

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 21 February 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Aldo Pugliese (Italy)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 488th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all, allow me to welcome warmly to the Conference the Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, who is to address us today. His Eminence Cardinal Casaroli is a diplomat with a wealth of experience well known to us all. He began his career at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, and then entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1940. Appointed the Church's Under-Secretary for Public Affairs in 1961, he became an archbishop and Secretary of the Church's Council for Public Affairs in 1967. In 1979, he was created a cardinal by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, who chose him as his Secretary of State. He has evinced a special interest in United Nations affairs, especially in the field of disarmament, and last year addressed the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It was his Eminence who strengthened the close co-operation that has always existed between the Holy See and the United Nations.

Starting in 1963, he embarked on a policy with a profound universalist spirit, one of the major aspects of which is what later came to be called the Holy See's Ostpolitik, and in 1971 he deposited the Holy See's instrument of accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in Moscow. His presence among us today, in a particularly important phase of our work, provides yet further proof of His Holiness's concern for and interest in the major problems confronting mankind. It is with pleasure that I now have the honour to give the floor to His Holiness's Secretary of State, His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Casaroli.

Cardinal CASAROLI (Holy See) (translated from French): The person who has the honour to address you today, and who thanks you for having offered him the opportunity to do so, represents before you a Power (if one can use that word) which is in no way military. Its weapons are exclusively moral and spiritual in nature, and thus very different from those that your Conference has to concern itself with. However, there are few parties in the world who are more interested than the Holy See in the problems of disarmament, and who follow work on this subject with such attention. The active presence of a permanent observer mission to the Conference is an eloquent sign of this. I can assure you that none of your initiatives, none of your efforts, pass us by unnoticed.

What is involved first and foremost is the common interest of all those who live on our planet, and for whom the weapons of all categories that have been accumulating for decades on Earth, in the atmosphere, and even in outer space, represent both a guarantee of security and a threat. But to a greater extent it is an interest based on deeper reasons, that is to say concerns of an ethical nature. It is true - and this is the first reaction of many people - that matters relating to arms and disarmament involve many technical aspects, which are rightly pursued and studied thoroughly by experts. And these matters are part of the political context of relations between States, blocs of States, regional, continental or global alliances: a complex fabric woven and rewoven by statesmen and by international political leaders, which sometimes develops in opposition to their efforts and their forecasts. It

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would, however, be fatal to forget the specifically moral problems and repercussions related to these questions. In the final analysis they have to do with man, his survival, his integrity, the possibility for him to live a dignified life and to develop in a way which is in keeping with his rights and his vocation: man, the centre of our universe and of history. These problems, which the experts on armaments are of course aware of, and which are not forgotten by statesmen, constitute for the Holy See (but assuredly not for the Holy See alone) an absolute priority and a dominant concern.

It is this very lack of competence in the technical and political aspects which makes it possible for the Holy See to take what one might call a clearer look at the moral questions: a look that is not disturbed by considerations of any other order, however necessary they may be. And for those who like you who cannot ignore those other considerations, perhaps this will arouse a little more attention to hear what the Holy See has to say. In a world that suffers from the pressure of problems and concerns presented by a situation that seems to want to follow only the lines laid down by the opposition of military and economic forces or the interests of social classes and peoples, this voice seeks to bear witness to the supreme requirements of a moral nature, and in particular to provide a reminder of them, which reaches as far as the everyday lives of peoples.

Many years of experience teach me that in the current world situation the unarmed word of the Holy See, if it is not always followed, is generally listened to with respectful attention and often, if I am not mistaken, with gratitude, like that of a friend who is trying to express in a disinterested fashion the profound voice of the conscience of mankind. At least that is the role the Holy See gladly assumes in the great community of nations, including those who are furthest away from it from the point of view of religion or ideology. And it wishes to express its gratitude to that community for the very cordial welcome it receives.

Quite rightly, the question of disarmament is seen as being closely linked with that of peace: the more States arm themselves, the greater the dangers of conflagration, which in a way are increased by arms themselves; the more military arsenals are reduced, the less temptation there is to use them. This spontaneous feeling stands in opposition to an old and well-routed conviction that is well expressed in the old Latin adage Si vis pacem, para bellum - If you want peace, prepare for war. In other words, arm yourself: the better armed you are, the more you will ward off the danger of war. It is not difficult to recognize in this succinct expression, in what one might call its "essential" form, the philosophy of modern "deterrence". Justice, and the interests of different nations and humanity, require a careful and measured approach - from the moral viewpoint too - to a problem that is so fundamental where principles are concerned and has so many concrete consequences in terms of life or death.

I was struck by the remark of a scientist, certainly not a man lacking moral concern, who, when discussing the possibility of carrying out an ambitious "defence" project and its foreseeable or disturbing implications, concluded that all things considered he found it more practicable - still - less dangerous and more useful for peace to continue to hold to the

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principle of "honest deterrence". Quite apart from the worth of his scientific and technical arguments, the collocation of these two terms was bound to make one think. I also remember the reply given by Pope Paul VI to a statesman from a major country who cited to him these very words of ancient Roman wisdom. Oh no, was the Pope's reaction, with the calm and sometimes only apparent candour that was characteristic of him, "Si vis pacem, para pacem". Of course, the statesman could have replied that the aim was the same, peace; the only difference was the judgement as to the most effective way of achieving the goal. Realism against idealism, one could have said. The solid ground of reality against the generous calculations and the illusion of good will.

But is it really so? For thousands of years, war was regarded as a means of conquest and glory which was more or less customary and acceptable for nations that were expanding or were forcefully asserting their will to achieve supremacy and domination over other peoples: for conquerors and strategists of genius seeking laurels and power. I do not need to retrace before you the long, hard and fitful evolution that has led humanity little by little to become aware of the morally unacceptable nature of such a concept and the behaviour that it inspires. Increasingly, princes and peoples who continued to make war - and God knows how many of them there were! - felt the need either to refuse to accept that they had taken the initiative, or to invoke powerful, almost unavoidable reasons for taking up arms. Now renunciation of the use of force, and even the threat of force, to have one's real or alleged rights accepted, is recognized as a principle of modern international law, and one may legitimately resort to the use of arms only in the case of an imposed war or if one needs to defend oneself. Even recourse to a "first strike" to prevent an attack that one expects or fears from the other party is in theory subject to such conditions that everyone prefers not to be seen as responsible for it. This attitude, inspired by legal or moral considerations, has been confirmed by the growth of the destructive potential of armaments which "progress" has put in the hands of the opposing armies and which has made the consequences of war increasingly less "tolerable" even for the winner. The appearance of the atomic bomb on the scene of history finally provoked the decisive crisis of a political philosophy which had not, and still has not, been able to deprive the very idea of war in relations between peoples and countries of its acceptability.

