

United Nations

**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records*



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FIRST COMMITTEE
11th meeting
held on
Monday, 24 October 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 11TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.1/38/PV.11
31 October 1983

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

OBSERVANCE OF DISARMAMENT WEEK

The CHAIRMAN: This morning the Committee is observing Disarmament Week and it is a particular pleasure for me, on this occasion, to welcome to the Committee the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. We appreciate the fact that they have found time to be with us today. This testifies again to their dedication to the important work which is being done within the framework of the United Nations towards disarmament and arms control.

I have pleasure in calling upon the President of the General Assembly.

The PRESIDENT of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY (interpretation from Spanish): Once again, on the anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations, we mark the beginning of Disarmament Week, the week in which we attempt to focus attention, both here and in many other parts of the world, on the efforts needed to make progress towards disarmament.

Once again the world is seeing exacerbation of conflicts and worsening of international tension, lives cast away, property destroyed, families and societies caught in the deadly exchange of gunfire and hatred. On many occasions we have manifested our sorrow at the sufferings of the Lebanese nation and other peoples in different lands. Today we must express our profound feelings of sadness at the losses yesterday in Beirut. And over all the events of the past 12 months have loomed ever darker the threatening storm-clouds of an escalation of the nuclear threat, while charge and counter-charge, proposal and counter-proposal, have been made in volley after volley, seemingly perceived by the other side as intended for visual effect rather than for practical purposes.

Each side in the separate bilateral negotiations concerning strategic arms and intermediate-range nuclear forces, on which so much public attention is at present focused, has marshalled its arguments and sought to demonstrate its resolve. Nevertheless, no progress has been achieved and we have before us the prospect of yet another vicious twist in the spiral of the arms race. The world as a whole is spending enormous amounts of money, while at the same time a quarter of the world's population does not know where the next day's meal will come from.

(The President of
the General Assembly)

We are observing Disarmament Week this year at a time when the international situation is becoming increasingly threatening. Tensions and conflicts have intensified in several parts of the world. The arms race is poised, consequently, on the brink of a leap into a new phase of deadlier weapons of greater speed and accuracy. World military expenditures are reaching astronomical proportions, and the basic needs of millions of people, especially in the third world, continue to be denied them. The search for absolute security by the great Powers serves only to increase their sense of insecurity, and the nuclear arms arsenals pose a general threat to the very survival of mankind.

(The President of
the General Assembly)

This is truly a revolutionary situation that concerns all peoples and nations equally. We cannot go on in this way without gravely tempting fate. It was Einstein who warned that the advent of nuclear weapons had changed everything - except our ways of thinking and reacting to one another. Arnold Toynbee, the British historian, who analysed the rise and fall of civilizations, revealed that militarism and the arms race have been in the past the most common causes of the decline of 14 civilizations. Of course I do not refer to armed forces for national defence which are essential for self-preservation.

We must stop reacting to other societies in a military manner. We must cure the military mind before it is too late. It is significant that hundreds of thousands, millions, of people are staging anti-nuclear demonstrations. The irreversible consequences of nuclear war will affect all human beings everywhere. World public opinion has realized this and people - men, women and children - in many countries have begun to express their feelings in a variety of ways. It is they who will be the victims in a nuclear war and they are having their say about the risks to peace that they are not prepared to accept.

It is the fatal perversity of some men that makes them seek to guarantee peace by threatening the future of mankind, but what sort of peace is it that is based on terror? Terror by its very nature cannot be balanced and is likely to lead to error and war. Are we so bankrupt intellectually that we have nothing better to rely on for peace than the so-called balance of terror? Relations between human societies can never be peaceful if they are based on terror.

The military approach to political and security problems has never led to their solution. A decade ago President Kennedy was right in his belief that "the basic problems facing the world today are not susceptible of a military solution". The indifference of the military mind to life itself is a symptom of a terrible form of inhumanity, and the nuclear weapon symbolizes this inhumanity in the most extreme manner possible. There is much weight in the affirmation of those who believe that militarism is the characteristic not of an army but of a society. We cannot afford to think of the use of force in this age of nuclear weapons.

