

UNITED NATIONS

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Press Release SG/SM/1423

~~DC/667~~

16 February 1971

TEXT OF STATEMENT BY SECRETARY-GENERAL AT FIRST MEETING OF  
EXPERT GROUP ON CONSEQUENCES OF ARMS RACE

Following is the text of a statement by the Secretary-General, U Thant, made at the first meeting today of the Group of Consultant Experts appointed by him to help prepare a report on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and of military consequences. The report was requested by the General Assembly in resolution 2667 (XXV) of 7 December 1970.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations as members of the Group of Consultant Experts which is to assist me in the preparation of the report on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and of military expenditures called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 2667 (XXV) of 7 December 1970. I wish to thank each of you for having accepted my invitation to join this Group in a personal capacity and to devote your knowledge and your talents to this important and challenging task. I am confident that I can count on you to complete the preparation of the report in time for it to be transmitted to the General Assembly for consideration at its twenty-sixth session.

As you are aware, this is not the first time that the Secretary-General has been requested by the General Assembly to conduct, with the assistance of consultant experts, studies on matters relating to the arms race and disarmament and their implications. It will be sufficient for me to recall the following three reports: the report of 1962 on "Economic and Social Consequences of Disarmament"; the report of 1967 on "Effects of the Possible Use of Nuclear Weapons and the Security and Economic Implications for States of the Acquisition and Further Development of These Weapons"; and the report of 1969 on

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"Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons and the Effects of their Possible Use". In this connexion, may I say how pleased I am to see around this table some of the distinguished experts who have already rendered valuable assistance in the preparation of one or more of the previous reports. I should like to add that all those reports, drawn up on the basis of objective and dispassionate analysis of relevant facts, were welcomed by the General Assembly as authoritative statements on the subjects covered by them and that the Secretary-General, as well as Governments, were invited by the Assembly to give the reports wide distribution with a view to acquainting public opinion with their contents.

It may be recalled that I was an early proponent of the new study. In a statement I made to the Conference on the "Politics of Disarmament" held here at United Nations Headquarters on 22 May 1970, I proposed "that a comprehensive study be undertaken, preferably on an international basis, of the economic and social consequences of the armaments race and of massive military budgets".

Subsequently, in my introduction to the annual report on the work of the Organization, submitted to the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, I stated:

".... in order that the Governments and peoples of the world may be more fully informed and may better understand the issues and problems related to the continuing arms race, I would propose that a comprehensive international expert study be undertaken of the economic and social consequences of the arms race and massive military expenditures. Such a study, which would complement a similar study carried out in 1962, could delineate the implications and evaluate the effects on nations and on economies of the growing stockpiles of armaments and the increasing volume of resources being diverted from peaceful to military purposes. It would help towards a better understanding of the needs and the possibilities for reordering both national and international priorities in the decade ahead."

Resolution 2667 (XXV) adopted unanimously by the General Assembly under the item "Economic and Social Consequences of the Armaments Race and Its Extremely Harmful Effects on World Peace and Security" which was included in the agenda of the twenty-fifth session on the initiative of Romania, in its operative paragraph 3, "requests the Secretary-General to prepare, with the assistance of qualified

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consultant experts appointed by him, a report on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and of military expenditures". The various considerations which the Assembly had taken into account in requesting the preparation of the study, and, which coincide with my own views, are set out in the preambular paragraphs of the resolution. Accordingly, I consider that resolution 2667 (XXV) should serve as the basis for the terms of reference of the Group of Consultant Experts.

I believe that, as a first step, it should be possible for the Group to prepare an outline for the study and I rely on your competence and expertise to accomplish this preliminary task on the basis of which subsequent work on the report can proceed.

It is needless for me to stress the importance of close co-operation and agreement among all the members of the Group in an undertaking such as the present study. I am confident that the Group will assess the magnitude of the dangers of the arms race and the economic burdens involved in it and consider the most effective ways of reducing and finally eliminating both the dangers and the burdens and thus facilitating the implementation of much needed programmes of economic and social development in the coming decade.

I earnestly hope that you will be able to present to me in due time a unanimous report and that such a report would contribute, in some measure, to the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Charter, to which all Member States are equally dedicated. I extend to all of you my best wishes for full success in this endeavour.

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OF EXPERT GROUP ON CONSEQUENCES OF ARMS RACE

CORRECTION

The first sentence of Press Release SG/SM/1423-DC/667, issued today, should read: "Following is the text of a statement by the Secretary-General, U Thant, made at the first meeting today of the Group of Consultant Experts appointed by him to help prepare a report on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and of military expenditures."

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