The terrible potential for destruction of the side which is attacked, and self-destruction of the attacker, which is characteristic of nuclear weapons, with their devastating consequences in space and time beyond the theatre of operations and the period of conflict, has given rise to the new concept of a "weapon made in order not to be used". Its very existence should be a sufficiently sure deterrent against possible attacks. Yet the dangers of such a threatening presence in the world very quickly became obvious: the boundary between the effectiveness of deterrence, even the most powerful deterrence, and the preponderance of elements that release the self-defence mechanisms linked with mutual mistrust, is still uncertain, and as long as arms are available it is a line that is too easy to cross, either in a moment of panic or because of inefficiency or error in the operation of the sophisticated electronics by means of which modern man seeks to make up for the insufficiency and slowness of his capacity to concentrate and react. In any event, if it is

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to be "credible" deterrence cannot rule out the actual use of threatened retaliation. If this is particularly true for nuclear weapons, given the lightning speed of their use and the destruction they cause, we should not exclude the other categories of weapons of mass destruction, or even what are called conventional weapons, which, in increasingly sophisticated form, are filling the arsenals of small and large countries alike.

The conviction has thus been forged, increasingly strongly and widely, that it is now necessary to remove from men's hands the instruments they need to make war on one another - in other words, we must come to disarmament. This is a relatively modern concept in the history of mankind, but one which is becoming increasingly necessary, also because of the way things are: even though, regrettably, it still appears easier to issue grand declarations of principle and stick to general intentions rather than to go into the specificity of the problems. The horrors of the Second World War led the newly established United Nations to include among its first aims the elimination of arsenals of nuclear weapons and the principal weapons of mass destruction, and later also the problem of conventional weapons, and since 1978 there have been three special sessions devoted to the problem of disarmament. You know much better than I do the history which, starting in 1945, led to the setting up of the present Conference on Disarmament, to which I am happy to pay tribute today, not only because of its importance and its almost universal representativeness, despite its necessarily limited membership, but particularly because of the work it has done and which it still has to do. You are the United Nations body that is responsible for multilateral negotiations on arms limitation and disarmament. It is true that the most acute problem today, that of atomic weapons, is in practice in the hands of the two major nuclear Powers. But you are not uninvolved in this, and not only because of the special interest with which you have followed the development of negotiations on that subject and your satisfaction, shared throughout the world, at its positive results, with the hope that they will be built upon in accordance with the aspirations of peoples.

Your Conference has also put among the items that go to make up what has been called its "Decalogue" the question of nuclear weapons in all their aspects; it keeps on its agenda subjects such as the banning of nuclear tests, the halting of the arms race, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. Even if on those points your work has not produced concrete results, it does show the great interest of your Conference in those problems, and it should be pursued with tenacity.

The historic changes that have taken place in the international climate, because of and following the new Soviet-American approach to disarmament questions, could have a positive influence in allowing progress at the multilateral level, which is your purview. Your interest in it and the success wished for in the future are bound in turn to improve the climate still further, by stimulating and encouraging the good will of those who want to bring humanity relief from the nightmare caused by the mass of weapons threatening life and progress, through bilateral and multilateral approaches which can increasingly be seen to be necessarily complementary.

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In this way there is a very wide area open for efforts by your Conference. Wide, of vital importance. And difficult. Your commitment deserves to be recognized, with your tenacity either for promoting real negotiations or for conducting exploratory discussions which must precede and prepare for the phase of negotiations per se. Of course the rule of consensus which governs your decisions is bound to slow down the work of the Conference; but that rule is dictated by understandable reasons, because you are dealing with subjects that concern the security of every State and of the international community. This difficulty and the slowness that it brings about can easily lead to a certain pessimism and discouragement; particularly because the "multilateral" nature of your field of action does not concern just a multiplicity of countries but also, in one way, the multiplicity of questions relating to disarmament, in so far as it is natural enough for a country that possesses weapons on which it bases its security to be reluctant to give them up if other countries are not ready to give up, in turn, other types of weapons that could threaten that security. But neither this difficulty nor the magnitude of the task should cause a dampening or cooling of your efforts, which are maintained by the awareness that you are working for a cause of vital importance for humanity, as I have said.

The dream of universal and complete disarmament, a world without weapons, returns from time to time to the minds of men, with the attraction of beautiful things, perhaps too beautiful to be realizable. While serving peace, disarmament itself needs peace to be able to be realized and maintained. And peace, to be possible and maintained, needs justice. Universal justice, in turn, would require an authority above the parties, universally recognized and accepted, which also had the means to enforce its decisions. In the prophecies of Isaiah of olden times, which have also found a place at the United Nations in New York, we read: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." But we also read, as a premiss for such a welcome change: "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people" (Isaiah 2, 4).

"He will judge ...": but who will judge, today? Without giving up this perspective, within which not dreams, but the requirements of political logic and particularly of morality confront what we see as the lack of logic of a reality subjected to selfish impulses as strong as, for example, exacerbated nationalism or the rivalries of races, ideologies or interests, it is necessary, at the same time, to consider this reality in order to try to improve the various elements of it, where possible, and as time allows, always taking into account the limits imposed by ethics and the ultimate ideal which humanity should never give up (I like the assertion that "you cannot achieve the possible without aiming at the impossible", and I find it to be true).

In 1979 your "Decalogue" presented you with an ambitious picture of sectors where you could work. Notable among them, because of the seriousness of the problem and the emphasis placed on it by the United Nations General Assembly and the international community, is the problem of chemical weapons. Last year the Conference on Disarmament, which has long been active in this area, and aware of "its responsibility to conduct as a priority task the negotiations on a multilateral convention on the complete and effective

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prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and on their destruction, and to ensure the preparation of the convention", re-established the Ad hoc Committee entrusted with pushing that process ahead. It is the wish of the Holy See that your work, backed up by the results of the recent Paris Conference that brought together the signatory States of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and other States, and stimulated by the request made to you to redouble your efforts as a matter of urgency, will be crowned with the success the world is awaiting as fast as possible. This result will be parallel to those that humanity also expects in the domain of nuclear weapons, remembering always the horrors for which chemical weapons have already been or can still be responsible, and the durability of their harmful effects, even decades after they have been used. On this point I think that no security argument can be reasonably put forward against the aim of complete and unreserved disarmament, while acknowledging the existence of many technical or legal problems in its execution. If cruelty and the involvement of the civilian population are characteristic to some extent of any type of modern weaponry, as far as chemical weapons are concerned, or those like them, the cruelty factor, one might say, is there in the pure state, that is without any of the corresponding advantages of a military nature - advantages which are debatable and in some cases unjustifiable - that are inherent in other types of weapon used for "deterrence".