(The President of
the General Assembly)

Plato and Socrates believed that man was capable of rational choice and that a bad choice was the result of faulty thinking. The future of mankind depends as never before on rational thinking and right choice. We must return to the wise ways of thought of our ancestors who brought mankind to the present great heights of our civilization.

Here in the United Nations our Charter sets out as the first of our purposes the maintenance of international peace and security, and yet the world seems to have precious little of either. It is widely recognized that disarmament and international security must go hand in hand. No nation can be expected to risk its fundamental security in a climate of international mistrust and suspicion engendered by an arms race, particularly one of the dimensions that we are witnessing at the moment.

With all the moral responsibility and authority at my command as President of the General Assembly, I call on all Member States, particularly the leaders of the major Powers, to exercise the utmost care and caution in the coming weeks and months. What is needed is a bold, imaginative step to reduce tensions, to improve international relations, to promote development as well as international economic co-operation, and to turn away from the precipice that confronts us.

In launching the World Disarmament Campaign the General Assembly sought to inform, to educate and to generate public understanding of and support for the objectives of the United Nations in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. That Campaign, still in its early stages, is already attracting public attention to the nature of the international machinery, whether bilateral or multilateral, which persistently fails to find ways of achieving progress towards a better and safer future. A decisive element in restoring public confidence in an effective United Nations would be a demonstration in this Committee's deliberations here and in the multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in 1984 that common interests can be identified, that compromises can be made and agreement can be reached that will set the international community on the road towards disarmament.

(The President of
the General Assembly)

Our foremost task is to remove the threat of nuclear war and ensure the survival of mankind. At the same time negotiations on measures of disarmament should be pursued with greater imagination and realism and with emphasis on those eternal qualities that unite people rather than on those ephemeral things that divide us. Through the process of dialogue and discussion human societies can remove their misconceptions of one another and create the right climate for reaching agreement and accommodation. The United Nations was intended to be a forum for mutual understanding and for harmonizing the actions of nation States in the attainment of common ends. Let us use the United Nations for the purpose for which it was created.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and let us work together by word and deed to save succeeding generations from the danger of a world war - a nuclear war. The nuclear weapon is our common enemy, but, more than that, we are our own worst enemy. There are limits to everything - limits to enmity, limits to the arms race, limits to deterrence and limits to freedom of action. But there are no limits to the further evolution of the human species towards that higher goal of peace, justice and freedom.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call upon the Secretary-General.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL (interpretation from Spanish): It gives me great pleasure to address the Committee during its first meeting in Disarmament Week. I firmly believe that there is a need to take advantage of this important debate so that the Governments and the peoples of Member countries should concentrate, as much as possible, on the urgent need to make a start on the reduction of the increasingly vast and sophisticated arsenals of armaments. This is not the first time that we have met for this purpose. Notwithstanding the evident fact that at the present time there is much greater awareness of the grave dangers inherent in the arms race, particularly the nuclear one, it has to be acknowledged that the Governments of the world have not yet found the necessary formulas to achieve either a limitation of armaments or disarmament. We are not blind to the fact that, as is borne out by new evidence every day, the world is at a dramatic crossroads, because whatever path is chosen can have a direct impact on the destiny of the world and on the well-being of all its inhabitants. This is particularly so in the field of disarmament.

However, nothing justifies despair or resignation. We have valuable opportunities within our reach. On the one hand, the two major nuclear Powers are holding bilateral talks on strategic missiles and on intermediate-range missiles. It is true that these negotiations are taking place under the oppressive shadow of great tension and of profound bilateral disagreements. None the less, from the point of view of the security and prosperity of those same Powers, as well as of the other countries and peoples of the world, there is no doubt that the importance of an equitable and reliable agreement designed to reduce nuclear arsenals and limit their technological up-grading and their deployment transcends the importance of any bilateral disagreements. We well know that the problems involved are highly complex, but we must also admit that if the negotiations were to fail, the inevitable result would be a further intensification of competition in the nuclear-arms sphere and a new source of danger and fear for mankind. The negotiating Powers must duly weigh their colossal responsibility not just to their own peoples but indeed to the entire international community.

