
PROHIBITION OF THE NUCLEAR NEUTRON WEAPON

Working Paper submitted by the German Democratic Republic
on behalf of a group of socialist States

1. In para. 50 of the Final Document of the First Special Session devoted to Disarmament all United Nations member-States emphasized that the achievement of nuclear disarmament will require urgent negotiation of agreements, inter alia on the cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems.

One of the first steps in this regard could be negotiations with a view to concluding a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling, deployment and use of nuclear neutron weapons. That would be an important contribution to and element of a comprehensive solution to the problem of nuclear disarmament.

Such a step, supported by a growing majority of United Nations member-States, would also correspond to the demands of a broad mass movement which, especially in many European countries, has called for urgent action to prohibit the nuclear neutron weapon, ever since plans for its production were announced.

In the United Nations, the Committee on Disarmament and other fora many countries have condemned plans to start production of this weapon and urged its prohibition.

By resolutions 36/92 K and 37/78 E, the United Nations General Assembly has requested the Committee on Disarmament to start without delay such negotiations.

The socialist group, therefore, proposes that the Committee on Disarmament include the item "Prohibition of the Nuclear Neutron weapon" in its agenda and establish the necessary organizational conditions for such negotiations. The best framework to elaborate the above-mentioned convention would be an ad hoc working group.

An appropriate basis for such negotiations already exists. As early as in 1978, eight socialist countries submitted a relevant draft convention (CCD/559). This proposal was reaffirmed by the Warsaw Treaty member-States in their recent Political Declaration adopted in Prague on 5 January 1983.

2. In stressing the importance of measures to prohibit the nuclear neutron weapon, the socialist countries are guided by the following consideration:

(a) Production of the nuclear neutron weapon and its introduction into military arsenals will lead to an escalation of the nuclear arms race. This weapon is by no means "simply a new kind of nuclear weapon". Scientists consider it to be the first type of a new, third generation of nuclear weapons, characterized by such special features as enhanced radiation in the case of the neutron weapon.

Apart from the neutron weapon other so-called specialized nuclear weapons are reported to be under development, in which such characteristics as heat, blast or electromagnetic impulse are to be enhanced.

(b) Nuclear neutron weapons will lower the nuclear threshold, thus making a nuclear war not only thinkable but also wageable. Moreover, they are a weapon par excellence for a potential aggressor, since their use would enable him to annihilate human-beings and to take over intact material facilities such as towns, factories and the like after a relatively short time. These weapons are part of the concept to wage a "limited nuclear war" far from the territory of their user. Such military considerations can be reduced to one objective: to blur the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons.

(c) Nuclear neutron weapons are planned to be deployed in various regions, i.a. in western Europe. Their introduction, it has been announced, will be followed by the deployment of such medium-range nuclear systems as the Pershing 2 missile and land-based cruise missiles. While the ultimate responsibility for creating the nuclear neutron weapon lies with the nuclear-weapon State concerned, it should not be neglected that the States on whose territories these weapons are to be stationed also bear a special responsibility. As it was emphasized in working paper CD/256, "it is up to the national authorities of non-nuclear-weapon States to take a sovereign decision on whether to accept nuclear weapons on their territories or not".

In addition, the danger of the proliferation of the nuclear neutron weapon and of its possible deployment in certain areas of conflict cannot be overlooked. Already now the racist regime of South Africa as well as Israel are reported to possess the means of delivery for the nuclear neutron weapon and to be capable of producing the weapon themselves.