There remains the question of an effective system of verification and control, a question which is just as important in all the other schemes for the complete elimination or the "progressive and balanced" reduction of weapons, to maintain an equal balance, particularly in the strategic area, which is still regarded as essential for safeguarding peace. On this problem your Conference is certainly able to provide a focus and a contribution that I think are particularly valuable.

The road to peace is long and difficult. There is no doubt that disarmament offers one of the most effective and most fundamental means to achieve peace; but the path to disarmament is not short or easy either. And in particular, it is still insufficient. It is still more necessary to achieve moral and political disarmament, to try to eliminate, or at least to reduce as far as possible, at the same time as arms, the motives that move men and peoples to use those arms: the desire for domination and oppression on the one hand, and on the other a well-founded fear of becoming the object of aggression in one's own existence, in one's rights and vital interests, in one's independence, in one's freedom, which is more valuable than life itself. Confidence-building measures are increasingly winning acceptance in relations between nations. We must encourage and develop them. But it is even more important to promote and improve the system of political dialogue, strengthened by the use of the various possible forms of good offices, mediation or arbitration - perhaps even made mandatory under appropriate arrangements. In the current situation the United Nations, with its own structures, is the best means that the international community has in this area. I hope you will forgive me if I also mention here in passing what the Holy See was able to do at a particularly critical moment in the southern zone of South America, as a result of Pope John Paul II's mediation between Chile and Argentina.

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International law still has a long road to travel before it manages to effectively reconcile the supreme cause of peace with those of sovereignty and the legitimate rights and interests of all nations large and small. That is a noble task which is incumbent on statesmen and on politicians, on the leaders of international life, and the scientists of our time. The Conference is not unfamiliar with this task, and for more than one reason, particularly because disarmament is also, in a way, closely linked to expanding the resources that nations and the international community require to face the challenge of development, in which Pope Paul VI recognized "the new name of peace". And it is in the name of peace - necessary, difficult, but possible - that I have the pleasure of offering you and your Conference my most sincere wishes for fruitful work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Casaroli for the important statement he has just made as His Holiness's Secretary of State.

We shall now continue with our business for today. In conformity with its programme of work, the Conference will start its consideration of agenda items 1 and 2, entitled "Nuclear Test Ban" and "Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament". In accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, however, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

As announced at our last plenary meeting, I shall put today before the Conference, for adoption, requests from non-members to participate in the work of the Conference. We shall first discuss those questions at an informal meeting once our list of speakers has been exhausted. Immediately afterwards we shall resume the Plenary to formalize any decisions which we may have reached at the informal meeting.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Czechoslovakia, Burma and China. I now give the floor to the representative of Czechoslovakia, Ambassador Vajnar.

Mr. VAJNAR (Czechoslovakia): Mr. President, allow me first of all to join you in welcoming here today His Eminence the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli. We listened with keen interest to what Cardinal Casaroli said in his statement this morning, and we appreciate the attention paid by the Holy See to the urgent and acute problems facing humanity today. Allow me also, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you, as well as the Conference under your guidance, the achievement of progress in dealing with the urgent and important problems on our agenda. My delegation would also like to thank Ambassador Ardekani of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his active work as President of the Conference last September. And I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, and my colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament who have welcomed me as the new head of the Czechoslovak delegation for their good work and wishes. I am looking forward to further fruitful, efficient co-operation in dealing with the problems entrusted to our Conference.

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It is always challenging and exciting to come back to familiar places. It is even more so when one returns to an international body at which one had witnessed and assisted in the elaboration of important international disarmament and arms control agreements. They are still in force, playing an indisputable, positive role in curbing the arms race in various categories of weapons and environments.

Of course, the Conference on Disarmament today is working in substantially different international circumstances from those of its predecessors. Moreover, the international climate has been changing rapidly in recent years. Constructive dialogue, replacing confrontation, has already brought tangible results in the negotiations on disarmament, the easing of tensions and the solution of regional conflicts, as well as co-operation in the humanitarian field. The end of last year and the first weeks of this year were particularly promising in this regard. The Vienna follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe concluded its work, adopting important decisions. A number of member States of the Warsaw Treaty Organization announced their decision to reduce their armed forces and armaments unilaterally and significantly. The Paris Conference issued an unprecedented call for the prohibition and elimination of all chemical weapons at the earliest date.

These positive developments should also have a direct bearing on the Conference on Disarmament's proceedings. In this regard we endorse what has been said at the previous meetings by the Minister of State from India, the head of the Soviet delegation and some other speakers. We are fully aware that the solution of the problems we have to address will not be easy. However, there is a feeling that the opportunity offered to the international community must not be lost.

Successful work in the Conference on Disarmament requires decisive action in a constructive spirit, with a sincere desire to achieve a balanced compromise. It should not serve as an arena for confrontation, for winning "points" in unproductive polemics. In our negotiations the legitimate interests of all participants must be respected. We are satisfied that the new atmosphere in international relations has led to increased interest in the Conference on Disarmament's work. Never before have so many countries which are not regular members - 21 now - participated in the Conference's work. We welcome them all, and in particular those who have applied to participate in our work for the first time.

The Czechoslovak delegation considers the Conference on Disarmament sufficiently representative to address successfully the priority questions related to nuclear disarmament and the finalization of the chemical weapons convention. Naturally, while specific measures are being discussed and negotiated in this direction, arms must not be moved into outer space. Czechoslovakia does not see the tasks I have just mentioned as noble but distant goals. We are ready to contribute to their achievement through specific steps, including unilateral steps when there is a hope that they will lead to positive developments.

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Two days before the Paris Conference, on 5 January, the Government of Czechoslovakia released a statement on issues concerning the prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons. This statement reaffirms that Czechoslovakia does not possess, manufacture or stockpile on its territory any chemical weapons. Nor does it own facilities for their development or production. All scientific research in this field is oriented exclusively towards protection against the effects of chemical weapons and other peaceful goals.

We are in favour of prevention of the further proliferation of chemical weapons. We are ready to contribute to this goal as far as we are able. With this objective in mind the Czechoslovak Government has adopted legislative measures providing for controls on the export of dual-purpose chemicals. I would like to stress in this connection that the only purpose of this measure is to contribute to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. It is not discriminatory against any country. We also consider that it will not hinder international co-operation in the peaceful development of the chemical industry. The full text of the said statement is contained in Conference document CD/878.