Given the particularly urgent nature of the situation with regard to intermediate-range weapons, it is my hope that the Soviet Union and the United States will give serious thought to the adoption of provisional measures which, should it prove necessary, would give more time for negotiations to achieve

(The Secretary-General)

positive results. In the sphere of strategic armaments, I believe that both parties must consider the possibility of setting up less dangerous and more stable systems, pending the attainment of the ultimate objective of the elimination of all nuclear weapons, but right now the most important thing is that the negotiations must go on. If they were abandoned the parties would have missed an opportunity which may well not present itself again and they would find themselves moving along a road fraught with dangers, while the other path, which offers more hope, would be unexplored. On the other hand, the broader forum of the Committee on Disarmament also provides opportunities for progress in the limitation of the threat posed by armaments and the enormous economic burden they represent. The comprehensive and useful studies which have been carried out with a view to the elaboration of a treaty on the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, the complete prohibition of nuclear testing and other disarmament questions are the basis for future progress and must be put to good use. The draft treaty on the prohibition of radiological weapons is at an advanced stage and I take the liberty of urging a renewal of efforts to bring about its prompt conclusion. Let us bear in mind that it is easier to reach an agreement on banning the deployment of a system of armaments or on the manufacture of a new series of weapons before and not after those systems and weapons have become an irreversible reality. Consequently, we must urge that the negotiations within the framework of the United Nations should continue with greater determination in order to establish a peaceful régime for outer space before military systems which could impede future negotiations are actually deployed there.

These are just some of the subjects to be considered in the Committee which is now dedicating all its efforts to disarmament issues in the light of their paramount importance for world security. It is fitting and auspicious that Disarmament Week should be starting on 24 October, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the United Nations. Apart from its concern with the arms build-up, as expressed in Article 26, the United Nations Charter, rather than defining the prerequisites for the maintenance of peace, attaches paramount importance to the need to avoid the use of force in the settlement of disputes and, on the other hand, establishes the principle of collective responsibility, entrusting its application to the Security Council, in order to guarantee the security of all the Member States. These provisions provide the firmest basis for the actual

(The Secretary-General)

reduction of armaments and can resolve the most tragic contradiction of our age, which is the fact that increasing expenditures on security fail to achieve security, but instead constitute - as the Charter implies - a diversion of human and economic resources to armaments which in turn gives rise to acute insecurity, especially in the developing world.

I thus appeal to the Governments represented in this Committee, as they proceed with their important work, to bear in mind the considerable progress which can be made in disarmament through a patient and constructive dialogue, in strict compliance with the principles and purposes of the Charter. This is the best way of achieving the rational utilization of the world's resources in order to meet the needs of so many millions of human beings and it is also the best road to a just and lasting peace.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Senegal, Mr. Sarré, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of African States.

Mr. SARRE (Senegal) (interpretation from French): This year we are celebrating Disarmament Week in what is unfortunately a somewhat pessimistic atmosphere. This is a period fraught with conflicts, when tensions have been constantly exacerbated and seem to be the harbinger of war rather than peace. This disturbing situation should confer special importance on this occasion. The improvement of international relations in an atmosphere more conducive to the promotion of disarmament is a particularly urgent matter for Africans, because not only do we live, like peoples in other parts of the world, under the constant threat of a nuclear holocaust, but in addition, we are powerless as we witness the squandering of enormous resources, which could have eradicated several times over the scourges that we and other peoples of the third world suffer from, namely, disease, hunger and ignorance.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

