

STATEMENT MADE BY AMBASSADOR ALFONSO GARCIA ROBLES, CHAIRMAN OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF DISARMAMENT, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT OF THE REPORT OF THE GROUP AND THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME ANNEXED THERETO

I have the honour to submit to the Committee on Disarmament the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, over which I have had the privilege of presiding during the Committee's sessions in 1981 and the part of 1982 that has already elapsed, together with a draft Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament which is annexed to the report.

Since the content of the report is what is customarily termed self-explanatory, I shall confine myself to making just a few comments. Firstly, I should like to say that this has been one of the most industrious working groups of what the United Nations General Assembly has described as the "single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament" since, as is well known, it began its work in the current year by holding daily meetings during the last three weeks of January, before the Committee met, and, after the resumption of the Committee's work on 2 February, it held an average of three meetings a week, without counting the very numerous meetings of its subsidiary bodies. Thanks to this, the Group has been successful in carrying out the task which was entrusted to it, albeit with the inevitable limitations imposed by the circumstances known to all.

In the report to which I am referring, there already appear the names of those who merit special mention for the valuable contribution which they made to the group's work: Ambassador Olu Adeniji of Nigeria, who presided over the first 10 of the 59 meetings held, Ambassador François de la Gorce of France, Ambassador Gerhard Herder of the Democratic Republic of Germany and Ambassador Celso Antonio de Souza e Silva of Brazil, who co-ordinated the work of their respective contact groups, and Mr. Tariq Altaf of Pakistan, who acted as co-ordinator of an informal drafting group. I should simply like, therefore, to record my especial gratitude to someone who, as a result of having undertaken to draft the report in consultation with the Chairman, was obviously unable to make an appropriate reference in the report to her participation in the Group as its Secretary. In the light of the experience which has enabled me to observe her at work at very close quarters and to rely on her untiring co-operation for approximately a year and a half, I consider it only just to take this opportunity of placing on record my view that Miss Aída Levín can serve as a model for the discharge of any office such as that which she has held in this Group, by virtue of her absolute objectivity, her knowledge of disarmament matters, her outstanding drafting abilities and her lively intelligence, which has so frequently produced formulas that have gained general acceptance.

With regard to the draft Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament which the Working Group transmits to the Committee as an annex to its report and which, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 36/92 F adopted by the Assembly on 9 December 1981, has to be submitted "in time for consideration and adoption by the General Assembly at its second special session devoted to disarmament", I do feel that it is my duty on this occasion to make a few comments on the basis of my lengthy and intimate connection with the efforts made to prepare the Programme.

I shall begin by emphasizing that the structure of the document which the Group is submitting to the Committee corresponds to that which has been approved since 1980 and which, as indicated in paragraph 68 (7) of the Committee's report to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, should comprise — in addition to an introduction or preamble which would be prepared last of all — six chapters dealing with objectives, principles, priorities, measures, stages of implementation, and machinery and procedures, respectively. The only change that has been made in this structure is that, for reasons which would appear obvious, two of these headings have been merged to serve as a title for the fifth chapter, which deals with both "measures and stages of implementation".

As for the contents of the Programme, the Working Group has endeavoured to keep as faithfully as possible to the mandate clearly defined in paragraph 109 of the Final Document, in which it was stipulated that the Programme should encompass "all measures thought to be advisable in order to ensure that the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control becomes a reality in a world in which international peace and security prevail and in which the new international economic order is strengthened and consolidated", reiterated word for word in paragraph 7 (b) of the "elements" approved, also by consensus, by the Committee on Disarmament in 1979, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 34/83 H of 11 December of the same year, and confirmed by the Committee on Disarmament when it adopted the report which the Working Group submitted to it in 1980, in paragraph 10 of which it was expressly agreed that "the Comprehensive Programme will have to be self-contained."

The fact that a considerable number of the provisions of the Programme are still between square brackets should not be a reason for discouragement but, on the contrary, should serve as a spur for efforts to find texts capable of gaining general approval. To this end, it should not be forgotten that the draft Final Document which the Preparatory Committee for the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament transmitted to the Assembly as a result of five meetings — three of which were held in 1977 and the last two in the first half of 1978 — had also been riddled with square brackets but that that did not prevent the Assembly from finally approving by consensus a document which was completely free of those symbols of differences of opinion.

