



VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 27TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GOLOB (Yugoslavia)

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DISARMAMENT ITEMS

AGENDA ITEMS 39 TO 56, 128 AND 135 (continued)

A draft resolution was introduced by:

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria) - A/C.1/36/L.1

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.1/36/PV.27
6 November 1981

ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 39 to 56, 128 and 135 (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: This morning the Committee will begin consideration of the draft resolutions relating to disarmament.

Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria): Mr. Chairman, my delegation has had the opportunity during the course of the general debates in this Committee to extend to you its courtesies. But, since this is the first time I am taking the floor, I should like to add my personal greetings and best wishes to you and to the other officers of the Committee for a successful tenure.

In introducing the very first draft resolution of the Committee during its current session (A/C.1/36/L.1) on behalf of the delegations of Bahamas, Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Venezuela and Yugoslavia as sponsors, I take advantage of the opportunity to express satisfaction at the commendable manner in which the Secretary-General has continued to organize the United Nations programme of fellowships on disarmament in accordance with the guidelines approved by the General Assembly in resolution 33/71 E of 14 December 1978. The sponsors would also like me to extend commendation to the United Nations Centre for Disarmament, and particularly to its Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Martenson, for the enthusiasm and efficient manner in which the programme has been conducted.

Conceived within the framework of efforts designed to mobilize public opinion in favour of disarmament through such means as disarmament education, seminars and training, the programmes of fellowship on disarmament, as the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/606) shows, is testimony that the programme continues to justify the hopes of the General Assembly which launched it in 1978, and enjoys the patronage of an ever-increasing geographical spread of countries within the United Nations membership. A cursory look at the composition of the Fellows for the 1981 programme bears this out.

(Mr. Ayewah, Nigeria)

The sponsors of the draft resolution would also like to call attention to the useful contribution made to the 1981 programme by the Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary and Sweden which extended invitations to the Fellows to visit their respective countries to become acquainted with aspects of disarmament-related activities. We express our sincere gratitude to those three countries and hope that other countries will follow their example in the coming years.

The format of the draft resolution on the United Nations programme of fellowships on disarmament, which you now have before you, is divided into two parts, namely, a preambular part and an operative part.

The preambular part recalls the decision of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament to establish a United Nations programme of fellowships on disarmament, in order to encourage expertise in the field of disarmament, particularly among the developing countries.

We express satisfaction that Governments, particularly those of developing countries, have continued to show interest in the programme, a further reason for the need to continue the programme.

That leads on to the operative part in which we invite the General Assembly to decide to continue the programme of fellowships in 1982.

We take cognizance of the Secretary-General's commendable efforts in the conduct of the programme so far, and express appreciation to those Member States that invited the Fellows to their capitals in 1981 to study selected activities in the field of disarmament.

Having regard to the fact that the General Assembly has decided to hold the second special session on disarmament in 1982, we have thought it useful to ask the Secretary-General to provide that special session with an assessment of the programme of fellowships since its inception in 1979, with a view to assuring that the purpose of its creation continues to be met along the guidelines established for it by the General Assembly.

As presented, we believe the draft resolution raises no difficulties and should readily commend itself for adoption by Member States.

Mr. FEIN (Netherlands): In my first statement in the general debate, on 30 October, I discussed certain nuclear matters, but I also stated that I would keep for another day more detailed consideration of an agenda item proposed by the Soviet Union and related to the non-first-use of nuclear weapons. In my statement today I shall do just that: I shall attempt to analyse the various aspects of the Soviet proposal, entitled "Prevention of nuclear catastrophe: declaration of the General Assembly". I shall do so in the light of several other more or less related statements of the Soviet Union over the past several years.

In doing so, it might be useful to place on record at the outset that my own Government, the Netherlands Government, actively pursues a policy aimed at a reduction of the role of nuclear weapons. Within this context my Government is inclined to support all those proposals which aim at equal, balanced and verifiable disarmament results. Whether or not the Soviet proposal under discussion can qualify for this category we shall see.