Thus our bitterness can be understood, as we see that indifference to our appeals has turned into deafness when any question arises that relates directly to the freedom and dignity of the peoples of the third world, and yet when we emerged four decades ago from the nightmare of war, we hoped that mankind would be able in future to prevent the outbreak of a new war by building a new system of international relations based on confidence, co-operation and solidarity. Today justice and peace have become a reality only for a small number of countries in the world. For the overwhelming majority the historic injustice that condemns them to living on the periphery is becoming increasingly intolerable, especially since the great scientific and technological advances that have been made in our time would have made possible considerable improvements in the lot of mankind at a cost far less than that of armaments.

At times the world seems to have forgotten the sense of what it is striving for. It is strange indeed to try to conquer outer space and to install devices of death there, and at the same time standing idly by while witnessing the deadly scourges of our time ravaging the world. In addition to these evils of our century, common to all of us, which we are trying over the short term to eliminate, we Africans have another danger to face, that of having to live side by side with a régime which everyone hastens to condemn, but which has nevertheless succeeded in obtaining help to discover the secret of how to produce atomic weapons. This threat is particularly real, since there is no evidence that South Africa, which does not hesitate nowadays to invade and occupy a good part of its neighbour's territories, would hesitate for a moment to use atomic weapons in times of crisis or in war. We believe that at this time the nuclear Powers have a decisive role to play in eliminating that threat. They should enter into specific binding commitments, guarantee observance of the non-nuclear status of Africa and refrain from transferring any nuclear technology to racist South Africa, whose policies they so vehemently condemn.

That would not be too high a price to pay to preserve the achievements of the non-proliferation régime, especially when we consider the consequences for international peace and security of possession by the leaders in Pretoria of atomic weapons, since everyone knows that their racial policies is likely sooner or later to lead to an unprecedented explosion.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

On this question of disarmament, so vital to the future of the world, the small countries have no alternative but to preach reason to the major Powers of the world which have in their hands the key to our common destiny. Yet, we are not sure that our appeals will be heard, still less heeded. All we can do is to hope that by appealing directly to national and world public opinion, as proposed in this Disarmament Week, we can create militant political forces capable of bringing the necessary pressure to bear on the various Governments to induce them to realize finally that there is no alternative to disarmament and peace if we do not want to see the smouldering embers of war throughout the world explode into a world-wide conflagration.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call Mr. El-Fattal, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and Chairman of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. EL-FATTAL (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic):

Mr. Chairman, I wish to offer you my delegation's cordial congratulations on the occasion of your election, and at the same time to thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the First Committee at this special meeting, on behalf of the Group of Asian States, over which it is my honour to preside.

The occasion that we are celebrating today is the beginning of Disarmament Week, which it is the custom of the United Nations to celebrate annually, since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, which, in its Final Document, instituted Disarmament Week to promote the aims of disarmament.

Although we are celebrating Disarmament Week for the fifth consecutive year, we see with regret and bitterness that thus far the nations have made no progress towards disarmament. Moreover, the international community feels that no progress has been achieved in the spheres covered by the first special session on disarmament and that no worth-while measure has been taken to bring about disarmament, although the second special session on disarmament, in 1982, which was itself a failure, stressed the importance of disarmament. The international situation has been steadily worsening. There is a climate of distrust prevailing which affects relations among the major Powers. The signs of a cold war are

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian
Arab Republic)

beginning to loom over international relations and as a result the arms race seems to be a priority for certain Powers, in particular the nuclear Powers.

The conventional arms race has accelerated recently as a result of the fears of certain countries, especially small and developing countries, that the policy of aggression, intervention and occupation is becoming common practice. The fears and misgivings of the countries of the world are due to the build-up in the arms race and its consequences: in other words, the danger of a nuclear war that would wipe out the whole of mankind. We all realize that a nuclear war would not be limited, that there would be neither victor nor vanquished, and that a nuclear war could not be confined to a specific region. Thus a nuclear war would mean the end of the world.