However difficult the efforts required to achieve this purpose may be, this will probably not be one of the most difficult tasks that has ever been brought to fruition, especially if no delegation tries to renege on the commitments undertaken in the Final Document in 1978. It would also seem that it will be by no means impossible to reach an agreement on the number of stages that the programme should comprise, in the light of the flexibility that has been evidenced by many of the delegations that have formulated the main working papers submitted to the Group, since, with general acceptance, the Group has been able to channel its deliberations, as it were in the nature of "working hypotheses", firstly on the basis of four stages and subsequently on the basis of three. A similar comment might be made concerning the revision machinery or procedure, in respect of which too there already appears to be a more or less general acceptance of a five-yearly régime and of the fact that such revision or examination should be undertaken through specific special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

If the foregoing is taken into account, there would appear to be some justification for concluding that the two most difficult problems still outstanding are that of determining whether or not the Programme should have a calendar for its implementation and that of determining the extent to which the Programme should be of a binding nature. If one accepts, as we think it reasonable to do that all the States participating in the second special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament may be expected to give evidence of goodwill and good faith in the formal and informal negotiations taking place at that session, there will be a solid basis for expecting that a satisfactory solution to these problems will be found.

With regard to the question of time-limits to be included in a possible calendar, it should first of all be pointed out that, for the moment, no one is thinking of rigid time-limits like those which appeared in the two draft treaties on general and complete disarmament submitted to the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament in 1962 by the Soviet Union and the United States respectively. In this connection, it is also encouraging to note that reference has been made in the deliberations on this subject -- and, above all, that the reference was made by the representative of one of the most important members of the group known as the Group of Western European and Other Countries -- as an example of recommendable terminology to that used in the Declaration of the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade, in which the time factor undoubtedly occupies a prominent place.

With regard to the nature of the Programme, although, on the one hand, it would seem that the hypothesis that it may be possible to obtain a consensus in order to give the Programme the legal status of a multilateral treaty will have to be discarded, it is clearly apparent, on the other hand, from the comments made at the various meetings which the Group devoted to consideration of this subject, that there is a general trend towards finding formulas which will enable the Programme to be placed at a level far above that of the resolutions annually adopted by the General Assembly. This will undoubtedly require the inclusion in the Programme of provisions similar to those contained in paragraph 126 of the Final Document, in which the States that participated in the first special session "solemnly" reaffirmed, inter alia, "their determination to work for general and complete disarmament and to make further collective efforts aimed at strengthening peace and international security; eliminating the threat of war, particularly nuclear

war;" and "implementing practical measures aimed at halting and reversing the arms race". This will certainly require also that the Programme make an express provision along the lines of the statement in paragraph 17 of the Final Document emphasizing the pressing need to "translate into practical terms" the provisions adopted and to "proceed along the road of binding and effective international agreements in the field of disarmament". Furthermore, in view of the fact that, unfortunately, the Final Document has been to a considerable extent treated by the nuclear Powers as a dead letter, consideration must be given to the possibility of including in the introduction and final paragraphs alike of the Comprehensive Programme, provisions which both politically and morally impart the greatest possible, though freely accepted, binding character to the text, a binding character which, it is to be hoped, will be greater than that achieved in 1978.

In this connection, it is worth remembering that, at the Group's meetings, representatives submitted a number of valuable suggestions aimed at highlighting, through symbolic acts, both the importance of the Programme and, more particularly, the political commitment of Governments to execute its provisions. Among these suggestions, pride of place -- in view of its originality and potential effectiveness -- should perhaps go to the suggestion that the Programme should be signed by the Heads of State or Government of all the States Members of the United Nations. In my opinion, the fact that most if not all of them will almost certainly not be in New York at the closure of the Assembly's session should not be an obstacle to an acceptance of this suggestion; quite the contrary, in fact. A special representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations might very well be given the responsibility of taking the original text of the Programme to all the capitals of those States for the purpose of collecting the signatures of their respective Heads of State or Government. This could, at the same time, help to ensure that public opinion in each of those countries has a true awareness of the significance of the Programme.

Recently, particularly during the last year or so, there has been throughout the world an increasing number of acts of all kinds which reveal the concern that the nuclear arms race and the emergence of doctrines such as the credible possibility of a limited nuclear war or the illusory hypothesis of a nuclear victory, have aroused throughout mankind. If, as the Assembly stated in 1978, all peoples have a vital interest in the success of the negotiations on disarmament, it may be asserted without any exaggeration that the thousands of millions of human beings who make up these peoples will follow very closely the work of the special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament which is to be held at United Nations Headquarters from 7 June to 9 July 1982. This may very well be the decisive element in making the representatives of those peoples deliberating in New York realize the need to approve by consensus a Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament, which, starting from the text which the Ad Hoc Working Group is today submitting to the Committee, may give new life to the pressing objectives which, for four years, have been set out in paragraph 109 of the Assembly's Final Document. It must never be forgotten that, as stated in the Final Document itself, the most acute and urgent task of the present day is to remove the threat of a nuclear war, since this threat has confronted mankind with a choice between proceeding to disarmament or facing annihilation.