In the first place, I wish to raise a question to the Soviet delegation regarding the precise nature of the Soviet proposal. It is not clear to us whether only a declaratory resolution containing a moral obligation is sought or whether this proposal implies that the Soviet Union for its part is prepared to pledge never to be the first, at any time and in any conditions, to use nuclear weapons. If a moral, declaratory statement only is envisaged and not the second possibility - that is, a firm no-use pledge - then we may wonder what the practical value might be of such a resolution. Where does it leave us and how does the Soviet Union envisage that such a resolution would have any real impact on global security? We would do well to remember that the adoption of resolutions is not a goal in itself. Our task is rather to take concrete steps in order to make the world a safe place to live in.

If, however, the Soviet proposal is related to the other possibility I mentioned just now, if it is in fact intended to imply that the Soviet Union is prepared to issue an unequivocal, unconditional non-first-use statement, then I have some further observations to make. I am then obliged to remark that the Soviet Union has, in the course of time, made quite a few different proposals on the use of nuclear weapons and that we have some difficulty in reconciling one with the other; they seem to be somewhat divergent.

(Mr. Fein, Netherlands)

In 1961, for instance, the Soviet Union voted in favour of a controversial resolution -- resolution 1653 (XVI) -- in which the use of nuclear weapons was condemned.

Although at first glance there would seem to be a fundamental difference between non-use and non-first-use, I should like to recall what the representative of the Soviet Union said when, in 1967, he tabled resolution 2289 (XXII) on "The conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons". He said then that when such a non-use convention was concluded the mutual deterrence would nevertheless be maintained because the possibility of retaliation would not be abolished until general and complete disarmament had been achieved. This statement would clearly imply that every non-use declaration is, in the view of the Soviet Union, in fact only a non-first-use declaration. We should keep this in mind.

Now from what I have said and quoted so far the impression might be gained that the Soviet Union is in any case in favour of a non-first-use commitment with regard to nuclear weapons, and that would be an interesting observation. As a matter of fact, a non-first-use draft treaty was proposed by the Warsaw Treaty Organization in 1976 in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. But, unfortunately, things are not all that simple. How, for instance, can a presumed willingness of the Soviet Union to renounce the first-use option be reconciled with the Soviet proposal, made in 1972, concerning the "non-use of force in international relations and permanent prohibition of the use of such weapons"? That is obviously not the same thing and it is therefore not entirely surprising that one delegation came to the conclusion at that time that the proposal would in fact allow for the first use of nuclear weapons as soon as a State had violated the first part of that rule, that is, the non-use of force part.

Whether that interpretation was justified or not I dare not say, but I am reminded in this respect of yet another proposal of the Soviet Union which does not help to clarify its real intentions either. This proposal was launched in the late 1970s under the title "No first use of nuclear or conventional weapons". This proposal was also made in the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Such a proposal would seem to amount to a kind of non-aggression pact and it is certainly not a non-first-use of nuclear weapons proposal.

(Mr. Fein, Netherlands)

In this connexion it is interesting and very relevant to note that only last year the representative of the Soviet Union in the First Committee declared:

"We believe that it is inadmissible artificially to divorce the prohibition of nuclear weapons from the prohibition of the use of force in international relations." (A/C.1/35/PV.39, p. 66)

It would be well to think about that remark.

I have so far in this statement raised two questions with regard to the Soviet proposal: does it concern a kind of moral, declaratory resolution only or does it imply a willingness on the side of the Soviet Union to issue a sort of binding, unequivocal non-first-use statement? If the latter is the case, we have already noted that the Soviet Union has proposed various more or less related courses of action which, however, regrettably do not seem to rhyme with one another.

(Mr. Fein, Netherlands)

Nevertheless, let us now proceed to look at certain statements made by the Soviet Union in the recent past which were of a more binding character and concern the intentions of the Soviet Union to use such weapons, on a first-use basis or otherwise. Here again we must note interesting differences in relation to, and between, statements made on this question during the past few years. Let us take in the first place the solemn statement by the President of the Soviet Union on 25 April 1978:

"The Soviet Union for its part wishes to state as emphatically as it can that we are against the use of nuclear weapons, that only extraordinary circumstances, only aggression against our country or its allies by another nuclear Power, could compel us to have recourse to that extreme means of self-defence."

Another authoritative declaration by the Soviet Union was made when signing Additional Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco:

"Any action taken by a State or States party to the Tlatelolco Treaty that is inconsistent with their non-nuclear status, as well as the commission by one or several States party to the Treaty of an act of aggression with the backing of a State possessing nuclear weapons or jointly with such a State will be regarded by the Soviet Union as incompatible with the relevant obligations of these countries under the Treaty. In such instances the Soviet Union reserves the right to reconsider its commitments arising from Additional Protocol II."