If Disarmament Week, which we are now celebrating for the fifth time, has secured any positive results, it is the feeling of indignation of the peoples of the world, who are standing out against the arms race and the installation of nuclear weapons. Disarmament Week has been successful in that respect, and has made public opinion in different parts of the world more sensitive to these issues.

In speaking about Disarmament Week and evaluating its results I would like first to take up two important issues closely related to disarmament and which constitute a matter of global concern: the relationship of disarmament to development, on the one hand, and international security, on the other.

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab
Republic)

The great enemy of development in the third world countries is their increasing desire to acquire weapons, since in order to defend their frontiers, their independence and their resources against the Zionist, fascist, racist régimes in various parts of the world, or against aggressive imperialist forces, the developing countries are forced to buy weapons and to squander their financial resources on those purchases instead of devoting them to economic and social development. A quick glance at the situation in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East clearly shows how gloomy the picture is in those regions. Millions of people are afflicted with sickness, illiteracy, hunger and malnutrition in those countries. The \$800 billion spent annually on the purchase of weapons would have been enough, if used rationally, to change the situation of those countries. There is no denying that disarmament is not a matter that concerns only the nuclear Powers, and in particular, the super-Powers. It affects all the countries of the world, most of which are represented in this hall.

I wish to point out the essential link between disarmament and international security. International security will continue to be under threat as long as a policy of the might, hegemony, domination, aggression, annexation, and the occupation of foreign territory remains the official ideology of certain régimes in various parts of the world and is carried out by force of arms. We have no guarantee that we can avoid a conflict by pinning our faith to the possibility of using nuclear weapons within a limited area and to a limited extent. Peace-loving countries have categorically rejected this doctrine. The Asian countries are non-nuclear-weapon States, and any Asian country which is trying to make use of nuclear energy is doing so for peaceful purposes. We support the idea of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and most of us have already signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

What we find particularly disturbing on the other hand, are the attempts of the Zionist régime in occupied Palestine to develop weapons of mass destruction in co-operation with the racist régime of South Africa. International intelligence-gathering has shown that the enemy has already acquired a nuclear-weapon capacity, and it should be noted that it has refused to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

(Mr. El-Fattal, Syrian Arab Republic)

At the beginning of this Disarmament Week, let us reaffirm that we shall spare no effort in this cause and restate our full support for our Organization, in which we have placed all our trust, so that we can carry out this difficult task and seek solutions to the problems the world must face today.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call upon Mr. Gurinovich of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, who is speaking on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. GURINOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): I have the great honour of speaking as Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States at this special meeting at the beginning of Disarmament Week. This present Disarmament Week happens to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the Moscow Conference, attended by the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom. That Conference adopted, among other important documents, a four-Power declaration on questions of general security; in those harsh years of the Second World War, the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and China stated, in paragraph 4 of their declaration - that they recognized the need to establish, as early as possible, a universal international organization for the maintenance of international peace and security, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving States, and whose membership would be open to all such States, large and small.

Two years later the United Nations Charter was drafted, signed and entered into force, the Charter of an organization which now has 158 Members.

In the declaration to which I have referred the parties recognized the need to establish and maintain international peace and security in the post-war period and - again - I quote from the declaration - with the least possible diversion of world human and economic resources for armaments.

They went on, in paragraph 7 of the declaration, to state that they would confer and co-operate with each other and with the other Members of the United Nations in order to achieve practicable comprehensive agreements for the regulation of armaments in the post-war period.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

It must be acknowledged that peace-loving forces have succeeded in achieving certain definite results in their struggle for the limitation and prevention of the nuclear arms race in various respects. Evidence of this is provided by the drafting and adoption of a number of treaties and conventions on the subject that are now in force. Otherwise, the situation would be even worse.