The Paris Conference and its Final Declaration have already been welcomed here by practically all speakers taking the floor since the beginning of this session. We share the view that the Conference was an important political gathering confirming the validity of the Geneva Protocol while at the same time calling for the elaboration of a convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons and on their destruction at the earliest date, as the most reliable guarantee against the use of chemical weapons. Czechoslovakia regards that as a highly urgent task. It is argued by some that fixing deadlines is arbitrary, and not acceptable for disarmament negotiations. Perhaps this might be so if there is a total absence of specific negotiations on a subject covered by a suggested deadline. However, in the case of chemical weapons so much effort has already gone into the elaboration of the convention that the proposals for the time frames for its achievement advanced in Paris, as well as in this room recently, are not only quite realistic, but might also usefully remind us of the pledge we have all so solemnly subscribed to.

Paragraph 3 of the Final Declaration requests all States to make contributions to the negotiations in Geneva and to become parties to the convention as soon as it is concluded. As the Czechoslovak Government said in the statement mentioned above, we are prepared to be among the first States to accede to the chemical weapons convention. We regard the national inspection of a chemical industry facility we effected on 25 and 26 January 1989 in the town of Mnisek in central Bohemia as a contribution to the early finalization of the convention. The inspected facility is producing a schedule [3] chemical. The report on this inspection will be submitted soon.

We share the belief expressed by many representatives in our Conference, as well as at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, that measures of a regional nature could also make a significant contribution to the negotiations on the chemical weapons convention. With this in view my country, together with the German Democratic Republic, proposed back in 1985 the creation of a chemical-weapon-free zone in Central Europe. If established, in Europe as well as in other parts of the

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world, such zones could limit the proliferation of chemical weapons and lessen the threat of their use. In so doing they would strengthen efforts aimed at the global ban on chemical weapons and would create more favourable conditions and a political atmosphere conducive to its early achievement.

Starting at the end of last November the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons met twice to continue work on the convention during the inter-sessional period. We consider the work done in the course of the six weeks useful. Under the chairmanship of Ambassador Sujka of Poland certain progress was registered on a number of issues, and some obstacles complicating the Committee's work in the past were removed. The Ad hoc Committee has just started its work for the 1989 session under the chairmanship of Ambassador Morel of France. The programme adopted is ambitious and should lead to intensive work. We welcome the fact that problems related to article VI are going to be discussed actively. My delegation also hopes that due attention will soon be accorded to the question of challenge inspections. Agreement on this issue would be a major step in the development of a general pattern of verification under a chemical weapons convention.

We of the Czechoslovak delegation maintain that the priority attention accorded by the Conference on Disarmament to the chemical weapons convention must not lead to putting aside and neglecting of other urgent topics - first of all the nuclear test ban. We would have been pleased if an ad hoc committee on the matter had been established years ago and if a "rolling text" similar to the one we have been developing for the chemical weapons convention were now in our hands for an NTB too. The comparison might seem a bit far-fetched; however, if all had displayed readiness for constructive dialogue, a long way could have been covered since 1982, when we first established an Ad hoc Working Group on an NTB. Instead, the Conference has been discussing the terms of reference for a subsidiary body for the last five years, and new events related to an NTB which have occurred outside this room have barely had any influence on this discussion. My delegation considers that the Conference on Disarmament should abandon the passive role it has confined itself to and finally start specific work geared towards a future NTB. In August last year the Czechoslovak delegation submitted a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on the subject (CD/863) which had previously been known and discussed as an informal proposal by the President. We were motivated solely by the desire that the Conference on Disarmament should initiate, "as a first step towards achieving nuclear test-ban treaty, substantive work on specific and interrelated test ban issues, including structure and scope as well as verification and compliance". It is high time that we recognized progress achieved at the bilateral Soviet-American talks and in the Group of Scientific Experts dealing with seismic data transmission. At the same time it should be accepted that the conclusion and successful realization of the INF Treaty, and the advanced stage of the Soviet-American negotiations on 50 per cent reductions in their strategic nuclear forces, make the situation today quite different from the time when a nuclear test ban was proclaimed a long-term or ultimate objective.

The agenda of our Conference contains a number of other important items, and my delegation will address them in due course. However, before I conclude my today's statement let me draw your attention, and the attention of the Conference, to document CD/887, circulated by my delegation. It contains a

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statement entitled "On reducing the number of personnel and armaments and on organizational changes in the Czechoslovak People's Army". This statement, issued in Prague on 28 January of this year, stipulates that the Czechoslovak People's Army will be cut by 12,000 men and military expenditure in Czechoslovakia for 1989-1990 by 15 per cent. Large quantities of armaments - 850 tanks, 165 armoured personnel carriers and 51 combat aircraft - will be withdrawn and gradually destroyed.

We regard this decision as marking the start of the gradual implementation of our initiative on the establishment of a zone of confidence, co-operation and good-neighbourly relations along the dividing line between the member States of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO. At the same time it marks adherence to and active support for the proposals advanced by Mikhail Gorbachev in his statement at the United Nations General Assembly on 7 December of last year. The steps which are going to be undertaken will emphasize the defensive nature of the Czechoslovak People's Army and the creation of more favourable conditions for the upcoming Vienna negotiations. As is stressed in the statement mentioned above, Czechoslovakia is prepared to continue the process of reductions if the member States of NATO are ready to undertake adequate measures.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Czechoslovakia for his statement, and also for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. As His Eminence Cardinal Casaroli has other pressing appointments during his visit to Geneva, I should like briefly to suspend this plenary meeting in order to take leave of him as he departs from the Conference and the Palais des Nations.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 488th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed. I should now like to give the floor to the representative of Burma, Ambassador Thant.

Mr. AUNG THANT (Burma): May I, first of all, extend our warm welcome and felicitations to His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State of the Holy See? Despite his manifold duties, he has found it possible to come to our midst and deliver a statement in the CD. We thank His Eminence for his gracious presence and the important statement he has delivered.

I should like to extend to you, on behalf of my delegation as well as on my own behalf, our heartfelt congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of February 1989. You represent Italy, a country which has been in the forefront of many important diplomatic initiatives in the cause of international peace and security. In addition, you personally bring to the presidency a wealth of experience and expertise in the field of multilateral disarmament negotiations, and I am fully confident that it will make a positive contribution to the work of the CD. I should also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor Ambassador Ardekani of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who very skilfully guided the work of the CD during September 1988 and through the inter-sessional period.

