considerations. Its report (A/42/27) now before this Committee has, as in the case of past reports, failed to show progress in significant areas. Fundamental differences remain on several key issues. Perhaps nowhere has this been more clearly demonstrated than in the paragraphs dealing with the issue of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

Ghana has consistently supported General Assembly resolutions on the issue of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We strongly believe that the conclusion of such a treaty should be among the highest priorities of the United Nations. We believe also that "a comprehensive test-ban treaty is the litmus test of real willingness to pursue nuclear disarmament". We therefore recall with regret that the historic opportunity offered by the Soviet unilateral moratorium on testing was allowed to slip away. It is even more regrettable that the opportunity was wasted in view of the offer of the Soviet authorities to submit the sincerity of their intentions to verification.

Ghana reaffirms support for resolution 41/64 A, of 3 December 1986, in particular the establishment within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee with a specific mandate to commence negotiations.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is another area of concern to my Government. Ghana is a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We acceded to the Treaty, which now has a significant number of signatories, in the hope that it would serve as a check on Member States which might wish to join the nuclear club. Regrettably, our expectations have proved vain. Now a significant number of countries either possess the bomb or have the potential for manufacturing it. Even more regrettable is our disillusionment over the failure of the nuclear-weapon States to adhere faithfully to the commitments undertaken under article VI of the Treaty, in absolute betrayal of the trust reposed in them by the non-nuclear States parties to the NPT.

About two decades ago to this day the Heads of State of Africa, in their wisdom, decided to keep the continent of Africa free from nuclear weapons. That decision reflected a commitment to the objectives of non-proliferation as enshrined in the NPT and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a means of fostering co-operation on other wider regional issues.

The apartheid South African régime, however, has consistently frustrated the African initiative by its clandestine nuclear programme and persistent refusal to sign the NPT. It was therefore a surprise that a move by African delegations, including my own, at last September's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna to deny the apartheid régime access to IAEA facilities was thwarted by friends of the racist régime.

South Africa's continued nuclear activities and the problems with regard to the implementation of the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa are already well known. The matter has been raised in this Committee and other United Nations forums on countless occasions. Some delegations, for one reason or another, have not gone beyond paying lip-service in what should have been a matter of universal

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concern. The fact is that South Africa sees its nuclear capabilities as an instrument for perpetuating apartheid and for destabilizing the front-line States. Its nuclear capability and the provision of sophisticated weapons are the major factors in the racist régime's continued frustration of the legitimate aspirations of the Namibian people to self-determination and national independence. In view of its record of vacillation and deceit, one wonders whether the reported announcement that the South African Government will sign the NPT could not be yet another ruse intended to take the international community for a big ride

It is our hope that the friends of South Africa and those delegations which espouse the cause of the apartheid régime will prevail on that country to sign the Treaty, as it has promised to do.

Universal accession to the Treaty would allay the fears of non-nuclear States, in particular small countries such as my own, and help promote the climate for strengthening international peace and security.

This brings me to the question of the cessation of the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament. Ghana believes that a comprehensive treaty which would ban for ever the production, development, stockpiling and use of such weapons would have a tremendous impact on the world scene and augur well for the future of mankind. No effort, therefore, should be spared to attain this objective.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

In this regard, we welcome the recent reports that the United States of America and the Soviet Union have agreed in principle to conclude a treaty banning United States and Soviet land-based shorter- and medium-range missiles. As the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Dr. Obed Asamoah, said in his statement in the General Assembly on 24 September this year it

"is a great leap forward on the road to the achievement of one of the fundamental objectives of the United Nations - that is, a world without war". (A/42/PV.10, p. 93)

The whole world is waiting to see how the two countries will utilize this historic opportunity after Reykjavik. Perhaps the climate for meaningful negotiations has never been better. Much of the suspicion and mistrust which in the past have impeded meaningful negotiations would seem to have been dispelled by the recent efforts to establish effective dialogue and communication between the two countries. The opening of the Krasnoyarsk radar facilities for inspection by a United States Congressional delegation and other gestures of sincerity and good will in our view provide the appropriate climate for meaningful negotiations.

These two countries together possess about 95 per cent of the world's most devastating weapons. The world therefore has an intrinsic interest in the ongoing developments. It is our hope that the agreement will open up further East-West negotiations and give an impetus to the disarmament process.

No reason for stockpiling nuclear weapons - whether deterrence or the so-called defensive doctrine - can in any way diminish their awesome threat to humanity. The argument that deterrence provides stability is flawed, since it does not take into consideration the inescapable tension and deep mistrust entailed by the concept of deterrence. We believe the surest way to avert the danger of nuclear war lies in the elimination of nuclear weapons. Until nuclear disarmament

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is achieved, all should observe their Charter obligations - in particular, the obligation to refrain from the threat and use of force and to resort to peaceful settlement of disputes.

We all have a stake in world peace. This implies that we should all co-operate in reversing the present unhappy trend in international relations. In a world where massive expenditure, estimated to reach the trillion-dollar level by the turn of the century, is incurred on arms, while millions of mankind lack shelter and the basic necessities of life, disarmament and development undoubtedly are the two major challenges facing the world today.

