



VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. Roche (Canada)

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- GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS (continued)**

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 51 to 69, 139, 141 and 145 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. PHAM NGAC (Viet Nam): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to express to you my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of this Committee. I am sure that your wisdom and experience will ensure constructive and fruitful deliberations on the very important, indeed vital, issues before our Committee. Let me assure you of the full co-operation of my delegation to that end.

My congratulations go also to the other officers of the Committee.

Our Committee is meeting at a very auspicious time. While last year we were talking about some improvement in international relations, we have to note that the movement then commenced is now opening up new prospects for peace and for solutions to many conflicts and hotbeds of tension throughout the world.

In the present circumstances, when the groundwork is being laid for the building of a world that is truly nuclear-free, further efforts should be made to step up the positive momentum towards the attainment of general and complete disarmament. Co-operation between the great Powers and growing endeavours by countries in various regions working for a peaceful settlement of differences have produced valuable results in the cause of maintaining international peace and security.

The Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - INF Treaty - is a truly historic agreement both because of its objective - the complete elimination of an entire class of United States and Soviet nuclear missiles - and because of the innovative character and scope of its verification provisions. The Treaty itself is a clear manifestation of the concept of security through disarmament, and it serves the interests of peace not only in

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

Europe but the world over. Furthermore, it constitutes a breakthrough and generates confidence in the process leading to the long overdue nuclear disarmament. The ratification of this Treaty and progress towards the reduction of strategic weapons by 50 per cent will undoubtedly represent a milestone in the process of genuine disarmament.

Together with the joint efforts of the international community, this progress in disarmament has had a profound bearing on the improvement of the international atmosphere. After years of tension and stalemate, countries of various regions have now engaged in dialogue in search of political solutions to their problems, thus opening up new prospects for the solution of a whole series of regional conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan, between Iran and Iraq, in Western Sahara, in Cyprus, in Namibia and in South-East Asia. In general terms, these developments have been a vivid manifestation of a substantial improvement in international relations.

However, we do not lose sight of the fact that the harmful doctrine of nuclear deterrence, the commitment to an arms race in outer space - that is, the strategic defence initiative - and the production of binary weapons still persist. That is why my delegation believes that the most pressing problem facing us is not merely to reduce existing nuclear arsenals but also to prevent the arms race from taking on a new, more dangerous dimension and spreading into outer space, and to impose a complete prohibition of nuclear tests and chemical weapons and a ban on the testing and production of new generations of weaponry.

The third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in spite of generally favourable conditions, failed to adopt a final document. The reason for this is known to everyone. Even with the utmost patience we could not achieve a consensus on a final declaration, but this in no way negates the clearly

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

manifested determination of the international community to achieve disarmament. In fact, it provided an opportunity to compare the disarmament concepts of Member States and to identify differences in priorities. It also proved the need to enhance the role of multilateral forums in solving questions related to international peace and security in general and disarmament in particular.

The subject of a nuclear-test ban has been on the agenda of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral negotiating forums since the 1950s, but only partial results have been achieved so far. One of them is the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, known as the Moscow partial test-ban Treaty. Under its provisions, the original parties expressed their determination to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time. The same aim was recalled in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, signed in 1968.

The objective, however, has not yet been attained, despite more than 20 years of efforts. The time has now come for all-out concerted efforts to be made in an attempt to accelerate the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. Several initiatives have been put forward to that end. A moratorium on nuclear tests is repeatedly proposed by the Soviet Union, verification of nuclear tests by a number of non-nuclear States and the conversion of the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty by another group of non-nuclear States.

My delegation believes that only when we have put an end to nuclear tests can we hope to stop both horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. In this regard, my delegation shares the concern of many other delegations that South Africa may become a nuclear-weapon Power and adopt the doctrine of nuclear deterrence.

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

The growing determination to seek universal and equal security for all, the willingness to preserve the climate as part of the common heritage of mankind and the greater concern about the dumping of toxic and radiological waste in a number of regions encourage more effective international co-ordination and co-operation in solving global problems. In this regard, the initiative on the establishment of a comprehensive system of international peace and security proves to be realistic and appropriate in meeting the requirements of our time.

