



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/10068
31 March 1975
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

Thirtieth session
Item 42 of the preliminary list*

WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

Letter dated 31 March 1975 from the Permanent Representative of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the following comments by the USSR in connexion with resolution 3260 (XXIX) concerning the question of the World Disarmament Conference:

"In connexion with General Assembly resolution 3260 (XXIX) on the World Disarmament Conference, the USSR Mission to the United Nations wishes to draw the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Soviet Government's comments concerning the convening of the World Disarmament Conference.

1. The Government of the USSR, as has been repeatedly emphasized, consistently favours the convening of a world disarmament conference, believing that the holding of such a conference could make a substantial contribution to the solution of the disarmament problem.

The favourable developments now taking place on the international scene makes the convening of a world disarmament conference all the more urgent. The time is ripe for taking new broad steps on a multilateral basis in the field of disarmament with a view to strengthening the favourable trend that has resulted in recent years from the conclusion of a number of important international agreements restricting or eliminating certain forms of armaments and reducing the danger of an outbreak of nuclear war: the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the convention on the prohibition and destruction of bacteriological weapons, the treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of weapons of mass destruction on the sea-bed and the ocean floor, the Soviet-United States agreements on the limitation of strategic

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weapons and the prevention of nuclear war, and others. It is important to ensure the further development and strengthening of this trend and to give it a new impetus.

This task is made more timely by the fact that it has not yet been possible to halt the armaments race, even though, at the initiative of the Soviet Union, the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session adopted a resolution on the reduction of the military budgets of States permanent members of the Security Council by 10 per cent and utilization of part of the funds thus saved to provide assistance to developing countries. The armaments race has already led to the expenditure of incalculable material and human resources which are diverted from the purposes of peaceful construction. Agreed measures to halt the armaments race would free enormous amounts of resources for the solution of urgent social and economic problems.

The armaments race harms all States, including those that do not participate in it directly. Consequently, disarmament concerns all countries without exception.

2. At every session since 1971, the United Nations General Assembly has spoken out consistently in favour of the holding of a world disarmament conference. In addition, calls for the early convening of such a conference have been issued by authoritative international forums of the non-aligned States at Cairo, Georgetown, Lusaka and Algiers. Many international social organizations have supported the proposals for the holding of such a world conference.

3. A world disarmament conference must be a forum at which all the countries of the world, on a basis of equality, will be able to express and compare their views on disarmament questions in all their aspects, both with regard to weapons of mass destruction and with regard to conventional weapons and armed forces. A comprehensive exchange of views at the conference would make it possible not only to make clearer the positions of all States on the various aspects of the problem of disarmament but also to join forces in determining the most effective ways and means for its solution. The work of the conference would undoubtedly promote more effective action on the part of States to agree on measures in the field of disarmament. It would help in determining the most timely aspects of the problem of disarmament which require immediate solution and planning practical ways and methods of limiting and halting the armaments race.

4. The Soviet Union believes that the conference should devote special attention to the problem of general and complete disarmament, the principal and final purpose of all disarmament negotiations. It would also be necessary to discuss at the conference ways of ensuring progress on further measures to halt the nuclear-weapons race and bring about nuclear disarmament, to prohibit other types of weapons of mass destruction and to reduce conventional arms.

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The Conference might also consider - and the Soviet Union would be prepared to join in considering - any specific questions whose favourable solution would help to attenuate the armaments race, to induce States to act with restraint in the increase of existing types of weapons and the development of new types and to persuade them to refrain from the use of scientific advances for the further development of means of destruction.

5. The discussion of all of these questions at the conference should not, of course, be a substitute for disarmament talks which have proved their value, in particular those in the Committee on Disarmament. An important purpose of the conference would be to involve in disarmament negotiations all the militarily important States.

The Soviet Union reaffirms its readiness to co-operate actively with all States, both within and outside of the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference, in attempts to solve the problems involved in the preparations for the conference and in its convening at an early date. The time has come for vigorous efforts to carry out the preparatory work for the convening of the conference, including the preparation of an agenda. Taking account of the work done by the Ad Hoc Committee over the past two years, there is every reason to believe that a world conference can be convened in the near future.

The convening of a world conference has become a necessity. Its realization will help to strengthen and improve the détente now taking place in the world, to convert it into an irreversible process and to add to it détente in the military field."

I should be grateful, Sir, if you would have this letter from the USSR Mission to the United Nations circulated as an official General Assembly document under item 42, entitled "World Disarmament Conference", of the preliminary list of items to be included in the provisional agenda of the thirtieth regular session of the United Nations General Assembly.

(Signed) Y. MALIK
Permanent Representative of
the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics to the United Nations