(Mr. Aung Thant, Burma)

I came to Geneva to assume my responsibilities towards the tail-end of the 1988 session. I recall with profound thanks the warm words of welcome addressed to me by my colleagues. I thank them all once again and reciprocate their kind sentiments. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome in our midst our new colleagues who have just joined us, Ambassador Sharma of India, Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, Ambassador Dietze of the German Democratic Republic, Ambassador Houlliez of Belgium, Ambassador Reese of Australia, Ambassador Bullut of Kenya and Ambassador Vajnar of Czechoslovakia. I look forward to entering into close relations and co-operation both official and personal, with them all.

I do not wish to let this opportunity pass without placing on record the most sincere and profound thanks of my delegation to the French Government for hosting the historic Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons, and for the generous hospitality and most satisfactory services extended to the participants in the Conference, including my own delegation. This initiative of the French Government was a most timely and welcome step at the right historical moment. My tribute also goes to the French Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Roland Dumas, who addressed this august body and formally presented the Final Act of the Paris Conference on 7 February. His statement was a source of inspiration and encouragement for all the delegations in the Conference on Disarmament.

As we survey the world political scene at the beginning of the 1989 session of the Conference on Disarmament, we can see many encouraging signs. The Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons has generated a political momentum that will give added impetus to the negotiations on chemical weapons in the Conference on Disarmament. The Soviet Union has made a unilateral declaration that it will start destroying its chemical weapon stockpiles (the United States also announced earlier its plan to destroy its old stocks of chemical weapons). Another unilateral measure declared by the Soviet Union and its allies was to reduce their conventional forces in Europe. The United States-Soviet START negotiations are well advanced on 50 per cent cuts in their strategic nuclear weapons. East-West negotiations on conventional arms reductions are due to start in Vienna next month with new vigour. All these developments create an atmosphere of optimism. It is incumbent on all of us to translate this optimism and hope into reality by producing maximum possible tangible results.

The tempo of negotiations on chemical weapons in the CD has somewhat slowed down in the past two years, at a time when the threat of chemical weapons is looming ever larger and the need for the early conclusion of a convention on chemical weapons is becoming much more urgent. We require a renewed political commitment by all countries, large and small, at a high political level in order to move those negotiations out of the doldrums. The Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons fulfilled this very requirement. The Final Declaration of the Paris Conference, inter alia, stressed the necessity of concluding a convention on chemical weapons at an early date and called on the Conference on Disarmament to redouble its efforts, as a matter of urgency, to resolve expeditiously the remaining issues and to conclude the convention at the earliest date. We can consider this solemn and strongly worded Final Declaration of the Paris Conference as a

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mandate for the work of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons this year. Inspired by this solemn and serious political commitment in the Final Declaration, it is imperative that the CD move into high gear and press ahead with new verve and vigour this year in our task of elaborating the draft convention on chemical weapons.

Some doubts have been raised as to the assurance of undiminished security during the transitional period after entry into force of the convention on chemical weapons. This is a complex question, and I do not wish to get into the substance or the detailed discussion of this question at this point. However, my way of reaffirming the fundamental position of my delegation, I wish to stress the conviction of my delegation that the security of all countries can be strengthened only by the early conclusion and entry into force of the convention on chemical weapons, but not by postponing it. It is hardly necessary nowadays either to look back far into history or to go into deep research in order to realize the terrible reality of the use of chemical weapons. The risk of proliferation of chemical weapons is already running high. We must act before the situation gets out of control. The only long-term guarantee for security against chemical weapons is undoubtedly a global and comprehensive ban on chemical weapons through early conclusion of the convention. Even pending and prior to the achievement of that goal, there will surely be viable unilateral measures that could be helpful in confidence-building. The United States and the Soviet Union - the only chemical-weapon States which have declared their possession of these weapons - will unilaterally start destroying their stockpiles of chemical weapons before entry into force of the convention. Moreover, once the convention is signed, signatory States will have an obligation to refrain from actions that will jeopardize the objective of the convention, unless of course they have subsequently explicitly declared their intention not to ratify it. Thus, even prior to entry into force of the convention, there will be certain restraints, though short of binding legal obligations, that will preclude or lessen the risks of the use of chemical weapons by signatory States, since this kind of worst-case scenario violations will obviously jeopardize the fundamental objective of the convention.

While some real and reassuring progress has been made on agenda item 4, Chemical weapons, little progress has been achieved in the CD on the priority nuclear issues, agenda items 1, 2 and 3. Agenda item 1 "Nuclear test ban", is a priority item to which my delegation attaches great importance. There is general agreement in the CD on the need for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban. Differences of opinion lie with the question of the mandate for the ad hoc committee.

At its forty-third session last December, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 43/63 A, entitled "Cessation of all nuclear test explosions", with an overwhelming majority of 136 votes in favour to 4 against, with 13 abstentions. Resolution 43/63 A, inter alia, appeals to all States members of the Conference on Disarmament to promote the establishment by the Conference at the beginning of its 1989 session of an ad hoc committee with the objective of carrying out the multilateral negotiation of a treaty on the complete cessation of nuclear test explosions. It further recommends to the Conference on Disarmament that

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such an ad hoc committee should establish two subsidiary working groups, one dealing with the contents and scope of the treaty, and the other with the issues of compliance and verification.

The main thrust of resolution 43/63 A is the same as that of the Group of 21's proposal in document CD/829. My delegation believes that document CD/829 provides a sound basis for reaching consensus on the draft mandate for an ad hoc committee. Hence, the quest for an appropriate formula should be pursued on the basis of CD/829, also taking into account other relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions and proposals such as United Nations General Assembly resolution 43/63 A and Czechoslovak paper CD/863.

In order that the impasse over the question of the draft mandate may be overcome expeditiously, I should like to suggest that you, Mr. President, undertake intensive consultations with group co-ordinators and interested delegations who are the proponents of those proposals.

Up till now, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to deal effectively with agenda item 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Under the present rules of procedure, the most effective way to deal with a subject in the CD is to address it in an ad hoc committee. It is regrettable that the Conference has not hitherto been able to establish an ad hoc committee on this important agenda item. My delegation feels that as the existence of nuclear weapons and their qualitative and quantitative development directly threaten the security of both nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States, all nations have a vital interest in negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In view of the universal character of the security risks posed by nuclear weapons, the bilateral negotiations between the two major nuclear-weapon States could never replace the genuinely multilateral search for universally applicable disarmament measures; and it is the conviction of my delegation that the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the field of disarmament, has a role to play in this most important area of disarmament.