Of no less importance is the question of chemical weapons. In recent years the General Assembly has annually urged the Conference on Disarmament to intensify negotiations on a convention banning chemical weapons and has several times requested that its subsidiary body expedite the drafting of such a convention. This year, as the prospects of a ban on chemical weapons are far more promising than before, the international community expects everything to be done to achieve a convention at the earliest date. The Vietnamese people, who are still struggling very hard with the aftermath of large-scale chemical warfare, would not want to see other people falling victim to such weapons of mass destruction.

Now I turn to the question of a regional approach to disarmament, which has received considerable attention in recent years. While the ultimate goals of disarmament are essentially the same for all countries - namely, to achieve genuine security, to avert the danger of war and to release additional resources for peaceful ends - conditions between regions differ to such an extent that an acceptable first step could not be the same in all of them. In some cases first steps might focus on the peaceful resolution of disputes and in others on the reduction of forces or the establishment of security- and confidence-building measures with a view to setting up or maintaining an equitable force correlation.

(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

Zones of peace and nuclear-weapon-free zones fall within the regional approach. In this regard, mention should be made of such zones already established in Antarctica, Latin America and the South Pacific, and proposals for similar zones in Africa, the Balkans, Central Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and South-East Asia should be encouraged.

As far as a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean is concerned, owing to the meritorious and untiring efforts made by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean some progress on procedural matters as well as substantive issues has been recorded. But the differences in approach between States remain wide and prevented the Ad Hoc Committee from reaching a decision to hold its second session of 1988 in Colombo, pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 42/43. Our delegation is convinced that concrete actions to achieve the objectives of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace would be a substantial contribution to the promotion of international peace and security, as well as the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful development of the States of the region. In this connection, all necessary assistance should be given for the Ad Hoc Committee in order to facilitate the intensification of its work to fulfil its mandate and to enable the completion of its remaining preparatory work for the early convening of the conference in Colombo in 1990, as repeatedly called for by the General Assembly, in particular in its resolution 42/43.

In South-East Asia several initiatives have been proposed to make the region a zone of peace and stability, free of nuclear weapons. In July this year, at the Jakarta Informal Meeting, the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic put forward its seven-point proposal for making South-East Asia a zone of peace, friendship and co-operation. My delegation hopes that these initiatives will

(Mr. Pham Ngao, Viet Nam)

receive the support of all countries inside and outside the region, so that, like other regions of the world, South-East Asia may finally enjoy peace.

Bilateral disarmament measures coupled with multilateral agreements can reinforce the process of strengthening universal peace and security. The international community has the task of seizing the momentum created by the various positive developments and carrying it forward. The absence of polemics and the greater realism which have been evident in the general debate during recent weeks must continue to inspire and guide our actions. Substantial disarmament agreements are needed, in the interests of peace, security and development. Our Committee will again this year have to tackle a large number of important issues. There are opportunities for new ideas and innovative approaches to be applied. To this end, my delegation, together with others, will strive for consensus resolutions and decisions to be adopted in this Committee.

Mr. TAEB (Afghanistan): I should like first, Sir, to extend my congratulations to you on your unanimous election to chair the work of this important Committee during the forty-third session of the General Assembly and to congratulate the other officers of the Committee. I wish you all every success.

A number of recent developments have made a significant contribution to improving the international climate and have begun a new, promising era of movement towards the eradication of nuclear and chemical weapons and the resolution of regional conflicts by peaceful means.

The signing of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles has been welcomed by the international community as a historic event and an important step for the cause of disarmament.

(Mr. Taeb, Afghanistan)

The general improvement in Soviet-American relations, progress in disarmament talks, the joint endeavours to seek peaceful solutions for the hotbeds of crisis in various parts of the world and the necessity for multilateral co-operation to face the common problems of our world are the main trends of the present international situation.

None the less, it should be pointed out that general and complete disarmament is still a dream of all peace-loving nations. This is an issue related to the very survival of human civilization, the core of which is the threat of nuclear annihilation.

My delegation attaches great importance to the question of the prevention of nuclear war and nuclear disarmament. The fact that there can be no winner in a nuclear war has been widely acknowledged, even by those who once spoke of limited nuclear war. But merely understanding this truth is not an active step in removing the threat of nuclear destruction looming large over the world. Concrete measures must be adopted immediately to stop the world from falling into the abyss, which could happen not only by evil intent, but by a mere technical error. We hope that the new international atmosphere will enable the Conference on Disarmament to establish a working group to study the problem of the prevention of nuclear war.

