

FINAL RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Tuesday, 6 March 1984, at 10.30 a.m.

President:

Mr. I. Datcu

(Romania)

PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Algeria: Mr. A. TAFFAR

Argentina: Mr. J.J. CARASALES
Mr. R. GARCIA MORITAN

Australia: Mr. R. BUTLER
Mr. R. ROWE
Ms. J. COURTNEY

Belgium: Mr. M. DEPASSE
Mr. J.M. NOIRFALISSE
Mlle. M. DE BECKER

Brazil: Mr. C.A. DE SOUZA E SILVA
Mr. S. DE QUEIROZ DUARTE

Bulgaria: Mr. K. TELLALOV
Mr. P. POPTCHEV
Mr. C. PRAMOV

Burma: U MAUNG MAUNG GYI
U THAN TUN

Canada: Mr. J.A. BEESLEY
Mr. G. SKINNER
Mr. P.W. BASHAM
Mr. R. NORTH
Mr. D. MUNTON
Mr. J. KIRTON
Mr. G. BOEHNERT
Mr. R. HAYCOCK
Mr. B. MCGRATH
Mr. J. ENGLISH
Mr. J. BAYER
Mr. T. KEETING
Mr. J. NEF
Mr. E. MAHANT
Mr. A. DONNEUR

China:

Mr. QIAN JIADONG
Ms. WANG SHIYUN
Mr. YANG MINGLIANG
Mr. ZHANG WEIDONG

Cuba:

Mr. A.V. GONZALES

Czechslovakia:

Mr. M. VEJVODA
Mr. A. CIMA

Egypt:

Mr. S. ALFARARGI
Mr. I. HASSAN
Mr. A. MAHER ABBAS
Mlle. W. BASSIM
Mr. F. MONIB

Ethiopia:

Mr. F. YOHANNES

France:

Mr. F. DE LA GORCE
Mr. H. RENIE

German Democratic Republic:

Mr. H. ROSE
Mr. J. DEMBSKI

Germany, Federal Republic of:

Mr. H. WEGENER
Mr. W.E. VON DEM HAGEN

Hungary:

Mr. D. MEISZTER
Mr. F. GADJA
Mr. T. TOTH

India:

Mr. S.K. SHARMA

Indonesia:

Mr. S. SUTOWARDOYO
Ms. P. RAMADHAN
Mr. ANDRADJATI
Mr. HARYOMATARAM
Ms. BOEDIMAN

Islamic Republic of Iran:

Mr. F.S. SIRJANI

Italy:

Mr. M. ALESSI
Mr. B. CABRAS
Mr. M. PAVESE

Japan:

Mr. R. IMAI
Mr. M. KONISHI
Mr. T. ISHIGURI
Mr. K. TANAKA
Mr. T. KAWAKITA

Kenya:

Mexico:

Mr. A. GARCIA ROBLES
Mr. P. MACEDO RIBA

Mongolia:

Mr. D. ERDEMBILEG
Mr. S-O. BOLD

Morocco:

Mr. A. SKALLI
Mr. M. CHRAIBI
Mr. O. HILALE

Netherlands:

Mr. J. RAMAKER

Nigeria:

Mr. J.O. OBON--
Mr. L.O. AKINDELE
Mr. C.V. UDEDIBIA
Mr. F. ADESHIDA

Pakistan:

Mr. M. AHMAD
Mr. K. NIAZ

Peru:

Mr. P. CANNOCK
Mr. C. CASTILLO RAMIREZ

Poland:

Mr. S. TURBANSKI
Mr. T. STROJWAS
Mr. G. CZEMPINSKI

Romania:

Mr. I. DATCU
Mr. T. MELESCANU
Mr. A. POPESCU
Mr. A. CRETU

Sri Lanka:

Mr. J. DHANAPALA
Mr. P. KARIYAWASAM

Sweden:

Mr. R. EKEUS
Mr. J. LUNDIN
Mrs. E. BONNIER
Mr. H. BERGLUND
Mr. L.E. WINGREN

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

Mr. V.L. ISSRAELYAN
Mr. B.P. PROKOFIEV
Mr. G.V. BERDENNIKOV
Mr. P.Y. SKOMOROKHIN
Mr. S.V. KOBYSH
Mr. G. ANTSIFEROV
Mr. V. VASHADZE