At a time when the bilateral talks between the two great Powers have already produced the INF Treaty and have now entered the crucial stage of negotiations on 50 per cent reductions in their strategic nuclear arsenals, the encouraging progress thus far made in the bilateral context should stimulate serious negotiations in the multilateral forum of the CD on the question of nuclear disarmament. In this connection, my delegation favours the establishment of an ad hoc committee on agenda item 2 with an appropriate mandate to elaborate on paragraph 50 of the Final Document of SSOD-I, with the objective of carrying out the multilateral negotiation of an agreement or agreements with adequate measures of verification and for the cessation, in appropriate stages, of the nuclear arms race and the substantial reduction of existing nuclear weapons and their ultimate elimination.

In the view of my delegation, while agenda items 1 and 2 have received a great deal of attention in the CD, agenda item 3, "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters", does not receive the attention it deserves. My delegation believes that the foremost concern of the international community today is the prevention of nuclear war, and therefore attaches highest priority to this agenda item.

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It was in the year 1984 that intensive consultations were conducted on agenda item 3. Those consultations came close to reaching consensus, but never came quite through to a successful conclusion. However, the CD has not made any movement forward on this question ever since. It is quite a long time since serious and intensive consultations on agenda item 3 were conducted in the CD. Perhaps, after all those years of low profile, it might now be time again to take a fresh look at this agenda item in the light of recent developments in the bilateral relations between the two major Powers, and to make renewed efforts to move forward on this agenda item. My delegation favours the establishment of an ad hoc committee to address this question effectively, as it does on every agenda item of the CD. However, in the absence of general consensus on the establishment of an ad hoc committee in making such renewed efforts, it might not be entirely irrelevant to explore the possibility of finding an appropriate and adequate organizational arrangement to deal with the substance of agenda item 3.

The impending threat of an arms race in space makes it absolutely necessary and imperative to take urgent and timely measures for the prevention of such an arms race before it is too late. An arms race in space will add a new dimension to the prevention of nuclear war, and will certainly make it doubly difficult to reduce the risks of nuclear war. This will be the fifth year that the Conference has dealt with this agenda item in an ad hoc committee. My delegation feels that the useful work thus far carried out in the ad hoc committee in the past four years, and later developments in this field, should be adequately reflected in the mandate and the programme of work of the ad hoc committee. Previous years have seen the belated establishment of an ad hoc committee on agenda item 5. We wish to see the speedy establishment of an ad hoc committee on agenda item 5 so that it may start its substantive work at the earliest possible date.

The question of negative security assurances is a long-standing question of great concern to non-nuclear-weapon States. We all agree that the most effective and the best guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. But pending the achievement of this goal, negative security assurances are important and indispensable measures to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Up till now, if I am not mistaken, only the People's Republic of China has given unconditional security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Last year's CD session witnessed lively and interesting discussions in the Ad hoc Committee on negative security assurances. The attempt to find a common formula on negative security assurances is a laudable and useful step worth pursuing. We should examine more closely the possibility of finding a "common formula" arrangement of negative security assurances that will be acceptable to all and meet the minimum requirement of the non-nuclear-weapon States. The single common formula approach and the "categorizational" approach which were subjects of much debate in the Ad hoc Committee last year deserve to be further pursued and scrutinized.

A comprehensive programme of disarmament, if truly comprehensive in scope and adopted as a genuine consensus document, could well be a valuable road map for us all in our disarmament efforts. The Ad hoc Committee on the

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Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament has been engaged in the task of elaborating a draft text of the Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament for the past eight years since 1981, under the able guidance of its Chairman, His Excellency Mr. García Robles, Ambassador of Mexico. Under the present mandate of the Ad hoc Committee, this year is the deadline year for submission of the finalized draft text of the CPD to the United Nations General Assembly. Consequently, an intensive work schedule lies ahead of the Ad hoc Committee if it is to complete its task within that deadline. In the view of my delegation, the priorities and principles of the CPD should be based on those enshrined in the Final Document of SSOD-I, and should reflect developments thereafter. The draft text of the CPD remains heavily bracketed. The reservations registered by some delegations on some specific paragraphs in the draft text reflect basic differences of approach.

The question of the improved and effective functioning of the CD is a subject which we keep under regular review and consideration every year. The Group of Seven (the "seven wise men") has done a good job; the Group's reports CD/WP.286 of 24 July 1987 and CD/WP.341 of 12 April 1988 are valuable inputs and form a useful basis for future discussions on this question. In the view of my delegation, the Conference should not content itself with mere discussion of the proposals and suggestions contained in those reports. The Conference should also find ways and means to implement some promising suggestions contained therein and translate them into concrete measures. In principle, my delegation supports the continuation of the work of the Group of Seven; but it will be appropriate and necessary to give them a fresh specific mandate on what aspects the Group should focus its work on next.

In talking of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, it would be a dereliction of duty on my part if I did not refer to the important role played by Ambassador Miljan Komatina, Secretary-General of the Conference, and his excellent staff. Without their exemplary devotion and dedication to their task, our work in the Conference would not have been as smooth and enjoyable as it is at present.

I recall vividly that in the past, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s when talking about disarmament, delegates in the First Committee or plenary of the General Assembly were accustomed to conclude their statements by giving the world a warning in these solemn words: "Disarm or perish". The futility of wars and the endlessly spiralling arms race, no matter whether nuclear or conventional, have been driven home to us all by history both ancient and contemporary so clearly that that dire warning of old seems no longer needed. Instead, true to the newly gained spirit of optimism and hope which I referred to at the outset, I would conclude and simply say:

"Forward to a saner world
Where humankind knows no wars
But peace and prosperity".

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Burma for his statement, and for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country. Now I give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Fan.

Mr. FAN (China) (translated from Chinese): The spring session of the Conference on Disarmament is being held in a new situation. At present the world is turning from confrontation to dialogue and from tension to relaxation. The world is in a period of change. Over the past year the United States and the Soviet Union, in accordance with the Treaty they signed, have started to dismantle and destroy their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles under strict supervision. This is the first United States-Soviet agreement on the reduction of nuclear weapons since their emergence, and it is being implemented. Addressing the forty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Gorbachev, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, announced a reduction in Soviet armed forces and conventional arms over the next two years. The third SSOD, convened in the new international circumstances, was an important international conference. It gave expression to the common desire of the international community for the maintenance of world peace and opposition to the arms race. This is conducive to the promotion of the disarmament process. Over the past year hot-spots in different regions and of different types have cooled down. For some, approaches to a political settlement have already been adopted, while for others they are being worked on. The momentum for political settlement of regional conflicts is increasing. At the same time, the United Nations has played a more active part in promoting the solution of major international disputes. In short, the past year has witnessed a marked improvement in the international situation.