(Mr. Taeb, Afghanistan)

The Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - although covering only a small percentage of nuclear arsenals, gives impetus to the issue of nuclear disarmament. The important achievement in the INF Treaty is its verification provisions, which open up new and unprecedented avenues for all other areas of arms regulation and disarmament negotiations, both bilateral and multilateral. We hope that this positive process will make it possible to bring to a successful conclusion the Soviet-American talks on a 50 per cent reduction of their strategic offensive nuclear weapons in the near future.

The issue of a comprehensive test-ban treaty has always been considered an urgent problem by the international community. Our position in this regard is clear: the Republic of Afghanistan fully shares the idea of a complete nuclear-test ban by all States. Such an approach would contribute to resolution of one of the most complicated problems in the field of nuclear disarmament - the task of preventing the qualitative upgrading of nuclear arms, the development of new types and varieties of weapon systems, and the modernization of nuclear arsenals. The international community hopes that the process begun by the partial test-ban Treaty, will be concluded with a comprehensive nuclear test-ban agreement.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been playing an important role as the international legal régime in the field of disarmament during the last two decades. In our view, the parties to the Treaty should make every effort to ensure success in the fourth review conference, to be held in 1990, for that would further strengthen the non-proliferation régime.

(Mr. Taeb, Afghanistan)

In order to secure what has been achieved so far in disarmament questions, and to make further progress in this sphere, the establishment of a multilateral verification system within the framework of the United Nations is an important issue at the present time. We support the establishment of such a system, in which all nations would be able to take part.

Outer space belongs to all nations, and it must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Therefore, we categorically oppose the introduction of an arms race into outer space, and the international community should focus its efforts on preventing the militarization of that sphere.

We welcome the progress made in the Conference on Disarmament and the shared desire for an early conclusion of universal and verifiable conventions on the complete prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons. Multilateral efforts in this area would rid mankind of such painful weapons of mass destruction.

Military expenditure is continuing to grow rapidly throughout the world. The negative consequences of this trend for the socio-economic development of all nations, particularly developing countries, have been studied widely and are known to every one of us. While military spending has been increasing, the developing countries have sunk deeper and deeper into despair and debt. Thus, all States, in particular the industrialized countries, have a crucial responsibility to take appropriate measures to reduce their military budgets, from which funds could be allocated to the socio-economic development of the most needy nations.

International arms transfers cover a great variety of transactions. With its negative implications for international peace, the supply of arms to areas of tension, particularly illegal arms trafficking, is a phenomenon that further aggravates tensions and undermines the internal security of some States, as well as regional security. In some cases, the arms supplied to irresponsible groups

(Mr. Taeb, Afghanistan)

engaged in terrorist and anti-government activities cause the loss of the lives of civilians, including women and children, and of national property. Unfortunately, my country is one of those to have suffered such loss. Even after the entry into force of the Geneva Agreements relating to Afghanistan, arms supplies continue to flow on foreign soil, to be transferred to extremist groups in Afghanistan. In the past three months over 800 innocent civilians, including women and children, have fallen victim to rocket attacks and bomb explosions. About 350 houses and 45 public buildings have been destroyed.

We believe that the new international spirit of co-operation, if it continues with good will, and if there is a constructive approach in the interests of all nations, should further strengthen regional and global confidence and lead to concrete progress towards a significant limitation of armaments and, consequently, to a reduced risk of war and an enhancement of international security.

Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic): In its second contribution to the debate, Mr. Chairman, my delegation will abide strictly by your appeal concerning adherence to rule 110 of the rules of procedure.

The German Democratic Republic expects this session to give important impetus to arms limitation and disarmament, and thus contribute to the work of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. And there are good reasons for doing so. A great deal has been said in this regard in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and in the general debate in this Committee.

After years of confrontation and competitive armament, there does indeed appear to be a turn for the better. So, a beginning has been made. This provides an opportunity for all of us to continue expeditiously the disarmament process that has been initiated, to ensure that no hiatus occurs, and to make the process irreversible. Let us remove mistrust, scepticism, reservation and opposition. Time is pressing. Not only do disarmament issues that have piled up for a long

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Republic)

time await rapid action; the upheavals occurring in science and technology keep presenting us with new challenges.