United Kingdom:

Mr. R.I.T. CROMARTIE
Mr. L. MIDDLETON
Mr. J.F. GORDON
Mr. D.A. SLINN

United States of America:

Mr. L.G. FIELDS
Ms. K.C. CRITTENBERGER
Mr. R. HORNE
Mr. L. MADSEN
Mr. R. WATERS
Mr. H. CALHOUN
Mr. J. DOESBERG

Venezuela:

Mr. A. LOPEZ OLIVER

Yugoslavia:

Mr. K. VIDAS

Zaire:

Ms. E. EKANGA KABEYA

Secretary-General of the Conference on
Disarmament and Personal
Representative of the
Secretary-General:

Mr. R. JAIPAL

Deputy Secretary-General of the
Conference on Disarmament:

Mr. V. BERASATEGUI

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

The Conference on Disarmament today begins consideration of item 3 of its agenda, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". As usual, however, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference, in accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure.

I have on my list of speakers for today the distinguished representatives of France, Morocco and Mexico, and I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of France, Ambassador François de la Gorce.

Mr. DE LA GORCE (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, the French delegation would like first of all to present to you its congratulations and best wishes for success in your duties. My delegation is happy to greet you as the representative of Romania, a country linked with France by long-standing ties of friendship and precious affinities in thought. Your talent and experience make us confident that you will accomplish your task in the best manner.

The French delegation also wishes to express its entire gratitude to our distinguished colleague from Poland for his efforts during the first month of our session. Those efforts led to substantial results; they have made it possible now to resume our work on a particularly important item of the agenda. I should also like on this occasion to draw attention to the long-standing ties of friendship that unite Poland and France and the unceasing admiration of my fellow-countrymen for the heroism of the Polish nation during its glorious and dramatic history.

I should also like, on behalf of the French delegation, to renew our wishes of welcome to our new colleagues, the Ambassadors of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Hungary, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. I shall be happy to continue with them the friendly co-operation that characterized our relations with their predecessors.

Those of my colleagues who have spoken before me have in the main stressed the deterioration of the international situation and the dangers which that implied. The French delegation shares to a great extent this concern but would not agree that the situation is in all respects as bad as some members of the Conference have claimed. We are, of course, aware of the persistence of tension and polemics. We deplore the continued resort to force: the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the war between Iraq and Iran, the crisis that threatens the independence and integrity of Lebanon, and the use of violence in South-East Asia, Africa and Central America. We also regret the breaking-off of the extremely important bilateral negotiations on nuclear issues that had opened in Geneva.

However, there is no visible desire anywhere to make a complete break; each side affirms its desire to continue the dialogue. The Stockholm Conference, which opened last month, expresses the resolve of the Europeans to define amongst themselves the means of restoring confidence and promoting security with the goal -- which we hope will not be far off -- of reducing armaments. The Vienna negotiations on balanced force reductions will resume. Here, our annual session has begun better than it did last year; the outlook for the negotiation of a convention on chemical weapons seems encouraging, and we hope that, with an open-minded approach on all sides, the Conference will be able profitably to deal

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with all the items on its agenda, taking best advantage of the albeit very diverse conditions characterizing the various questions before us.

Several of us have stressed the risks associated with the accumulation of weapons and especially of nuclear arms. We do not deny the existence of security risks that can in fact be produced by imbalance and destabilization; but it seems excessively negative to present the current situation as one marked by serious dangers of a nuclear disaster, and even less so as one marked by an imminent danger of such a disaster.

Furthermore, nowhere can we detect the nuclear panic that some movements are still trying to create in the Western countries. Where would the disaster come from? The countries of the Atlantic Alliance reaffirmed last year that none of their weapons would ever be used otherwise than in response to aggression. This commitment is in conformity with the obligation set forth in the United Nations Charter relating to the non-use of force. In addition, the member countries of the Warsaw Pact have affirmed their desire for peace as well and we take note of their statements.

