

SECOND REPORT OF THE GROUP OF SEVEN ON THE IMPROVED
AND EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Group of Seven considered ideas and proposals concerning the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. As a result of its work during the first part of the 1988 session, the Group agreed to submit to the Conference the ideas and suggestions appearing in sections A, B and C below. The Group also discussed under sections D, E and F various options and ideas as set out therein. In view of the limited time available, the Group was not able to conclude its consideration of those options and ideas.

A. Participation of non-member States in the work of the Conference

2. The Group welcomed the interest shown by non-member States in the work of the Conference and agreed that their participation should be encouraged. To that end the Group considered that:

(a) Non-member States should be enabled to make statements in plenary meetings and submit written proposals or working documents on measures of disarmament that are the subject of negotiations in the Conference, without prior invitation.

(b) Invitations upon request by non-member States may be extended for participation at informal meetings on agenda items and meetings of subsidiary bodies.

(c) Requests for participation should be circulated by the secretariat upon receipt. If no objections are raised at the end of a five work-day period following such circulation, the President would announce at a plenary meeting that consensus exists to extend the relevant invitations and proceed to address communications to that effect to the non-member States.

(d) Those invitations should remain in effect for as long as the relevant item is on the agenda.

(e) While participation in decision-making is limited to members of the Conference, non-member States, once invited, should be entitled to participate fully in its work, including in informal consultations held in subsidiary bodies.

(f) In addition, the Conference could decide to extend invitations to non-member States to be associated with negotiations on a defined subject.

B. Participation of scientific and technical experts in the work of the Conference

3. The Group recognized the importance of the involvement of scientific and technical experts in the work of the Conference in view of the complexity and technical nature of some of the questions under consideration. The following suggestions were considered bearing in mind that the participation of scientific and technical experts should be designed to serve a concrete purpose:

- (a) More frequent inclusion of scientific and technical experts in the delegations of member States.
- (b) Increased use of the possibilities offered by rules 22 and 23 of the Rules of Procedure.
- (c) More regular establishment of groups of scientific and technical experts on an ad hoc basis for a specific purpose at a particular time.
- (d) Drawing up of a list of scientific and technical experts whose services could be drawn upon as appropriate.
- (e) Use of legal experts from the United Nations Secretariat to assist at the stage of treaty-making in the Conference.

C. Non-governmental organizations

4. The Group agreed that closer interaction of the NGO community with the Conference was highly desirable. In that connection, the President of the Conference and the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies might meet from time to time with representatives of NGOs.

D. Disarmament consultative council

5. The Group considered the idea of establishing a disarmament consultative council composed of renowned scientists and public figures.

E. Time, duration and organization of the annual session

6. The Group considered the following alternatives concerning timing and duration of the annual session:

- (a) Five sessions lasting five weeks, spread out over the whole year, with intervals for preparing positions and proposals.
- (b) An annual session lasting a minimum of seven months as follows: January-end April and June-mid-September.
- (c) Maintaining the present annual schedule and division of the session in two parts as provided for in the Rules of Procedure, with the possibility of ad hoc arrangements, as necessary, for subsidiary bodies and keeping in mind that the Rules of Procedure allow for the convening of special sessions of the Conference.
- (d) Making the Conference permanently in session, with two or three recesses annually.

7. With respect to the organization of the annual session, the following options were considered:

- (a) A concentrated general debate during the first month of the session with:
 - (i) two plenary meetings per week; or
 - (ii) as many plenary meetings as needed to permit all Member States of the United Nations wishing to participate to do so.
- (b) Upon completion of the concentrated general debate,
 - (i) one plenary meeting per week, thus allowing the time now devoted to a second such meeting to be used by a subsidiary body of the Conference;
 - (ii) maintaining two plenary meetings per week with subsidiary bodies meeting as at present following plenary meetings; or
 - (iii) Substantive work in subsidiary bodies with the possibility of convening plenaries as needed.
- (c) Maintaining the present organization of work.

F. Membership of the Conference

8. The Group was fully aware of the significance attached by many non-member States to the expansion of the membership of the Conference. The following alternatives were considered:

- (a) The Conference should become, in the future, a permanent universal organ on disarmament negotiations.
- (b) The Conference should remain a body of limited size given its negotiating function.
 - (i) The rule of consensus should apply to the expansion of the membership and decisions thereon should be made on an ad hoc basis as agreement is achieved on each candidate.
 - (ii) As long as it remains a body of limited membership, it is necessary to preserve the political balance of its composition and thus a case-by-case approach cannot be applied.