What is needed, therefore, is greater efficiency and effectiveness, as well as an action-oriented approach on the part of all multilateral disarmament bodies. This applies in particular to the Conference on Disarmament. It is true that, during this year's session of the Conference, progress was made. The report of the Conference, contained in document A/43/27, confirms this. We do not, of course, underrate the results. They should prove to be a sound foundation for further substantive steps. The report also shows, however, that much remains to be done in order to achieve, after twists and turns, an about-turn in the work of that body.

What has special priority for us in this endeavour is nuclear disarmament, a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and the elimination of chemical weapons.

(Mr. Dietze, German
Democratic Republic)

As a result of the implementation of the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - and of progress in the Soviet-American negotiations on drastic cuts in their strategic offensive weapons, a comprehensive approach to putting an end to the nuclear-arms race and to nuclear disarmament keeps gaining in relevance. Such an approach would require the inclusion of all nuclear-weapon Powers - indeed, all States and all types of nuclear weapons - and would call for preventing the modernization of existing, and the development of new, nuclear weapons. The German Democratic Republic is in favour of identifying - as a first step to be taken in parallel with bilateral negotiations - those issues that need to be discussed multilaterally. We believe that the proposals submitted by the USSR in 1986 and by India this year could be appropriate projects with which a start could be made.

In that connection let me point out the ideas put forward by my country at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in document A/S-15/23. We would suggest that at this session the General Assembly, in a substantive resolution, should come out in favour of mandating the Geneva Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. My delegation has prepared a draft resolution in that regard. Of equal importance would be General Assembly decisions aimed at preventing first use of nuclear weapons. As the author of General Assembly resolution 42/42 A, the German Democratic Republic is ready to undertake once again a corresponding initiative and hopes for the support of all Member States.

Nuclear disarmament means, first of all, a complete and general test ban. In the debate it has rightly been pointed out that unless nuclear-weapon tests cease, the elimination of one category of weapons would be less valuable and the arms race

(Mr. Dietze, German
Democratic Republic)

is expected that the Soviet Union and the United States will abide by the idea of preventing an arms race in outer space and ending it on Earth. The German Democratic Republic has set forth its position on that point in detail in document A/43/506/Add.1. We are in favour of strict compliance with the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty). The USSR proposal to include the radar station near Krasnoyarsk in the project for a world space organization should be considered carefully.

A good many initiatives were undertaken at this year's session of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament with a view to preparing the ground for result-oriented negotiations. Thanks to the committed stand of Ambassador Taylhardart of Venezuela, the Ad Hoc Committee on Outer Space has submitted a considerable number of proposals that show that there is indeed a substantial basis for a multilateral discussion of the subject. It is now time to take concrete measures to translate the manifold suggestions and ideas presented by States into practical negotiations on future global agreements. The Soviet proposals concerning the creation of an international system of verification of the non-stationing in outer space of weapons of any kind has, no doubt, lent fresh momentum to such an idea. I also wish to recall here the proposal put forward by the German Democratic Republic and Mongolia concerning the basic provisions of a treaty banning anti-satellite weapons and ensuring the immunity of space objects. My country hopes that the draft resolution to be adopted at this session of the General Assembly on the question of outer space will emphatically call for practical measures.

We are convinced that a global ban on chemical weapons must be agreed upon as soon as possible. The completion, without delay, of a convention on the subject is necessary, feasible and a matter of urgency. That is borne out by recent developments. Thanks to the able and energetic chairmanship of Ambassador Sujka of

(Mr. Dietze, German Democratic Republic)

All the progress made on such a convention notwithstanding, we note with concern that negotiations have slowed down, which, as is well-known, cannot be attributed solely to the complexity of the subject matter.

Bearing this in mind, we believe, first, that early and substantive results can be achieved if we focus on settling unresolved key issues, such as verification of the non-production of chemical weapons, challenge inspection and aspects of an international verification organization.

Secondly, the participation of as many States as possible in the exchange of data, suggested by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, would be very helpful in increasing the pace of negotiations. At this year's session of the Conference, my country has already submitted a host of data on such chemicals as are relevant to the convention.