We should consider, therefore, calmly and objectively, the present facts relating to the problem of peace and the problem of security, as those facts determine the very conditions of the disarmament enterprise.

The President of the French Republic, speaking to the General Assembly of the United Nations last September, said the following on that subject:

"Peace among nations can last only if it is based on a genuine balance. This is the lesson of history. It is in respecting this golden rule that the rights of all to independence and security will be reconciled. The approach should be to establish such a balance, or re-establish it if it no longer exists, and guarantee stability, reduce forces progressively to lower and lower levels, and verify at all times the information supplied; that is the only possible approach to the problems before us".

This statement expresses in the clearest terms the principles underlying French policy.

The conditions for peace and for security are therefore the very conditions of disarmament. For this reason we have introduced in the list of the main goals for the enterprise of disarmament -- our Decalogue -- a heading entitled "Disarmament and international security". That, in the view of the French delegation, justifies the inclusion in our agenda of an item entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters".

The French delegation willingly agreed to establishing this as a separate item. It highlights the fact that the prevention of nuclear war cannot be isolated from other matters. It is not a specifically nuclear item. It is, of course, linked to nuclear disarmament to the extent that the achievement of nuclear disarmament would, by definition, exclude the use of nuclear arms. But in the current situation, which is sure to last some time, the item deals primarily with the prevention of war in general, i.e. conventional war which could by escalation lead to a crossing of the nuclear threshold. The problem to resolve is, therefore, one of security and the conditions underlying security: from a political point of view, a state of international relations that ensures a sufficient level of

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confidence, in particular through the respect of the principle of the Charter that prohibits the use or threat of force; from a military point of view, the maintenance of the necessary balance and the rebuilding of confidence by appropriate measures. The proposals submitted in Stockholm by the Western Powers provide an example of that approach.

Other measures have been proposed that seek specifically to prevent a nuclear war by prohibiting the use of nuclear arms or their first use. The French delegation has on many occasions, in this body and in the First Committee of the General Assembly, presented the reasons why such measures, which are declaratory and unverifiable, would seriously harm the cause that they claim to serve, as they would destroy in one area the balance needed for security and would thereby provoke political and strategic destabilization with incalculable consequences that would affect the entire world.

The discussions that we are to have on new agenda item 3 will serve as an occasion for the French delegation to deal with this fundamental problem in greater depth.

I have tried to situate the "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters" in the very broad context given by the wording of our agenda. It proposes an ambitious, but in our view necessary, task, with which the Conference on Disarmament alone is able to deal at the international level. We must, through in-depth discussions, explore and identify the conditions for security in the nuclear age, and study the conditions, means and commitments that could preserve that security.

Will this study indicate issues suitable for negotiations of a concrete and specific nature? The French delegation does not exclude this a priori; it does not think that such negotiations can bear on aspects that are within the proper competence of the nuclear-weapon Powers. But it shares without reservation the legitimate concerns of the international community with regard to the matters covered by item 3 of the agenda, which are of major interest to all of humanity. France recognizes therefore the right of all States to participate in a joint effort on such matters. The French delegation will therefore make a full contribution to this effort to the greatest extent possible.

I shall only devote a few brief comments to other items on the agenda.

The French delegation remains ready to participate here in substantive discussions on agenda item 2, cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament. It has on many occasions explained the reasons underlying its approach to nuclear disarmament and the conditions in which the French Government could accept undertakings. It feels that in the present conditions such negotiations are within the competence of the two main nuclear-weapon Powers. The French Government therefore hopes that the negotiations interrupted last year by the Soviet Union will resume as soon as possible.

Chemical disarmament remains the main goal of our negotiations. Recent weeks have been marked by two very positive elements: the announcement by the United States Secretary of State of the forthcoming presentation of a draft treaty and the statement by the representative of the Soviet Union on continuous verification of the destruction of stocks. Furthermore, the subsidiary body has

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resumed its work with a broader mandate that authorizes the drafting of provisions of a treaty. The method proposed by its chairman seems to us to be well-suited to the negotiating conditions. We would hope, however, that matters relating to the prohibition of use and verification would receive more prominence. The recent allegations relating to the use of chemical weapons -- allegations recently submitted to the Conference -- call for further vigilance on the part of the international community with regard to the observance of that prohibition.

