

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/498 *
21 May 1984

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

LETTER DATED 16 APRIL 1984 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE LETTER DATED 9 APRIL 1984 ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, MR. PEREZ DE CUELLAR, FROM THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Mr. A.A. GROMYKO, ON QUESTIONS OF THE LIMITATION OF MILITARY NAVAL ACTIVITIES AND NAVAL ARMAMENTS

I have the honour to transmit to you the letter dated 9 April 1984 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, from the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. A.A. Gromyko, on questions of the limitation of military naval activities and naval armaments.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this text as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed) V. ISSRAELYAN

* Re-issued for technical reasons.

This letter, sent in reply to your inquiries in connection with resolutions 38/198 F and 38/198 G, states the views of the Soviet Union on the subject of the limitation of naval activities and naval armaments.

1. The Soviet Union considers the primary task of its foreign policy to be that of preventing a nuclear catastrophe and bringing about a genuine turn for the better in the dangerous course of world events. It has recently taken a number of major initiatives aimed at the attainment of that goal.

Of special importance among them is the Soviet Union's proposal for norms to govern relations between the nuclear Powers. Agreement on the recognition of such norms by all nuclear Powers and on making them binding would serve the interests not only of those Powers but of all the States of the world. The proposal also relates to the Declaration on the Condemnation of Nuclear War, adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly on the basis of a USSR draft, and to Soviet proposals concerning the freezing of nuclear weapons and the prevention of an arms race in space, also approved in the United Nations.

Effective practical steps for arms reduction, especially nuclear arms reduction, are what is now needed in order to avert the threat of war hanging over mankind and to improve the international situation.

2. An important contribution to the cause of preventing war could be made by curbing the arms race in the seas and oceans.

The further increase in naval fleets and the intensification of their activities are fraught with the danger of destroying the stability that now exists on a global scale and within individual regions, and are leading to a significant diversion of resources from constructive purposes. This tendency has a negative effect on the security of peaceful navigation and on the investigation and exploitation of marine resources, whose value to mankind is growing ever greater.

There are also increasingly frequent instances of the direct use of naval forces by certain Powers to exert pressure on sovereign States, especially developing States, to interfere in their internal affairs, to commit acts of armed aggression and intervention and to preserve the remnants of the colonial system.

3. As is known, the USSR, independently or together with other socialist countries, has proposed reaching agreement on many specific measures relating to the reciprocal limitation of the activities of naval fleets and to the limitation and reduction of naval armaments, and also on appropriate confidence-building measures both as a whole and with respect to individual areas, whether in the Indian, Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, in the Mediterranean Sea or in the Persian Gulf. These proposals remain in effect.

The Soviet Union has actively striven for the formulation of measures aimed at curbing the naval arms race on a bilateral basis as well, in particular within the framework of Soviet-United States talks on the limitation and subsequent reduction of military activities in the Indian Ocean, and in the context of the limitation and reduction of strategic weapons.

4. However, owing to the position of the United States of America and a number of its allies, the process of solving the problems related to the limitation of the naval arms race has thus far failed to come off dead centre.

The facts indicate that, counting on the attainment of military superiority in every field and the possibility of the mass use of force even in the most remote

areas of the earth, the United States of America has begun a new round of the naval arms race. New ships equipped with the most modern means of destruction are being built and commissioned, and old ships are being taken out of mothballs and equipped with similar weapons. The constant naval presence of the United States in various parts of the oceans is increasing, and the infrastructure of bases for its maintenance is being expanded.

5. The USSR welcomed the appeal made by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session for a start to negotiations on the limitation of naval activities, the limitation and reduction of naval armaments and the extension of confidence-building measures to seas and oceans, especially to regions with the busiest sea lanes or regions where the probability of conflict situations is high. The USSR, for its part, is ready to take part in such negotiations.

As an urgent step, it might be possible to agree, for example, that States would not expand their naval activities in areas of conflict or tension.

Moreover, it is desirable to seek solutions that would avoid a situation in which the naval fleets of the great Powers are at sea for any length of time far from their own shores. It might also be useful to take such steps as withdrawing vessels equipped with nuclear weapons from certain areas of the World Ocean, establishing limits for the presence in those areas of vessels of various classes, and so on.

The USSR could go even further towards the direct and effective limitation of naval armaments. Such measures could include, for example, limitation of the number of warships of the principal classes. Consideration should at the same time be given to the placing of limits on anti-submarine forces and weapons, as well as to measures concerning naval bases in foreign territories.

Subsequently, consideration could be given to the balanced reduction of the numbers of vessels in the combatant arm of the fleets of the great Powers. This applies particularly to such vessels as aircraft carriers, which have a highly destabilizing effect and are used for the demonstration of force and as an instrument for exerting pressure on independent States.

It could be of great political significance to achieve agreement on and the implementation of confidence-building measures, which help to avert conflict situations and to strengthen the security of sea communications.

All the necessary measures should of course be elaborated and implemented in accordance with the principle of not harming the security of anyone, with due account being taken of all factors that determine the relationship of forces at sea, as well as other ways of limiting weapons which affect naval forces in one way or another.

The possibilities of a regional approach to limiting naval activities and naval armaments should be fully utilized.

In the course of the negotiations the Soviet Union is also ready to consider the measures needed to ensure the mutual confidence of States in fulfilling their obligations.

6. In the opinion of the Soviet Union, all the major naval Powers and other interested States should take part in the negotiations on limiting naval activities and naval armaments. From this angle, it might be possible to consider conducting the negotiations in the context of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva. The

Soviet Union, however, is also ready to study the possibility of holding separate multilateral negotiations on this whole range of questions. Moreover, it proceeds from the principle that holding multilateral negotiations on the limiting of naval activities and naval armaments should not serve as an obstacle to the consideration of these questions at negotiations among the nuclear Powers.

7. As to the study on the naval arms race called for in the General Assembly resolution adopted at the thirty-eighth session, the Soviet Union is of the opinion that the study should not only reveal the dangerous nature of such an arms race and its adverse effect on international peace, security and economic development, but should also help in arriving at tangible areas of agreement. The value of the study would be undermined if it led only to the gathering of information on naval armaments, the description of their technical details, the methods of comparing naval forces, and so on. Furthermore, the study should not serve as a pretext for delaying the start of practical negotiations or as a substitute for them.

A. GROMYKO
First Deputy Chairman
of the Council of Ministers of the USSR,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR

9 April 1984