Thirdly, trial inspections should be organized to examine the effectiveness in practice of provisions elaborated so far. In one of my country's chemical plants, preparations for a trial inspection are under way. An inspection at the national level is scheduled to take place this year. It is being prepared in such a way as to closely resemble a real inspection. The plant to be inspected will be a multipurpose facility with significant production and processing of a category II chemical.

In accordance with Article VI of the future convention, inspections will have to test procedures for verifying, first, that the substance produced is not diverted for purposes prohibited by the convention; secondly, that its use is consistent with the convention; and thirdly, that the facility is not used to produce certain category I chemicals, taking into account the specifics of the facility and its capacity for producing such chemicals.

(Mr. Dietze, German Democratic Republic)

measures with a view to an early completion of the convention. I believe that this is a timely initiative.

My second remark refers to our Committee. Taking particular account of the consultations held in Geneva, we deem it appropriate to schedule a meeting dealing specifically with the issue of chemical weapons. This would enable all delegations to obtain detailed information on the status of the negotiations and to receive guidance concerning national measures.

And finally, my delegation counts on the General Assembly duly to appreciate what has been achieved so far and to mandate the Conference on Disarmament to complete the drafting of the convention. The German Democratic Republic has prepared a relevant draft resolution and is ready for close co-operation with other delegations.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, all this requires an effective and efficient negotiating body. In this spirit, the German Democratic Republic will continue to be actively involved in the work of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. SALLAM (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): As I speak here before you for the first time on behalf of the two parts of Yemen, allow me, Sir, to express to you, at the outset, my sincere happiness at seeing you preside over the work of the First Committee. I would also like to express my extreme appreciation for all the efforts made by members of your distinguished Bureau and for their endeavours to make the work of the Committee a success.

Ancient yearnings for political and for economic hegemony over the regions of the planet rich in natural resources remain the motive power of the arms race. These yearnings were born with the industrial revolution in Europe, that is to say around 200 years ago, when European ships sailed East, West and South in search

(Mr. Sallam, Yemen)

This exploitation of the wealth of weaker countries went on for decades. The colonial powers amassed fabulous fortunes from the systematic exploitation of the natural resources and the cheap labour of women and children of their colonies in the production of raw materials and commodities.

Many industrialized countries continued, until the First World War, to exploit those human and natural resources. After that War, rapaciousness and the innate ill-will toward others revived and led to the stockpiling of military equipment and the development of new, relatively sophisticated weapons with the aim of subjugating mankind to fascism and nazism. The Second World War took a heavy toll in human life. European man, in an orgy of destruction, squandered the wealth he had amassed and threatened the continued existence of the civilization and culture he had built. European man destroyed himself with his own hand and fell victim to his own rapaciousness. All that which he had built over a long period of time was destroyed: the great material wealth, side by side with the more precious human wealth. All was sacrificed in the name of supremacy by one race over another, by one economic system over another.

We, the community of nations, had believed, after those two devastating conflicts, that the Second World War had to be the war to end all wars. We, therefore, established the United Nations whose Charter begins with these words, "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

From the outset, we, the members of the United Nations decided that dialogue was going to be the means of dealing with one another. We committed ourselves to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law. We undertook not to interfere in the internal affairs of each other and not to use or threaten to use force against one another. We solemnly undertook to respect fundamental human rights and uphold human dignity.

(Mr. Sallam, Yemen)

The two parts of Yemen - on whose behalf it is my honour to speak today - welcome the agreement between the two super-Powers, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, and their conviction that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. That conviction, along with an insistence on the elimination - even the gradual elimination - of weapons of mass destruction, are welcomed by the two parts of Yemen and by the international community as a whole.

This is a realization that has eased and continues to ease world tension. It will enable us to begin to focus attention on the reallocation of the wealth that was being squandered on weapons to the development of economic resources, the improvement of existing programmes and the introduction of new ones with a view to ensuring the well-being of all mankind.

We, therefore, appeal to those States which continue to pursue policies of aggression - such as South Africa and Israel - to forsake those policies and renounce the use of force. We call upon Israel to embrace dialogue and accept the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including the right to return to their homeland, to determine their own future, and to establish an independent State on their national soil under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), their sole, legitimate representative.