Broadly speaking, the necessary conditions seem present for the current session to make significant, and we hope decisive, progress in the negotiations on chemical disarmament.

Radiological weapons have also been the subject of negotiations for some years. We hope that these negotiations will focus on their proper goal, which is the condition for a successful outcome that is within our reach. In that connection, we do not think that new weapons of mass destruction should be dealt with within the same subsidiary body. The negotiation of a general agreement aimed at preventing the development of unidentified weapons does not seem practical to us. We prefer, therefore, resuming the method already used of informal meetings with experts, which has made a useful contribution to exploring the subject.

The French delegation has stressed on many occasions the capital importance of preventing an arms race in outer space. Such an arms race could in fact lead to dangerous destabilization of the necessary strategic balances. Agreement was reached last year on the establishment of a working group, but not on its mandate. Several of us, basing our position on the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly last December seek a general negotiating mandate, which others cannot accept. The French delegation has an open position on this problem but believes that the extreme complexity of the subject requires, at least for the duration of one session, the exploratory work envisaged in the draft mandate presented last year. In the view of my delegation it would therefore be wiser at once to devote to essential preparatory work the time we risk losing in a possibly fruitless discussion in an effort to attain a more ambitious text.

Finally, the French delegation maintains all its interest in the agenda items relating to negative security assurances and the comprehensive programme of disarmament; the conditions of which we are all aware, the lack of the necessary time, will no doubt not permit much progress this year.

But on the first of these items we continue to believe that the solution of giving Security Council endorsement to the declarations of the nuclear-weapon Powers, if possible in a single formulation, could provide substantial protection to the vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States and is therefore worth considering in fresh discussions.

The French delegation will deal more substantially with some of the matters that I have raised in future statements, as well as with the very pressing, but so imperfectly resolved, problem of our methods and procedures.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to my country and myself.

I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, Ambassador Skalli.

Mr. SKALLI (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all I have the great pleasure, on behalf of the Moroccan delegation and myself, of proffering our warm congratulations on your accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the month of March.

We are particularly pleased to have the conduct of our work entrusted to the distinguished representative of Romania, with which Morocco has the most exemplary links of friendship and co-operation. We are convinced that your wealth of experience, and your qualities as a shrewd and sagacious diplomat, will enable you to carry out your responsibilities with great ability and competence.

The work carried out by your predecessor, Ambassador Turbanski of Poland, deserves the highest praise. We should like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to him for the brilliant and efficient manner in which he directed the work of the Conference during his presidency.

I should like to take this opportunity cordially to welcome our new colleagues, the distinguished representatives of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Hungary, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. I should like to assure them of the full co-operation of the Moroccan delegation.

Since the end of our last session, international peace and security in the world have been put to a severe test. The many conflicts which rock our planet only increase international tension which has already reached an alarming level. The breaking off of the bilateral negotiations on intermediate-range nuclear forces and the postponement of the strategic arms talks testify to the current impasse in international relations. These events make our task in this Conference today both arduous and imperative.

We had agreed, however, that 1983 would be a crucial year for the renewal of disarmament negotiations. Although a unanimous desire to take action in the right direction was clearly expressed, we must recognize how small were the results we achieved.

There are few exercises more edifying in this connection than to note, in the statements at the start of a session, the expressions of hope for progress in our work and, in the statements at the close of the session, the expressions of regret and frustration because of the total lack of progress. For more than five years now, the Committee on Disarmament, now the Conference on Disarmament, has been entrusted with the task of negotiating in the sphere of disarmament; and never have so many wishes been expressed, but never have so many obstacles arisen to prevent any headway from being made. This backsliding is a source of profound concern for us, all the greater because a latent and insidious cold war is spreading to all levels of international relations, while its adverse effects are increasingly felt within our Conference.

(Mr. Skalli, Morocco)

Let us hope, admittedly without any great conviction, that the change in the title of this single multilateral disarmament negotiating organ will be an opportunity for an enhanced awareness of the dangers of the present situation and will induce us to take measures which could constitute the start of a genuine disarmament process; for no one is unaware of the risks to the world of the increasingly vast and ever more devastating arsenal of weapons.