Now it should be noted that in both these statements, which might be mistaken for, or represented as, a non-first-use commitment, in fact there is a reservation, and the criterion for reserving the right to use nuclear weapons is whether the Soviet Union is attacked by another nuclear-weapon State or by other States - that is, non-nuclear-weapon States - with the backing of a nuclear-weapon State. So the criterion for the use by the Soviet Union of nuclear weapons is not whether nuclear weapons were actually used by others. Where does that leave the non-first-use commitment?

(Mr. Fein, Netherlands)

Although there is an important difference between the two statements that I have quoted on the one hand and the negative security assurances given by the Soviet Union on the other, in the latter, too, the criterion is not whether nuclear weapons are actually used; the assurance of "never-use" is given to States "which renounce the production and acquisition of such" - that is, nuclear - "weapons and do not have them on their territories". This formula even implies that some non-nuclear-weapon States which are not engaged in any aggression are threatened by the possible first-use of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union against them.

If the Soviet Union in its most recent proposal now under discussion intends to offer a non-first-use promise, then I wonder whether the other commitments that I have just quoted - and there are quite a number - are still valid. If they are, then one has to note the inconsistencies between the different formulas. As long as those inconsistencies between the earlier Soviet declarations and the draft resolution A/C.1/36/L.2 presented to this Committee exist, one can only come to the conclusion that this Soviet proposal belongs not to the realm of serious and concrete disarmament proposals, but rather to another field of State activities in which the Soviet Union excels.

To sum up, we come to the following three conclusions.

First, the Soviet Union appears from time to time to be in favour of declarations of a rather sweeping nature which, at first glance, seem to be aimed at abolishing nuclear weapons altogether - that is, declarations of a "never-use" type - but which are of a non-binding, declaratory or moralistic nature.

Secondly, upon closer examination those proposals turn out to be more restricted than a "never-use" declaration and they are more in the nature of non-first-use statements; but they are imprecise and inconsistent in character.

Thirdly, when, finally, the existing specific Soviet proposals on non-first-use themselves are analysed it appears that in these authoritative statements, which really count, the Soviet Union retains for itself the right to use nuclear weapons, or threaten to use them, on a first-use basis, against non-nuclear weapon States, among others.

(Mr. Fein, Netherlands)

Those are the facts, and we should like to hear an explanation from the Soviet representative of how he reconciles them.

Having dealt at some length with the Soviet position on the use of nuclear weapons, I think that it would be in order for me also to say a few words about our own position with regard to the non-first-use of nuclear weapons. The possibility of the use of nuclear weapons by the defensive alliance to which the Netherlands belongs is a relevant proposition only in the event of aggression against us -- that is, in the case of a serious violation of the Charter and in particular of the principle of the non-use of force embodied therein. The Charter of the United Nations recognizes explicitly the inalienable right of individual and collective self-defence, and this includes, obviously, the right to determine what level of force is needed to dissuade the aggressor from pursuing his military activities. The uncertainty about in what circumstances nuclear weapons would be used against the aggressor is an integral part of our strategy to deter aggression in Europe. To take away that uncertainty in a situation in which a large conventional imbalance exists in Europe would not diminish the chance of a military conflict -- the contrary is true. A serious non-first-use declaration could be an important confidence-building measure at a certain stage of the disarmament process. But in view of the present situation, in particular in Europe, it cannot be the first step. First we have to make progress in controlling and limiting the nuclear weapon itself and we must create a stable balance between East and West, and also in the conventional field. This would in itself reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our over-all military posture.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is Ambassador Wegener of the Federal Republic of Germany, who will introduce the comprehensive study of the Group of Governmental Experts on Confidence-building Measures. I am told that he is doing this on behalf of Ambassador Gerhard Pfeiffer, Chairman of the Group, whom he has now replaced as the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Committee on Disarmament and to this Committee.

Mr. VILGEMER (Federal Republic of Germany): In the absence of Ambassador Gerhard Pfeiffer, Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on Confidence-building Measures, who has taken over other duties, I have pleasure today in introducing document A/36/474, which contains the comprehensive study on confidence-building measures. The study, while comprehensive, is still concise and sufficiently self-explanatory as not to require a lengthy presentation. I should, however, like to use this opportunity to provide a brief abstract of its contents and focus on some of its principal aspects.