The two parts of Yemen call on the international community to urge Israel and South Africa to accede to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty and to place all their nuclear facilities under international supervision and inspection through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge Israel to announce its acceptance of the status of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and of the concept that outer space should not be used for military purposes.

(Mr. Sallam, Yemen)

All the funds and resources thus released will help meet the needs of the elderly and the very young for food, shelter and peace of mind. Everyone can then aspire to a future of life with dignity and, freedom from need, poverty, hunger and disease. The resources and funds released by disarmament and by cessation of the arms race will help us discover new food and natural resources in the seas and oceans and discover the secrets of outer space, which man is so keen on entering and getting to know. So let us work together with hearts filled with love and goodwill to create a future worthy of the dignity of man.

Mr. TAN (Singapore): Our Committee is meeting under changing and auspicious circumstances in the international arena, for 1988 will go down as a watershed year. We have witnessed an encouraging breakthrough in nuclear disarmament, which is also a result of the fundamental restructuring in international relations. This has also given new impetus to the search for a comprehensive solution to the problem of chemical weapons. From Afghanistan to Namibia, the Iran-Iraq war to Western Sahara, there is an infectious virus of non-violence. Peace is breaking out in many conflicts which once seemed intractable and insoluble. Indeed, one can be tempted to say that the cold war division which appeared after the Second World War is indeed fading away, if it is not already a thing of the past.

The most telling change must be the increasing desire of the two super-Powers to engage in dialogue and consultations. Since 1985, United States President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev have met at four summit meetings, an unprecedented number. The new atmosphere in the Soviet-United States relationship is best reflected by USSR Deputy Foreign Minister Petrovsky in his address to the non-governmental organizations Conference in September 1988, in which he asked:

(Mr. Tan, Singapore)

leaders appears imminent, and may be held as early as the spring of 1989.

The current mood in relations between the super-Powers reminds me of a Chinese folk-tale, which goes as follows:

"There was once an aged Oriental water-melon farmer who woke up one morning to find some of his soon to be harvested melons stolen. A paranoid character, he immediately suspected his long-standing neighbour. For days to come, he toiled and sweated to build even higher and stronger fences between their properties. No effort was spared; labourers were redeployed; money was spent on an assortment of booby traps. When all was completed, he discovered, much too late, that with his neglect of the crops everything had started to go bad. He also never found out who had initially stolen the melons."

While not many of us may be of farming descent, the simple point of the story is that building higher fences and setting booby traps do not help to harvest the melons.

The reason for the change in attitude of the super-Powers from confrontation to co-operation is simple. They have made prudent calculations and have realized that the arms race is a bottomless pit. Further, in a nuclear world, military might need not be automatically translated into real power and influence. As we are poised to enter the twenty-first century, a new industrial revolution is beginning to emerge. It is powered by advances in computers, robotics, biotechnology, nuclear power, space exploration and ultra-high-speed travel. Nations which can harness and propel themselves forward in this industrial revolution will ultimately command positions of technological, industrial and material superiority. The super-Powers have accepted that unless they make serious structural adjustments to their domestic situation and external relations they will be relegated to second- or even third-rate Powers in the twenty-first century.

(Mr. Tan, Singapore)

Just as the super-Powers are reassessing their interests and priorities, so we in the developing world must be equally bold in adjusting to the new world. Significantly, my delegation has noted that many leaders in their statements at this session have alluded to the following points.

(Mr. Tan, Singapore)

attention and resources to their economic development. This is rightfully acknowledged to be the spacecraft that will propel us into the twenty-first century. We in the developing world must not miss the take-off.

I am aware that the purpose of the general debate is to discuss specific issues of disarmament, which I have not addressed directly in my comments today. We felt, however, that the remarkable developments of 1988 have demonstrated that disarmament cannot realistically occur until and unless fundamental political decisions are taken, especially by long-standing adversaries, and that it does not serve the interests of their peoples or their Governments to continue with the conflicts, tensions and rivalry that we have seen over the past few decades. Once those fundamental political decisions are taken the processes of disarmament follow smoothly and quickly. That is why we encourage all nations of the world to carry out equally drastic reconsideration of their own policies to see whether all of us can march in step with the rapidly changing world.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to tell the representative of Singapore that I appreciated his watermelon story. As is often the case, a homely illustration conveys a gem of truth, and I thank him for it.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.