In his message to the Conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked why, when there is such broad agreement on the objective of disarmament, it is still so remote. He was right to say that the answer should be sought, and I quote, "in the apprehension among nations, most importantly among the most powerful, of possible jeopardy to national security, an apprehension which detracts attention from the grave threat to global security which a continuing arms race poses".

The delegation of Morocco has often had occasion to draw attention to the fact that the arms race in our times has grown out of all proportion to the security needs of the States responsible for it.

We think that the accumulation of increasingly sophisticated and destructive weapons, far from conferring security on one or the other party, only increases suspicion and aggravates tension. Consequently, unless it is stopped, it can hardly fail to produce a conflictive situation of extreme gravity. The impressive number of resolutions adopted on the subject by the last United Nations General Assembly is in itself rather revealing. It illustrates the major concern of the international community to see the Powers which practically hold all mankind hostage, envisaging relations based on something other than mistrust and confrontation, and committing themselves firmly to a process of genuine disarmament which would benefit all nations of the world.

The time seems to have come when, on pain of being totally discredited in the eyes of public opinion throughout the world, we should undertake serious and constructive action in our Conference. Our agenda comprises issues whose urgency and importance need no further illustration.

My delegation wishes to express its satisfaction on the decision which we have taken to include the issue of the prevention of nuclear war as a separate item on our agenda. We have in this form recognized the priority which this problem merits, and its acuteness.

For our part, we can only welcome this, since the major problem confronting mankind to date -- if we need to be reminded -- is that of its own survival. As General Assembly resolution 38/183 G so rightly says, removal of the threat of nuclear war is the most acute and urgent task of the present day.

(Mr. Skalli, Morocco)

It is encouraging to note that all the delegations here present agree in admitting that the genuine threat of the annihilation of all life on earth following a nuclear war is the greatest peril our world must face. We thus find it difficult to understand the reasons which prevent the Conference from beginning substantive work on so crucial and fundamental a matter.

The General Assembly resolution which I have just quoted, after noting with concern that the Committee on Disarmament was not able to start negotiations on the question during its 1983 session, requests the Conference on Disarmament to undertake, as a matter of the highest priority, negotiations with a view to achieving agreement on appropriate and practical measures for the prevention of nuclear war.

The Moroccan delegation considers that it is high time to act and to follow up the General Assembly's recommendation. Specific negotiations on the subject should begin without delay, preferably within a subsidiary organ, the creation of which was recommended by the Group of 21 in document CD/341, which we consider to be the most suitable means of considering the issue.

It is clear that the best means of preventing the outbreak of nuclear war is to stop the nuclear-arms race and promote nuclear disarmament, since it is a fact that it is nuclear weapons which most seriously threaten the existence of civilization as a whole. We would like to recall here the particular responsibility which the nuclear-weapon States bear where disarmament is concerned. We can never sufficiently stress the political and moral duty of such States to respect the undertakings into which they have entered and to permit the implementation of the provisions of paragraph 50 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Next year the Third Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be held at Geneva. This underlines the importance, on the eve of this event, of the work of the present session of the Conference on agenda item 1 on the nuclear-test ban.

We have unfailingly asserted the urgent and imperative nature of the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty completely banning the testing of nuclear weapons. We have unceasingly stressed the positive effects of concluding such a treaty on non-proliferation. The efforts undertaken to date, however, do not, it must be confessed, meet our concerns and expectations, despite the numerous appeals by the General Assembly and despite the undertakings under the Partial Test Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Working Group which we set up two years ago on agenda item 1 initially concerned itself with the important question of verification. From now on it would be advisable to concentrate on preparing a draft treaty, the conclusion of which will most certainly constitute an important stage in nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Skalli, Morocco)

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is another issue to which the General Assembly has given high priority. We ourselves are fully aware of this. The extension of the arms race to outer space has become a new motive and a new reason for concern on the part of the international community.

Instead of being regarded as the common heritage of mankind and a domain for peaceful activity benefiting all the nations of the world, outer space has become an area of competition between the Great Powers. Each day that passes brings its quota of news on the development of or experimentation in some weapon whose field of action will be outer space. The launching of anti-satellite weapons or other missiles is no longer considered a futuristic scenario but a very real and threatening reality.