(Mr. Wegener Federal Republic
of Germany)

The General Assembly in its resolution 34/37 B of 11 December 1979, which was initiated by my delegation decided to undertake a comprehensive study on confidence building measures and requested the Secretary-General to carry out the study with the assistance of a group of qualified governmental experts. Pursuant to that mandate, the Secretary-General appointed a group of experts, whose names are listed on pages 4 and 5 of the document under consideration. The Group held four sessions during the years 1980 and 1981.

Apart from its introduction and its section on "Conclusions and Recommendations", the study consists of seven chapters.

Chapter II reflects on the current international situation and the role that confidence building measures can play in the enhancement of international security. Chapter III sets out the objectives, characteristics and opportunities for such measures. Chapter IV contains a historical survey leading up to our time, while Chapter V elaborates on the principles governing confidence building measures. Chapter VI discusses various approaches to negotiating and implementing such measures while Chapter VII lists various fields for their application and gives some illustrative examples. Chapter VIII deals with the role of the United Nations.

In the view of the Group, measures designed to build confidence and thereby facilitate disarmament negotiations are, at a time when the world faces a serious deterioration of international relations, more urgent than ever. While it is true that such measures can influence many factors, both of a military and of a non-military nature, the Group gave a more detailed consideration to military concerns. It held, however, that in many cases confidence building measures might be promoted by taking into account such additional factors as the cultural, economic, ideological and political environment.

(Mr. Weigener, Federal
Republic of Germany)

It was the experts' common view that one of the main objectives of confidence-building measures is to reduce the elements of fear and speculation in order to achieve a more accurate and more reliable reciprocal assessment of military activities. Particularly in times of crisis, all measures enhancing communication and information assure a particularly important function. While there were differences of view concerning the degree of openness necessary for building confidence, all experts agreed in principle on the need for an exchange of information on the military activities of States and other matters related to mutual security. This is reflected in the illustrative list of measures which is contained in Chapter VII.

Because confidence building is by nature a process in which each previous measure forms the basis for further measures, the Group held that States must, at each stage of the confidence building process, be able to assess the results achieved. This implies that neither declarations of intent nor a repetition of generally recognized principles nor mere promises of good behaviour in the future satisfy the requirement of removing perceptions of threat and suspicion. The seriousness, credibility and reliability of a State's commitment to confidence building, can therefore only be demonstrated by the continuous, regular and full implementation of confidence-building measures and policies.

In order to achieve the objective stated above, confidence-building measures should, in the Group's view, translate universally recognized principles of international law into reality by the application of concrete, specific and verifiable measures relating to the elements of threat which cause concern in a particular region. In the process of building confidence, the full implementation of less restraining measures thus creates the basis on which more restraining - and thus more efficient - measures can be agreed upon.

(Mr. Wegener, Federal
Republic of Germany)

This study can only be a first step, as are confidence building measures themselves. Further and more far reaching steps must follow aimed at broadening and strengthening confidence-building measures in the military field and widening the approach by giving more attention to the non military aspects of confidence building. I feel that the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would be a particularly suitable forum to discuss and to decide on further steps to be recommended.

At this session of the General Assembly, I believe that the adoption of a procedural resolution taking note of the study and submitting it to the second special session for further consideration would be the best course to take. My delegation, together with a number of others plans to submit a text in this vein within the next few days.

In concluding, I should like to convey, on behalf of the Group's Chairman, his gratitude to all the governmental experts who worked together in the Group with remarkable devotion and efficiency, showing throughout a profound understanding for the views of others. I should also like to reiterate the appreciation of all the members of the Group and in particular that of the Chairman to the members of the Secretariat for the assistance received. I especially wish to thank Mr. Mats Marling of the Swedish Foreign Ministry who served as a consultant to the Group, and to Ms. Amada Segarra formerly of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament, who served as the Group's secretary.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guyana): Mr. Chairman, I have already had a very pleasant and memorable opportunity to congratulate you upon your election to the Chairmanship of this Committee. I should now like to express similar congratulations to the two Vice Chairmen, Ambassador Carias of Honduras and Ambassador Yango of the Philippines, as well as to the Rapporteur, Mr. Makonnen of Ethiopia.

