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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF A SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF
THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

PROHIBITION OF ACTION TO INFLUENCE THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE FOR MILITARY
AND OTHER PURPOSES INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY, HUMAN WELL-BEING AND HEALTH

Letter dated 7 August 1974 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics addressed to the
Secretary-General

The Soviet Government proposes the inclusion in the agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly of the following item as an important and urgent matter: "Prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health."

The twenty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly is opening at a time when, as a result of the efforts of all progressive and peace-loving forces, considerable progress is being made on the international scene towards improving the political climate, and the policy of détente is receiving increasing support. In the practice of international relations between States with different social systems such basic norms of inter-State relations as respect for independence and sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, abstention from the use or threat of force, and non-interference in domestic affairs are becoming ever more widely and firmly established. Détente has played a decisive part in the trend towards the political settlement of conflict situations in many parts of the world. Active negotiations are being held on a number of complex international problems.

Recent years have seen the conclusion and entry into force of such major international agreements limiting the scale of the arms race as the Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and others. Wide international recognition has been accorded to the Convention on Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, signed by more than 100 States.

The agreements between the Soviet Union and the United States on the prevention of nuclear war, strategic arms limitation and the limitation of underground nuclear tests constitute an important contribution to the strengthening of peace and control of the arms race.

Other concrete measures for the limitation of armaments, including measures for the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe, are being actively discussed.

However it has not yet proved possible to stop the arms race completely. States are still spending vast sums on the improvement of weapons and on stocking their military arsenals. There is a real danger that the achievements of science and technology will be used to create new types of weapons of mass destruction and to devise new means of waging war.

In the opinion of the Soviet Government, present-day conditions require that the activities of the United Nations should concentrate on the study of ways and means to consolidate and expand the positive processes taking place in the world of today, to back up political détente by military détente and achieve new concrete results in the field of the limitation of the arms race and disarmament.

The Soviet Union believes that an important step in this direction would be the prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health.

For many centuries mankind has been seeking to discover how to influence natural elements in a positive way, and mitigate the deleterious effects of natural disaster. At present, with this end in view, many States are carrying out scientific research and practical work in an attempt, for example, to create artificial rain, disperse clouds, etc. Activities in this field, pursuing peaceful and constructive ends, should, of course, be encouraged and welcomed in every way. However, the results of this research could also be used for destructive military purposes, and thus present an extreme danger to world peace, and to human well-being and health.

It is urgently necessary to draw up and conclude an international convention to outlaw action to influence the environment for military purposes. Compliance with the provisions of such a convention could be ensured by the adoption by each State, in accordance with its constitutional procedures, of measures to prohibit activities contrary to the convention and also by means of consultations and co-operation between States, inter alia within the framework of the United Nations. The conclusion of such a Convention would be not only a measure to limit the scope of the arms race but also an important means of preserving the environment. All States of the world without exception, and all peoples, would stand to gain from the implementation of this measure.

Needless to say, such an agreement should on no account restrict scientific research and practical work on the alteration of natural conditions to meet the peaceful needs of States for the benefit of mankind.

The adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution approving the idea of concluding a broad agreement on the prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health, and the preparation of a draft international agreement on the subject, would certainly be in the interests of strengthening peace and make a substantial contribution to the cause of preserving mankind from the danger of the use of new means of waging war, and also serve the interests of limiting the arms race and of disarmament.

I should be grateful, Sir, if you would consider this letter an explanatory memorandum pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the United Nations General Assembly and issue it as an official document of the United Nations General Assembly.

A. GROMYKO
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the USSR