In view of the need to explore and use outer space for the good and in the interests of all, we must take the necessary measures to dispel the danger which an arms race in outer space would create for mankind.

Last year, there was unanimity on the subject of the creation of a subsidiary organ for that purpose. Unfortunately, we were unable to agree on the terms of its mandate.

At its latest session, the General Assembly, in resolution 38/70, called upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and to take immediate measures to prevent an arms race in outer space.

This resolution also requests the Conference to establish an ad hoc working group with a view to undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in all its aspects in outer space. We hope that this appeal will be heard and that we can set to work without delay.

The prohibition of chemical weapons is one of the issues to which we all attach high priority. It is good to note that work in this sphere is well advanced. Each session which passes brings us closer to the drafting of a convention which we hope to be able to conclude during this session. That would most certainly be a major contribution to the objective of general and complete disarmament which we are pursuing.

We welcome the fact that the mandate adopted for the subsidiary organ responsible for negotiating on this question adequately reflects the state of progress of our work.

Our optimism is justified and reinforced by the recent statements of the United States and the Soviet Union whose proposals will not fail, we are sure, to give a new impetus to our negotiations.

(Mr. Skalli, Morocco)

In the statement he made at the opening of this session, the distinguished representative of Mexico, Ambassador García Robles, judiciously drew a parallel between the main results obtained by the various multinational negotiating bodies on disarmament.

He also recalled that both the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament had achieved tangible results in the sphere of the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. As for the record of the Committee on Disarmament since its inception in 1978, it is, and I quote, "from all standpoints unjustifiably barren". It is to be hoped that the Conference on Disarmament will pull our work out of the present morass, so that this multilateral negotiating body can in its turn make progress towards general and complete disarmament.

We consider that it is time for us to act and show sufficient political will to respond to the expectations which the international community has placed in us.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement, and especially for his kind words addressed to my country and to the President.

I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Mexico, Ambassador García Robles.

Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, those of us who have had the opportunity, as I have, not only of appreciating your efficiency and discretion at work in the Committee on Disarmament, but also of having witnessed the distinguished and skilful manner in which you discharged your important responsibilities as representative of Romania to the United Nations, must congratulate ourselves on the fact that it has fallen to you to direct the work of the Conference on Disarmament in the month of March which, together with the month of February, is one of the most important months for launching the work of this multilateral negotiating organ on a sound course. The delegation of Mexico is pleased to offer you its unqualified co-operation.

We would also like to renew the expression of our high appreciation to your predecessor, the distinguished representative of Poland, Ambassador Turbansky, whose skill and acumen in guiding the initial stage of our work this year were truly exemplary.

In accordance with the programme of work which we adopted for this week, this plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is devoted to item 3 of its agenda, entitled "prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters".

(Mr. García Robles, Mexico)

To appreciate the importance of this item, suffice it to recall two paragraphs of the Final Document of 1978. In the first of these, paragraph 8, the United Nations General Assembly stressed that "while the final objective of the efforts of all States should continue to be general and complete disarmament under effective international control, the immediate goal is that of the elimination of the danger of a nuclear war"; and in paragraph 18 it added that "removing the threat of a world war -- a nuclear war -- is the most acute and urgent task of the present day".

We therefore venture to hope that this year nothing will happen of the kind which occurred in 1983, when two months of painstaking effort -- which I may illustrate by referring to the statements made by the delegation of Mexico at the 197th, 198th, 202nd, 203rd and 216th plenary meetings of the Committee -- had to be deployed to overcome the resistance, as stubborn as it was incomprehensible, of some States to the mere inclusion of the item in the agenda. We would like to believe that during the coming week the Conference will be able to reach agreement on acceding to the request addressed to it by the General Assembly on 20 December last year, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 38/183 G, to establish "an ad hoc working group on the subject at the beginning of its 1984 session"; and will entrust to the subsidiary body thus established a suitable mandate to enable it immediately to undertake "negotiations with a view to achieving agreement on appropriate and practical measures for the prevention of nuclear war", as explicitly stated in that same resolution.