(Mr. Sinclair Guyana)

It is difficult to overstate the challenges facing our Organization in the area of disarmament. This debate takes place as so many delegations preceding me have observed, in the midst of an increasingly widespread concern about the sinister directions in which man's creative genius is being turned -- in the midst of a deep-rooted fear caused by the apparent inability of men and nations to curb their capacity for self-destruction. As the rhetoric of confrontation invades the vocabulary of States preparations for war intensify. Sophisticated military hardware has, with fiendish generosity, become a symbol of friendship. Theories of limited or winnable nuclear war are being spawned with diabolical facility -- as if there could ever be winners in a nuclear war.

The eyes of the world must certainly be riveted on the activities of this Organization in the area of disarmament. In no other area of international activity is our challenge as great in no other area is the price of failure as final as in the area of disarmament.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the disarmament effort is slowly spreading beyond the walls of negotiating rooms into the streets, into schools and colleges, into villages and community centres into churches. Its advocates, once principally diplomats or professional negotiators, now also include the masses of people -- the people who have begun to assert their right to have a say in decisions about their survival and the survival of their children on this planet, made so dangerous by the decisions of Governments and leaders of Governments. My delegation cherishes the ardent hope that the anger and the concern of the people will serve to introduce that note of urgency that seems to be so conspicuously lacking in negotiations for the achievement of world-wide disarmament.

In his book "Meeting at Potsdam", the author, Charles Mee Jr. describes the scene in Almagordo, New Mexico where the atomic bomb was first tested on 16 July 1945. After painting a picture of the complete devastation of all living and non living forms in the area of the blast, he writes.

(Mr. Sinclair Guyana)

Some years later, looking back on what he perceived as a needless use of the bomb, Oppenheimer (one of the observers of the explosion) said, 'In some crude sense which no vulgarity, no humour, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known since the beginning. Today in 1961 a single missile contains a destructive force 200 times greater than that of that first bomb. Yet missiles continue to be amassed; they continue to be refined and made more lethal, and the security they are supposed to bestow continues increasingly to be elusive.

At the heart of this suicidal momentum that is deceptively referred to as the arms race lies the rivalry between the two super Powers. There is a certain unreality about the current situation where, even with weapons so deadly as to be unusable, we witness an alarming disinclination to undertake positive, meaningful disarmament measures so as to pull humanity back from the brink of destruction where such weapons have driven us.

(Mr. Sinclair, Guyana)

Within the United Nations, procedural obstacles are raised to prevent consideration of matters of urgent substance. For all the talks, and talks about talks, so far there has been no positive action for the elimination of nuclear weapons from the earth.

My delegation would not presume to decide what are the security needs and concerns of a super-Power. But since nuclear weapons are indiscriminate in their effects, we would strongly urge that in making decisions about those needs and concerns, and about their pursuit, the super-Powers do not jeopardize the security and survival of other States. It is precisely because we feel this security and survival threatened that we insist that all States have a stake in the elimination of nuclear weapons, and must therefore have equal opportunity to articulate their interests and concerns in the negotiations for such elimination. My delegation is therefore decidedly opposed to the exclusivist approach of some major Powers to the question of negotiations on nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that the Committee on Disarmament, established by the special session of the Assembly as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, is competent to negotiate concrete matters relating to nuclear disarmament and we would express the hope that this body will be allowed to fulfill the mandate entrusted to it.

My delegation is likewise very concerned about the efforts of certain States to obstruct the work of the Disarmament Commission, frustrating decisions on substantive issues already agreed upon. The Commission was created by the first special session as an important deliberative organ of the General Assembly where not some, but all, members of the international community could consider matters of disarmament and international security. We cannot accept that negotiations on disarmament are the business of only a small directorate. It is inconsistent with the spirit and the letter of the relevant special-session decision.

(Mr. Sinclair, Guyana)

The current arms race imperils all humanity; disarmament negotiations are and must therefore be the business of all States.

Guyana has consistently taken the position that as a step towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth there must be agreement among the nuclear-weapon Powers on complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. We do firmly believe that such an agreement, strictly and faithfully adhered to, would represent a positive and encouraging step in the direction of eventual nuclear disarmament.