These positive developments are gratifying and encouraging. The tendency towards relaxation in international situations contributes to the success of efforts for disarmament. It is the hope of the international community that more progress will be made in the field of disarmament so as to further promote the relaxation of international situations. It is true that this change is the outcome of policies pursued by various States. However, fundamentally speaking it is the result of the joint efforts of the people of the world to safeguard peace and prevent war, and of the evolution of the international situation over the past 40 years or so since the Second World War; it is also what historical developments demand.

One of the characteristics of post-war history is the intensification of the national yearning for independence and the continued struggle to safeguard national independence and State sovereignty. Great numbers of small- and medium-sized countries have taken pains to safeguard their sovereignty and refused to bow to others. Hegemonism and power politics have continued to suffer setbacks. Also characteristic of this period is a greater realization that solving international disputes by military means can lead nowhere. The wars of aggression waged by large countries against small countries were defeated by strong resistance. The aggressors paid heavily and found themselves isolated internationally. The disputes between a few developing countries unfortunately developed into armed conflict, bringing huge unnecessary losses to the parties involved and hampering their efforts to accomplish the historical task of national development. The super-Powers, in spite of their ability to start a world war and their possession of enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world many times over, had to admit that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

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The third characteristic is rapid economic development following the remarkable progress of science and technology. Some countries with small military budgets, which have escaped the flames of war, concentrated their efforts on the development of science, technology, the economy and education. Consequently their national strength grew by leaps and bounds. On the other hand, the countries involved in the arms race and military conflicts had their economic development retarded to various degrees. Their position in the world economy has continued to decline. People have come to realize that the strength of a nation depends on a number of factors, especially the development of the economy, science and technology, rather than the deliberate pursuit of military might. However, it goes without saying that the marked change for the better in the world situation does not mean an everlasting peace, nor does it exclude relapses or new setbacks in the international situation. A number of unstable factors remain in the world. The rivalry between the super-Powers has not faded away, but will be continued in new forms. No regional conflicts have been finally solved. It is possible for new clashes to break out. World economic and social development is far from balanced. The gap between North and South is widening. The results of disarmament are very preliminary and limited. Even after destroying their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, the super-Powers still possess an overkill capacity, enough to destroy the world many times over. The negotiations on 50 per cent reductions in strategic nuclear weapons are now marking time. The arms race has been continuing, and is characterized by quantitative reductions and qualitative improvement, as well as the application of the latest scientific and technological achievements to the research and development of new types of weapons. While people are concerned with the continuing modernization of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, the arms race is also extending into outer space. Consequently, efforts for the maintenance of peace and the promotion of disarmament can in no way be slackened, and disarmament still remains an arduous and long-term task.

Nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war are the top priority items in the whole area of disarmament. In the past few years the United Nations has adopted by consensus a resolution tabled by the Chinese delegation on nuclear disarmament. The resolution states that the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and welcomes the signing and ratification of the Treaty Between the United States and the Soviet Union on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles. The resolution also urges those two countries, which possess the most important nuclear arsenals, further to discharge their special responsibility for nuclear disarmament, to take the lead in halting the nuclear arms race and to reach early agreement on the drastic reduction of their nuclear arsenals. In addition the resolution expresses the belief that the qualitative aspect of the arms race needs to be addressed along with its quantitative aspect. China has always held the view that the two major nuclear Powers possessing the largest and most sophisticated nuclear arsenals in the world should take the lead in halting the testing, production and deployment of all types of nuclear weapons and in drastically reducing and eliminating them, whether they are deployed at home or abroad. In other words, they should not only drastically reduce the quantities of all types of nuclear weapons but also halt the qualitative escalation of the nuclear arms race and the production of new types of nuclear weapons. Following that, a broadly representative international conference on nuclear disarmament, with the participation of all the nuclear States, can be

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held to examine steps and measures for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. All countries in the world, big or small, with or without nuclear weapons, should have the right to participate in endeavours to solve nuclear disarmament problems.

It is regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament has failed to establish ad hoc committees on two agenda items, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. Moreover, substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament have not been able to be carried on at informal plenary meetings. As is noted in resolution 43/75 E on nuclear disarmament, adopted by consensus at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, "the Conference on Disarmament has not played its due role in the field of nuclear disarmament". We sincerely hope that appropriate ways will be found through consultations to enable the Conference to play a concrete and helpful role in this field.

At a time of preliminary progress in nuclear disarmament, more attention is being given to the importance and urgency of conventional disarmament. It was pointed out in paragraph 81 of the Final Document of SSOD-I that, together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, the limitation and gradual reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons should be resolutely pursued within the framework of progress towards general and complete disarmament. It was also emphasized that States with the largest military arsenals have a special responsibility in pursuing the process of conventional armaments reductions. Consensus resolutions on conventional disarmament sponsored by China and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in recent years explicitly reaffirm the importance of this issue. Wars and conflicts conducted with conventional weapons since the Second World War have resulted in enormous losses of life as well as property, and have endangered world peace and security. In an area where there is a high concentration of conventional and nuclear arms, a conventional war is likely to escalate into a nuclear war. With scientific and technological progress the lethality and destructiveness of conventional weapons have been greatly enhanced. In order to maintain and develop their conventional forces, some countries have consumed enormous amounts of human, material and financial resources which should have been devoted to their socio-economic development. Therefore, conventional disarmament is a matter that brooks no delay.

In recent years, encouraging signs have emerged in the negotiations on conventional disarmament in Europe. In 1986, the Stockholm meeting of CSCE reached an agreement on confidence- and security-building measures in Europe, exerting a positive impact on promoting conventional disarmament in Europe. Not long ago, at the Vienna CSCE follow-up meeting, agreement was reached on a mandate for the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe, which are to begin in March. Since December 1988 the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria have announced unilateral reductions of their armed forces, armaments and military budgets. NATO countries have also put forward proposals on conventional disarmament in Europe. Non-aligned and neutral States in Europe, too, have had an opportunity to air their views. Generally speaking, the international community welcomes these developments and earnestly expects all the parties concerned to reach early agreement on conventional disarmament in Europe so as to strengthen security and stability in Europe and the world.