In this connection, I should like to point out that, as I said on an earlier occasion in this same chamber, that these "appropriate and practical measures" to the negotiation of which the General Assembly requested that "the highest priority" should be attached, should be "measures commensurate with the gravity and imminence of the dangers which are to be averted". It is essential to bear in mind that, as the United Nations stated by consensus in the Final Document, in order to avert the danger of nuclear war "it is necessary to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects", without ever losing sight of the fact that "the ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons". Furthermore, this elimination obviously cannot be achieved all at once, and nuclear disarmament will only be possible through a gradual programme providing, among other measures, "progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery".

Viewed in this way, which seems to us the correct way, the prevention of nuclear war obviously embraces a very wide range of measures. Nevertheless, from this range it is necessary to select those measures which appear to be the most "appropriate and practical", to use the terms employed by the General Assembly, in order to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament, or the ad hoc subsidiary body which it sets up to deal specifically with agenda item 3, or any other relevant subsidiary body, gives priority to such measures in their negotiations.

(Mr. García Robles, Mexico)

Pride of place among these measures should perhaps be given to the nuclear-weapon-test ban, which has been at the top of the agenda of the Committee on Disarmament since it was established in 1978 with a membership of 40 States. As an ad hoc Working Group was already working on this item last year, it will suffice, when re-establishing it under whatever title is decided upon, to give it an appropriate mandate such as that proposed in the draft submitted by the delegation of Mexico and reproduced in document CD/438: in other words, "to initiate immediately the multilateral negotiation of a treaty for the prohibition of all nuclear-weapon tests and to exert its best endeavours in order that the Conference may transmit to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session the complete draft of such a treaty". This mandate, furthermore, corresponds faithfully to the mandate adopted by the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority in resolutions 37/72 of 9 December 1982 and 38/62 of 15 December 1983.

With regard to the agenda item that has since 1979 occupied second place on the agenda of the Committee and now the Conference on Disarmament, and is perhaps the item most closely linked with the prevention of nuclear war, it would be most advisable at last to heed the proposals repeatedly put forward by the Group of 21 and the group of socialist States for the setting up of an ad hoc subsidiary body with a view to the practical implementation of paragraph 50 of the Final Document, by undertaking urgent negotiations.

Item 5 on our agenda, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", is of similar importance and urgency, since it is clear that here we are facing a problem which does not admit of delay and concerning which it is important not to repeat the error which was made in the case of the missiles with multiple independently targetable warheads, commonly known as MIRVs. As was recently stated by a large number of scientists who are specialists in this field: "If space weapons are ever to be banned, this may be close to the last moment in which it could be done". It is therefore imperative for the Conference to set up without further delay an ad hoc subsidiary body for the purpose -- as recommended by the General Assembly in resolution 38/70 of 15 December 1983 -- of "undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in all its aspects in outer space".

If, as we hope, these three subsidiary bodies were in a position effectively to carry out mandates such as those which I have just summarized, the ad hoc subsidiary body to be set up on the third item of the agenda -- the prevention of nuclear war -- could devote itself to seeking to reach agreement, in the course of 1984, on a small number of measures which could be described as "short-term measures". These measures should include first of all three of those which I already had occasion to discuss last year at the 234th plenary meeting of the Committee on Disarmament held on 16 August 1983. They are the following:

Firstly, an immediate freeze of the nuclear weapons of the United States and the Soviet Union, to be followed, it would be hoped, within five years at most by a freeze of the nuclear arms of the other three nuclear-weapon States; this is a question on which the General Assembly has adopted two successive resolutions at its thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions, explicitly or implicitly emphasizing some points of special importance such as the following:

A nuclear arms freeze is not, of course, an end in itself. It would, however, constitute the most effective first step that can at present be taken both to prevent any further increase in the vast nuclear arsenals of the two Superpowers and to expedite the negotiations aimed at a substantial reduction and qualitative limitation of existing nuclear weaponry.