Of course, an important counterpart to the achievement of such agreement would be the effective prohibition of the testing of nuclear weapons by all States. The question of a comprehensive test ban treaty has been on our agenda for several years, but consideration of it continues to be deadlocked within the restricted negotiating framework to which it was committed. My delegation supports the appeal made by several others for consideration of this matter to be brought within the larger multilateral framework of the Committee on Disarmament, where an ad hoc working group of the Committee could negotiate an acceptable text. While these negotiations remain so stymied, nuclear-weapon testing continues so that the arms race qualitatively intensifies. My delegation considers that if the efforts within the trilateral forum are genuine and earnest, there should be no hesitation on the part of the States concerned in agreeing to an immediate halt to all nuclear-weapon testing pending the conclusion of a comprehensive treaty.

(Mr. Sinclair, Guyana)

Against the background of the grudging and isolated achievements in disarmament negotiations, we consider the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreement (SALT II) as a noteworthy achievement and we regret that it has been set aside. As we have had cause to state on previous occasions, it is necessarily restricted in scope and application, since it seeks only the limitation of arms between the two super-Powers. It is part of a process which must seek the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We fully share the assessments of the Palme Commission on the importance of SALT and express the hope that the process towards a more meaningful SALT agreement might continue without further delay.

One positive approach to nuclear disarmament is the idea of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on a regional basis. Especially at this present juncture, when we hear the strident advocacy by some of limited nuclear war as a viable option in what is perceived as a global East-West struggle, my delegation wishes to underscore the imperative of regional arrangements which seek to banish the development and emplacement of destructive nuclear weaponry. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America is to a large extent a reality. Guyana has repeatedly expressed its unqualified support for the principles and objectives of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, though we are denied membership of that Treaty through an exclusionary clause which essentially discriminates against us. We deplore this contradictory aspect of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. But for this aspect, the Treaty could serve as a model for other regions sharing, as they do, the concern of Latin America to secure their peoples from the threat of the awesome danger of nuclear destruction and at the same time to enlarge on our planet the areas of denuclearization.

(Mr. Sinclair, Guyana)

In a fundamental sense there is a close relationship between disarmament and development, and to speak of the first is to speak of the second. This fact has explicitly emerged from the special session on disarmament held in 1978. We must recognize clearly that the arms race has become a grave danger to mankind not only in the destructive threat it poses, but in withholding resources from the global development effort. A great deal has already been said about the practical uses to which the funds now expended on weaponry can be put, but suffice it to say here that the concept of security transcends military concerns and must include the problems of poverty, hunger and the inequitable allocation of resources. Security needs cannot be met merely by building greater and larger arsenals; they can only be fully met by addressing all aspects of the question, especially the release of resources, both human and material, now being utilized for destructive purposes, to meet the much more noble goal of enhanced development. The cost of the arms race has been a staggering one; one estimate is that annual military expenditures total \$450 billion. Compare this figure with that given to development, where the outlay is less than five per cent of that given to weaponry.

(Mr. Sinclair, Guyana)

But the call for disarmament is not only addressed to developed countries. Some developing countries themselves are regrettably given to excessive militarization. My delegation recognizes that States must equip themselves for their self-defence. However, there are some who face no obvious external enemy or threat and whose preparations therefore far exceed the normal requirements of legitimate self-defence. Such arms expenditure, in addition to exerting a drain on financial resources, also contributes to stepping up the arms race and the creation of new tensions and suspicions in their respective regions.

The Preparatory Committee has completed an important aspect of its work in connexion with the second special session on disarmament and must now begin the substantive preparations for that session. My delegation hopes that that session will be productive and action-oriented, and that its decisions will introduce some much-needed momentum into our over-all disarmament efforts. We therefore hope that all participants will approach that session in a positive and constructive spirit, with a desire for consensus rather than confrontation and to see real progress achieved.

When the first Disarmament Decade closed in 1980, the goal of disarmament was still elusive and still is so. Our only comfort now is that the nuclear button has not been pushed, a comfort which diminishes as we behold the increasing sophistication of modern nuclear weapons. With such a complex and sophisticated weapons development, there is no margin for error, no room for recall. This chilling reality should move us to work with greater dedication and resolve for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Disarmament must be seen as something positive, as the cause of all humanity. We at the United Nations do not labour alone in that cause; in fact, our efforts only reflect the wishes of the people of our various national communities who are declaring with increasing vehemence that something can and must be done to make our planet safe and livable. Let us heed the awareness of our peoples.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.