But we are also obliged to note that the threat of nuclear war has grown considerably, that the nuclear weapons now in existence are being constantly developed, that those means of destruction and annihilation which used to be given the old-fashioned name of conventional armaments are in no way comparable to the armaments of the Second World War, and that now annual military expenditures are much higher than they were during the years of the Second World War.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

In other words, it is the fault of the forces of imperialism and reaction, that it has not proved possible to achieve the aim of the least possible diversion of world human and economic resources for armaments. The acute need for this not only has not been reduced, but indeed has grown, taking into account the tasks facing mankind in the elimination of hunger, disease, illiteracy, housing shortages, unemployment and inflation, in overcoming the economic backwardness of the young independent countries and of individual areas and population groups in the developed capitalist countries, and in guaranteeing stable and constant economic and social progress for all peoples.

We do not want the Disarmament Week proclaimed by the United Nations to be limited to the customary ritual speeches. We want it instead to become a powerful stimulus to joint efforts to strengthen peace, to avert the danger of nuclear war, and to achieve agreements on real measures of nuclear and conventional disarmament, up to and including general and complete disarmament.

The World Disarmament Campaign, in which the peoples of the world are taking part ever more energetically, must play a part in this endeavour. It is our duty to heed the voice of the peoples and respond to their yearnings.

I should like to make a slight digression from the official style of my statement at this point. We all know that the children of different countries react identically to what they find pleasant or what they find unpleasant: they all laugh and cry in the same way. Once they have learnt to speak, naturally in their own language, they all express identically their attitude to what is good and to what is bad. As the years go by, differences come about in their attitude to what is happening around them. They then begin to adhere to different political, moral and other views and take a different position on religion and the state of affairs within their own country and abroad. But today practically all the peoples, regardless of race and the social structure of the country in which they live, all people of good will, from schoolchildren to old-age pensioners, whatever language they speak, all want the same thing. In a polyglot world we hear ever more loudly proclaimed the same demand: peace, not war; disarmament, not a nuclear catastrophe; co operation, not confrontation.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

We are deeply convinced that the time has come for the politicians and diplomats of all countries at long last to make a similar choice and, combining their efforts, find constructive and mutually acceptable solutions to the pressing problems of our time, including those in the sphere of disarmament. They must respond to the demands of the people in whose name they speak in the international arena.

The United Nations is now discussing a whole range of disarmament questions and each delegation is making a detailed statement of its position on them. In this connection, I wish briefly to recall that the States of the socialist community, proceeding from the provisions of their joint documents adopted in Prague, Moscow and Sofia this year, have already submitted for consideration a complete set of constructive proposals. In the communiqué of the conference of Foreign Ministers of States parties to the Warsaw Treaty held in Sofia on 13 and 14 October this year, the participants:

"stressed the special importance and urgency of the proposals and initiatives of States parties to the Warsaw Treaty towards averting nuclear war, carrying on and enhancing the process of détente, halting the arms race, especially the nuclear arms race, and launching disarmament, strengthening security and developing co-operation in Europe and the world as a whole. They expressed the determination of their States to make every effort to implement these proposals and initiatives".

Fundamentally our proposals relate to the condemnation of nuclear war: the prevention of nuclear war; the need for all nuclear Powers which have not yet done so to undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons; the renunciation of the deployment in Europe of new medium-range nuclear weapons and the reduction of those weapons, and the limitation and reduction of strategic armaments; nuclear disarmament; the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and a simultaneous freeze by all the nuclear Powers, primarily the Soviet Union and the United States, on nuclear weapons, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests.

(Mr. Gurinovich, Byelorussian SSR)

Our proposals relate to agreement not to increase military expenditures; the reduction of conventional armaments and armed forces; the prohibition of the militarization of outer space and the use of force in space and from space against the earth; a ban on and the elimination of neutron and other weapons, including new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction; and the liberation of Europe from chemical weapons as a first step towards a world-wide prohibition and elimination of such weapons.