(Mr. García Robles, Mexico)

There are no grounds whatsoever for concern about the observance of the undertakings involved in the freeze, as the General Assembly provided expressly in its resolution that the freeze would be subject, not only to the relevant measures and procedures of verification already agreed on by the parties in the case of the SALT I and SALT II Treaties — which posed verification problems far more complicated than those that might arise in the case of the proposed freeze — but also to those agreed on in principle by the same parties during the preparatory trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban held at Geneva between 1977 and 1980. The foregoing, combined with the fact that "the freeze would mean halting all activities under any arms programme" has led someone so well-versed in the matter as Herbert Scoville, former Deputy Director of the United States CIA, to declare that "verification can no longer legitimately be invoked as an excuse for not proceeding towards an agreement on a freeze".

Furthermore, at present the conditions are most propitious for such a freeze since the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are now equivalent in nuclear military power and it seems evident that there exists between them an over-all rough parity.

A second measure which, although apparently modest, could certainly be described as "appropriate and practical" to contribute to the prevention of nuclear war would be the undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States not to be the first to use those terrible instruments of mass destruction.

In my statement last year to which I have already referred I ventured to suggest that this could be done in two stages: in the first stage, the United States, France and the United Kingdom could solemnly undertake, through unilateral declarations — like those made by China in 1964 and by the Soviet Union in 1982 — not to take the initiative in the use of nuclear weapons. In the second stage, the five nuclear-weapon Powers would give a multilateral character to their unilateral undertakings by incorporating them in a negotiated multilateral instrument. Since so far none of the events which we had proposed for the first stage has occurred, we believe that it would be best to proceed without further delay to the second stage.

In this connection, the subsidiary body which will have on its agenda the question of the prevention of nuclear war would, in our opinion, offer an excellent forum for the urgent undertaking of the negotiations needed to conclude a treaty, convention or protocol on the question.

The third "short-term measure" which we consider appropriate and practical for negotiations in the subsidiary body to which I have been referring is institutional in nature. It is a measure which my delegation proposed in the same statement made last August to which I have already referred, and which received the honour of endorsement by the General Assembly in resolution 38/183 N of 20 December 1983. In that resolution, the General Assembly urged "the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Government of the United States of America to examine immediately, as a way out from the present impasse, the possibility of combining into a single forum the two series of negotiations which they have been carrying out and of broadening their scope so as to embrace also the 'tactical' or 'battlefield' nuclear weapons".

(Mr. García Robles, Mexico)

This appeal by the General Assembly is all the more pressing today if it is borne in mind that bilateral negotiations on nuclear weapons have been broken off or suspended, according to how one prefers to describe it. Furthermore, a multilateral body such as that which would deal with the prevention of nuclear war would provide the most suitable forum for the combined negotiations envisaged in the General Assembly's appeal, as in that same resolution the General Assembly reiterated "its request to the two negotiating parties that they bear constantly in mind that not only their national interests but also the vital interests of all the peoples of the world are at stake in this question".

The undertaking of the negotiations needed to achieve agreements on the three measures which I have just reviewed, which I described as "short-term measures", namely, a freeze of the nuclear weapons of the two Superpowers, the conclusion of an agreement making legally binding an undertaking by all nuclear-weapon States not to be the first to use those terrible instruments of mass destruction, and the combining into a single forum of the various negotiations which have been carried out on nuclear weapons, I repeat, the undertaking of such measures would constitute the best baptism by fire of the new subsidiary body established to contribute to the prevention of nuclear war. For all of them, besides their inherent importance, are fully in keeping with the General Assembly's requirement that they should be "appropriate and practical" measures; they would all serve to strengthen international peace, which is currently so seriously threatened, and which, as the Group of 21 stated a year ago, "must be based on a commitment by all States to joint survival rather than a threat of mutual annihilation".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and especially for the kind words he addressed to the President.

I have no more speakers on my list for today, and I should like to ask the Conference if any other delegation wishes to take the floor this morning? That does not seem to be the case.

Distinguished representatives, in accordance with the programme of work for this week I now have the intention of closing the plenary meeting and convening in five minutes' time an informal meeting of the Conference to continue consideration of some questions relating to the organization of work. I will inform you then of the results of the consultations which have taken place.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 8 March 1984 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.