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In order to make practical progress in conventional disarmament, it is essential to consider a number of principles to be followed by all. For example: first, the two super-Powers, which possess the largest military arsenals, have a special responsibility for conventional disarmament; second, the military forces of all countries should not be used other than for the purpose of self-defence. While taking into account the need to protect security and maintain defensive capabilities, countries should be encouraged to intensify their efforts and take appropriate steps, either on their own or in a regional context, to promote progress in conventional disarmament and enhance peace and security. Third, all occupying forces should be withdrawn from foreign territories and all forms of foreign military occupation terminated. Fourth, armed forces and armaments reduced from one region should not be redeployed elsewhere. Fifth, resources released from conventional disarmament should be devoted to social and economic development. It should be noted, however, that different regions have their own specific conditions. Efforts to promote conventional disarmament can only be effective when specific regional conditions are taken into account. The experience of other regions is not to be copied mechanically. Different situations require different approaches.

China is committed to the promotion of world peace and disarmament, including conventional disarmament. It has not only put forward proposals actively, but has also taken action. When the international situation permitted, China voluntarily made the decision to reduce its armed forces unilaterally by 1 million men, and the reduction was completed in 1987. Many of our military airports and harbours have been converted to civilian use or joint use by the military and civilians. A considerable proportion of military industries have been turned into enterprises for producing civilian products.

At the beginning of 1989, the Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons, a high-level political meeting, was held. Through the joint efforts of the participating countries, the Conference adopted a Final Declaration, with positive results which have received wide attention and welcome from the international community. In the Final Declaration the participating countries state clearly that they are determined to prevent any recourse to chemical weapons by completely eliminating them. They solemnly affirm their commitment not to use chemical weapons and condemn such use. The Declaration stresses the necessity of concluding at an early date a global, comprehensive and effectively verifiable convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. The Declaration furthermore points out the growing danger posed to international peace and security by the risk of the use of chemical weapons, as long as such weapons remain and are spread.

At the Paris Conference, the Chinese Foreign Minister clearly stated China's basic position on the prohibition of chemical weapons. He reiterated that China neither possesses nor produces chemical weapons. China has all along stood for the early conclusion of an international convention on the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons, and will continue to participate actively in the negotiations. The Chinese delegation wishes to reiterate the following position: while we continue to attach importance to nuclear and conventional disarmament, we also consider it imperative to pursue the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons as an urgent and important task and as an objective of our endeavour. The member States of the Conference on Disarmament should expedite negotiations to conclude at the

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earliest date an international convention on the prohibition of the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, possession and use of chemical weapons. The new convention should give priority to efforts to ensure the total destruction of existing chemical weapons and of their production facilities, guarantees against the production of new chemical weapons, and prevention of the emergence of new chemical weapons. To ensure compliance with the convention it is essential to provide for necessary and effective verification measures. The countries with the largest chemical arsenals should take the lead in ensuring an immediate halt to the development, production and transfer of chemical weapons, undertaking never to use such weapons and to destroy them within the shortest time possible. All countries capable of developing chemical weapons should stop the research, development and production of chemical weapons. The negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons have now entered a crucial stage. The CD should respond to the appeal contained in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference on the prohibition of chemical weapons and redouble its efforts to resolve expeditiously the remaining issues and to conclude the convention at the earliest date.

The year 1988 witnessed remarkable achievements in space science and technology. In 1988, the Soviet Union successfully launched its first pilotless space shuttle and two Mars explorers. Soviet astronauts set a record by staying one year in outer space. The United States recovered from the serious setback caused by the Challenger explosion and launched Discovery. The European Space Agency sent three satellites into orbit with a single powerful Ariane 4 rocket. And for the first time China launched a meteorological satellite into heliosynchronous orbit. There is great potential for the peaceful use of outer space to promote the development of science, technology, the economy and culture, and to enhance international co-operation. Bright prospects are opening up before mankind to explore and utilize outer space. While joyous over the progress of mankind in this respect, one also notes with grave concern that there has been an increase in military-oriented space activities. The development of space weapons, in particular, has cast the cloud of an arms race over peaceful outer space. Now the development of space technology is at a crossroads: either we take immediate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, so as to ensure that the peaceful use of outer space remains beneficial to mankind, or we leave things to take their own course, making outer space the arena for an arms race, thus placing the whole of mankind under the threat of an unprecedented calamity. Consequently, the prevention of an arms race in outer space should be a new priority in the field of disarmament.

It has been eight years since the prevention of an arms race in outer space was put on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, and the Ad hoc Committee on this item has been set up for four successive years. Though the work of this Committee has scored some achievements, it has undeniably failed to make substantive progress. We have always held that the effective way to prevent an arms race in outer space is to ban all types of space weapons. And this depends primarily on the will of the major space Powers, which bear a special responsibility for the prevention of an arms race in outer space. As the sole countries which at present possess and continue to develop space weapons, they should, if they are willing to do so, take practical measures and undertake not to develop, test, produce or deploy space weapons and to destroy all types of existing space weapons. On this basis, an international

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agreement on the comprehensive prohibition of space weapons can be concluded through negotiations. It is imperative to take advantage of the current favourable international climate to start substantive negotiations on the prevention of arms race in outer space as soon as possible. China has all along held that the exploration and utilization of outer space should serve only peaceful purposes and the well-being of mankind by promoting the economic, scientific and cultural development of all countries. China's commitment to the peaceful use of outer space is further exemplified by the fact that on 8 November 1988 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a decision to accede to the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space. Our accession to the three conventions will help increase international co-operation and exchanges in space activities.

This session of the Conference on Disarmament is convened at a time when China has just celebrated its traditional New Year festival - the spring festival. In China, we have many expressions, both in proverbs and in works of poets, greeting the spring festival, such as "Everything becomes fresh when spring comes" and "With the New Year all living things renew themselves". The spring festival marks the beginning of the first season when everything is full of vigour. Now that the spring session of the Conference on Disarmament in 1989 has already started, I would like to take this opportunity to express the wish that this Conference will demonstrate new vitality and make progress in the new international climate in 1989.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. I have no other speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? I see none.

As announced at the opening of this meeting, I shall now suspend the plenary meeting and convene an informal meeting to take up requests from non-members to participate in the work of the Conference.

The meeting was suspended at 12.08 p.m. and resumed at 12.11 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 488th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

I now turn to requests from non-members to participate in the work of the Conference. In that connection, we shall take up for decision working papers CD/WP.361 and Add.1 concerning the requests received from Chile and Viet Nam. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the draft decisions.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I have no other business for today. I shall now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 23 February, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.12 p.m.