That was why the Government of Ghana welcomed the convening of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, held from 24 August to 11 September this year here at the United Nations. The conclusions of that Conference might not have satisfied the concerns of every delegation. The fact that we were able to adopt a consensus document, however, should be a source of encouragement. We believe the Committee should take up where the Conference left off to keep up the momentum. The Ghana delegation will co-operate with any delegation or group of delegations in this regard.

The arms trade in conventional weapons deserves no less attention. In his report on the work of the United Nations submitted to the General Assembly at its current session, the Secretary-General placed the problem of conventional weapons in its proper perspective, when he said:

"The acquisition of large quantities of sophisticated arms by developing countries places a severe strain on badly needed resources while adding nothing to the strength of their economies. Furthermore, it adds to external debt and creates a secondary demand for imports that increases their dependence." (A/42/1, p. 9)

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

Most conflicts since the Second World War have been centred in the developing countries. Both past and present conflicts have been or are being fought with conventional weapons. The ongoing Iran-Iraq war is an excellent example of the disaster that conventional weapons can cause and the urgent need to move away from such weapons. This places particular importance on conventional disarmament.

The Final Document of the tenth special session provided adequate procedures, in paragraphs 81 to 85, for addressing the issue. We hope that urgent attention will continue to be given to this area of the arms race, without prejudice to the scale of priorities established in that Document. It goes without saying that we all have a responsibility to see that the root causes of the conflicts in the developing countries are eliminated. This implies an obligation to refrain from all acts of subversion and the fomenting of local conflicts which can be exploited by third parties.

There is one particular bright spot - the negotiations on a chemical-weapons ban - which deserves mention. There is a distinct possibility that in the not too distant future we may see an agreement banning such weapons.

We note and welcome the commendable progress being made in the Conference on Disarmament on the draft treaty. We applaud those countries that have organized workshops and offered facilities with a view to overcoming technical and political sensitivities that might stand in the way of the speedy conclusion of a draft treaty. For a credible treaty the current negotiations should, among other things, seek to produce a document that would be an improvement on the 1925 Geneva Convention; in particular, it should close all loopholes in that Convention, in the light of the extensive use of the banned weapons in current conflicts. The negotiations should also be directed towards the search for adequate safeguards against private firms and individuals that may wish to take advantage of loopholes

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in their national legislations to overcome the prohibitions and restrictions that may be enshrined in the treaty.

As in the past, the Disarmament Commission has again submitted a report on uncompleted work after its three-week meeting last spring. Apart from the little progress made on the items relating to the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, no significant progress was registered with respect to the other six items which the Commission examined. That was not unexpected, given the controversial nature of some of the agenda items. Nevertheless, and without questioning the motives of any partner, my delegation is amazed that, for example, some delegations would go to the extent that they have in the past to protect the racist South African régime in its practice of the evil system of apartheid. Meaningful progress demands a renewed approach, involving radical revision of present hardened attitudes. Any attempt to find an easy way out by calling for the deletion of any of the items on the ground that the Commission has exhausted its resources would amount to an abdication of responsibility and a lack of faith in the human spirit. Ghana would oppose any such move.

The question of enhancing the effectiveness of this Committee's working methods has engaged the attention of several delegations. We support the proposal that present and past Chairmen should exchange views on the matter. The clustering of resolutions has proved a valuable method of reducing the number of draft resolutions. It has also helped avoid duplication of drafts and final texts which should be transmitted to the Geneva Conference, already overburdened with work. To complement these efforts, delegations should refrain from introducing drafts merely because they wish their names to be associated with one or other issue to score a propaganda point.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

In our view, the objective should be the introduction of initiatives that would have a significant impact on the disarmament process. Furthermore, we should avoid long, drawn-out debates, as at the 1986 session, on issues that take up the time and resources of the Committee merely to satisfy ideological differences or embarrass a particular group of delegations. That is not to imply that we wish to deny the sovereign right of delegations wishing to express their Government's viewpoint. The truth is that what this Committee requires at this crucial moment is not an exponential growth in the number of draft resolutions but rather selective practical initiatives that will advance its work.

It goes without saying also that small delegations which in the past have made themselves willing sponsors of draft resolutions should reappraise their attitudes. Uncommitted small delegations could allocate the resources available to them in such a way as to ensure that the draft resolutions that leave this Committee are balanced and objective, with the necessary impact on United Nations efforts in the sphere of disarmament and arms control. What we, as small delegations, should remember is that weapons, whether Pershing IIs or SS-20s, are all instruments of destruction and not museum pieces. Ideological differences may give rise to conflicts, but weapons kill with the same cruelty whether they are from the East or from the West. Let us therefore be guided by objectivity and avoid being swayed by a particular delegation or group of delegations in determining our support for draft resolutions.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm Ghana's commitment to peace. Since joining this Organization we have worked tirelessly for the attainment of that objective. We shall therefore continue to associate ourselves courageously and single-mindedly with international efforts to promote conditions appropriate for world peace.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.