In short, acceptance of our proposals would amount to the renunciation of the use of either nuclear or conventional weapons by any State against any other States.

In other words, we advocate agreements on the basis of the principle of equality and equal security. We advocate a world without wars and without the accumulation of stockpiles of armaments. We call upon all other countries to associate themselves with our efforts to achieve these aims by making use also of the possibilities of the World Disarmament Campaign, to which the socialist States have made an appropriate contribution.

We advocate that all peoples should be freed of the danger of a nuclear disaster and have an opportunity to devote their efforts to creative purposes, in conditions of undisturbed peace.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of El Salvador, Mr. Rosales Rivera, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Latin American States.

Mr. ROSALES-RIVERA (El Salvador)(interpretation from Spanish): I have the honour to speak at the beginning of this commemorative Week, which is part of the World Disarmament Campaign, on behalf of the Latin American Group which, as in the past, gives its full support to all initiatives relating to this item.

The deterioration of the international situation makes it particularly urgent that attention be given to disarmament, for the climate of international tension and the various sources of conflict in the world are all events which foster the escalation of rivalry between the super-Powers. Latin America as a

(Mr. Rosales-Rivera, El Salvador)

whole fully supports the fight for disarmament at all levels as regards conventional weapons, intermediate-range missiles, long-range nuclear forces and, of course, outer space, which must be preserved from use for strategic or military purposes. Regrettably, this last dimension has become the object of the efforts to gain nuclear supremacy.

The area of conventional weapons is a source of special interest to Latin America. The arms race cannot be dissociated from its harmful effects on the economic development and social development of States. Armament and development are opposing directions. Unfortunately, threats to the security of States and imbalances caused by the unequal growth of the military weapons of certain countries in the same subregion conspire against the reduction of military expenditure. Plans for economic and social development are curbed and vast basic needs remain unsatisfied.

This is illustrated in resolution 37/95 A, in which the General Assembly:

“Declares once again its conviction that it is possible to achieve international agreements on reduction of military budgets without prejudice to the right of all States to undiminished security, self-defence and sovereignty;

“Reaffirms that human and material resources released through the reduction of military expenditures could be reallocated to economic and social development, especially for the benefit of the developing countries.” (resolution 37/95 A, paras. 1, 2)

(Mr. Rosales-Rivera, El Salvador)

The figures on world-wide military expenditures are astronomical - more than \$550 billion a year - and the amount spent on economic development is insignificant in comparison. The link between disarmament and development is very relevant and important and has therefore rightly been stressed in international forums. The present trend must be reversed, in the interest not only of the countries of the third world but of the international community at large which would stand to gain. Furthermore, the accumulation and upgrading of weapons do not themselves bring security. On the contrary, the world has become more insecure and a riskier place in which to live because of the arms race.

In détente, there is a perception of good faith and confidence and a sense of security which is a psychological resource conducive to a greater degree of co-operation among States that can, in turn, bring about a reduction in armaments and take us closer to the concept of general and complete disarmament. This premise, based on the building of an atmosphere of mutual confidence, applies to conventional weapons and to nuclear weapons and other sophisticated methods of warfare.

We believe that substantive progress in the Geneva bilateral negotiations would have a positive impact on multilateral negotiations. Both forms of negotiation are interrelated.

When we consider the present state of the reduction of conventional weapons, we very often find that among those involved are not just the two States concerned in the conflict. In the event of a nuclear arms race, however, it is the super-Powers which bear the burden of responsibility for the fate of the world. The others concerned play minor roles even though, paradoxically, a failure in negotiations and a nuclear war would irrevocably affect all mankind. That is why the voices of all the peoples of the world, as potential victims of a nuclear war, must be heard in equal measure in representative international organizations such as the United Nations, the special sessions of the General Assembly which have been held under the aegis of the United Nations, and also in secondary bodies such as the Committee on Disarmament.

