
Message from L.I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central
Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and
President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR
to the second special session of the General Assembly
devoted to disarmament

On behalf of the Soviet Union and of the 269 million Soviet people, I am addressing the United Nations General Assembly convened at its second special session devoted to disarmament.

The session faces great and responsible tasks. Its agenda includes a number of items of the first importance.

But if we are to single out the most important, the most urgent, the one now worrying people in every corner of the globe and preoccupying the minds of statesmen and public figures in many countries of the world, it is concern for halting the endless build-up of ever more destructive types of weapons, ensuring a breakthrough in the improvement of international relations and averting a nuclear disaster.

Concern for peace is the dominant feature of the Soviet Union's policy. We are convinced that no contradictions between States or groups of States, no differences in social systems, ways of life or ideologies and no transitory interests can eclipse the fundamental need shared by all peoples - the need to safeguard peace and avert a nuclear war.

Today, as never before, purposeful and considered action is required of all States in order to achieve this lofty goal.

Guided by the desire to do all in its power to deliver the world's peoples from the threat of nuclear devastation and ultimately to exclude its very possibility from the life of mankind, the Soviet State solemnly declares:

**THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS ASSUMES AN OBLIGATION
NOT BE THE FIRST TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS.**

This obligation shall become effective immediately, from the moment when it is announced from the rostrum of the General Assembly.

Why is the Soviet Union taking this step at a time when the nuclear Powers in NATO, including the United States, make no secret of the fact that their military doctrine not only does not rule out the possibility of the first use of nuclear weapons but it is actually based on that dangerous premise?

The Soviet Union bases this move on the indisputable fact, which is decisive in the present international situation, that should a nuclear war start, it could mean the destruction of human civilization and perhaps the end of life itself on earth.

Consequently, the supreme duty of State leaders conscious of their responsibility for the fate of the world is to exert every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons will never be used.

The peoples of the world have the right to expect that the Soviet Union's decision will be followed by reciprocal steps on the part of the other nuclear States. If the other nuclear Powers were to assume an equally precise and clear obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, that would be tantamount in practice to banning the use of nuclear weapons altogether, a goal advocated by the overwhelming majority of the world's countries.

In the formulation of its policy, the Soviet Union will naturally continue to take into account how the other nuclear Powers act, whether they heed the voice of reason and follow our good example or push the world downhill.

Another objective of the Soviet Union's initiative is to increase trust in relations between States. And that is particularly important in the present international situation, when the foundations of trust have been shaken by the efforts of those who are trying to upset the existing balance of forces, to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union and its allies and to destroy all the benefits brought by the policy of détente.

The military and political stereotypes inherited from the time when one side had a monopoly on the atom bomb have become outdated. The realities of today require a fundamentally different approach to the questions of war and peace. The step now taken by the Soviet Union makes it easier to take a different view of the entire complex of problems invoked in the limitation and reduction of armaments, especially nuclear arms, and advances the cause of disarmament in general.

The great achievements of human creative and technological genius enable the world's peoples to open a new chapter in their history. At this moment there already exist boundless opportunities to tackle the solution of such human problems of global magnitude as the struggle against hunger, disease, poverty and many other evils. But that requires making sure that scientific and technological progress is used exclusively to serve the peaceful aspirations of humanity.

The Soviet Union is assuming an obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons because it has faith in the power of good sense and believes in mankind's ability to avoid self-annihilation and to ensure peace and progress for the present and future generations.

I should also like to draw the attention of the representatives of States attending the special session of the General Assembly to the following question.

In the search for measures which would actually halt the arms race, many political and public figures of various countries have recently turned to the idea of a freeze - in other words, of stopping the further build-up of nuclear potentials. The ideas advanced in this connexion are not all alike, on the whole, we believe, they go in the right direction. We see in them a reflection of people's profound concern about their destiny. To use a figure of speech, people are voting for the preservation of the highest value in the world, which is human life.

The idea of a mutual freeze of nuclear arsenals, as a first step towards their reduction and, eventually, their complete elimination, is close to the Soviet point of view. Moreover, our country has been the initiator of concrete proposals aimed at stopping the nuclear arms race in its quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Lastly, there is one more issue which, in our view, the General Assembly cannot disregard.

Dangerous as nuclear weapons are, it must be borne in mind that in the arsenals of States there are other means of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. It is frightening to contemplate but nevertheless a fact that the tens of thousands of tons of toxic agents among the armaments of certain countries, a few kilograms would suffice to kill millions of people. And in addition, new programmes for the production of even more sophisticated types of lethal chemical weapons are being launched.

Every effort must be made to eliminate chemical weapons from the face of the earth. The Soviet Union is a devoted advocate of this approach. We are prepared to come to an agreement without delay on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons and the destruction of the stockpiles of such weapons.

In general, the Soviet Union is in favour of moving ahead in all areas where opportunities exist for limiting and radically reducing armaments, be it in nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction or conventional armaments. There is no type of weapon which the Soviet Union would not be prepared to limit or ban on the basis of reciprocity.

I should like to express my confidence that the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament will provide an effective impetus for a cessation of the arms race and a transition to practical measures for real disarmament. In this way it will justify the hopes which the world's peoples are pinning on this thoroughly representative forum.

I wish the participants in the session fruitful work for the benefit of all peoples and of universal peace.

L. BREZHNEV