(Mr. Rosales-Rivera, El Salvador)

In this regard, Latin America supports the work of the Ad Hoc Committee for the World Disarmament Conference. That Conference, as the Ad Hoc Committee has said, must be the result of consensus, bearing in mind the appropriate conditions. In addition, it should be preceded by proper preparation and commitment to universal goals and universal participation.

Although the awareness of the threat of a nuclear holocaust to the fate of the world has been particularly keen in the developed countries as a result of the media -- and this certainly applies to Western Europe and North America -- there has also been a reasonable level of concern in the third world.

Most people in Latin America consider that their overriding needs have to do with everyday matters such as bread, housing, clothing and work. An understanding of the problems of nuclear war has been shown mainly by the intellectual elites and by Governments. But to be honest, it is not a need which is felt among the masses. Each social community expresses its own concerns.

Latin America was nevertheless the first region which concerned itself with the threat of atomic weapons. The Tlatelolco Treaty and its protocols are eloquent proof of this. Now other regions of the world are following our example.

Of course, in the whole problem of disarmament, the element of effective international control is of primary importance, for it supports the psychological factor of confidence and the subsequent verification that commitments entered into are truly honoured. So there must be reasonable machinery for verification.

The United Nations has been dealing with the question of disarmament as one of its primary objectives. This is clear from Article 26 of the Charter. Ever since its beginning, this world Organization has been associated with this difficult undertaking which has been slow and elusive and which has often been in a state of stagnation. This is the context in which we must view the report of the Committee on Disarmament.

It would seem that the resolutions adopted year after year on disarmament are in inverse ratio to their effectiveness. But they must be seen as an expression of the concern which exists on the subject. The present generations must meet this challenge for their responsibilities go beyond what would have been imaginable just a few years ago, for they are dealing with the destiny of mankind.

(Mr. Rosales-Rivera, El Salvador)

As was stressed by the independent commission, in the nuclear era war cannot be an instrument of policy but merely a mechanism for unprecedented destruction. This places the problem of disarmament in a context beyond the applied sciences and advanced technology. It goes beyond the field of politics and enters the field of ethics. No generation has the right to determine the fate of future generations nor does it have the right to eliminate the human race. The power of nuclear destruction is immense.

For all these reasons, Latin America gives its support to disarmament and applauds initiatives to mobilize world public opinion in the world Disarmament Campaign, to which this week is contributing, a week which begins precisely on United Nations Day. Is it not ironic that just a week ago we celebrated World Food Day and were told that 450 million people are suffering from hunger, while today more than \$1 million a minute are being spent on the arms race? Can we continue with this dialectic of contradictions which the present generation is witnessing?

Latin America trusts that common sense will prevail.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of France, Mr. Louet, Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. LOUET (France) (interpretation from French): In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States, I take great pleasure in congratulating you, Sir, on your accession to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I wish also to congratulate the other offices of the Committee. We are sure that your concern for objectivity and your great competence, which we all recognize, will lend great impetus to the work of the First Committee.

For the sixth consecutive year, the General Assembly is celebrating Disarmament Week, beginning today, 24 October, the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. It might be useful to recall that the practice instituted by the first special session on disarmament is a response to the legitimate concern for involving the peoples of our countries in the efforts being made to promote disarmament. While it is primarily for our Governments to carry on a determined quest for significant progress in this field, the difficulty of the endeavour and the magnitude of the stakes make it quite right that their efforts should be accompanied by a flow of information to the populations who should be made more aware of what is happening.

(Mr. Louet, France)

This concern is now more justified than ever at a time when there is increasingly acute awareness of the danger to peace of the lack of progress in this field. We are thus convinced that the activities in connection with this Week will help unite the entire international community in the search for ways of reducing military arsenals. After all, this is what it is about and it is worth recalling this in a context and at a time when there is no lack of declarations of good intent and when the need for specific significant measures was never more clear.

I should like to reaffirm the support of the Group of Western European and other States for all the efforts to achieve genuine disarmament in a more harmonious and united international community.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.