



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/38/353/Add.1
21 November 1983

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/SPANISH

Thirty-eighth session
Agenda item 58

REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

Views of States on practical means of promoting the wider
participation of States in the international system of
standardized reporting of military expenditures

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

[Original: Spanish]

[31 October 1983]

1. The preparation of the budget of the Dominican armed forces has sought to satisfy the most essential requirements for enabling that institution to carry out its constitutional functions and the laws of the Republic, mainly as regards the sacred duty to see to the maintenance of the peace and institutional order of the State and the defence of national sovereignty.
2. In the preparation of that budget, account has been taken of the economic capacity of the Dominican Republic and consequently one may be assured that in its size and utilization it shows no sign of infatuation with arms or of tendencies which might suggest that the Government of the Dominican Republic in any way intends to build up a large military force in the Caribbean. The relations of friendship and good neighbourliness with the States of the region help to justify that policy.
3. Having indicated the above, the Dominican Government considers it feasible to participate more directly in the technical work of the group of qualified experts to undertake the task of constructing price indices and purchasing-power patterns for military expenditures. This means that our country is giving full co-operation and attention to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 37/95 B. Consequently, the Government of the Dominican Republic expresses its support for everything that may contribute to an equitable and rational plan for limiting the military budgets of Member States, as it has stated on various occasions in the United Nations General Assembly, and at the same time, expresses the hope that the work entrusted to the Group of Experts will be productive.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[Original: English]

[4 November 1983]

1. General Assembly resolution 37/95 B notes that an international system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures has been established and that a number of Member States are now reporting. However, it also points out that the broadest possible participation by States from different geographic regions and representing different budgeting systems is needed, and calls for new initiatives to give fresh impetus towards broader participation.
2. The Government of the United States is in full agreement with this resolution, which was supported by a hundred Member States and opposed in the main only by the Soviet bloc. The United States considers that the wider participation of States, particularly the Soviet Union - the largest military spender in the world - and other States in the Soviet bloc, is needed in order to:

/...

(a) Further refine the standard reporting system;

(b) Increase openness and confidence among States in military matters, thereby facilitating the achievement of various arms control and disarmament agreements and enhancing security;

(c) Improve the possibilities and prospects for effective agreements to limit and reduce military expenditures.

3. Despite the fact that the Soviet Union in 1973 proposed to the General Assembly that the permanent members of the Security Council agree to reduce their military budgets by 10 per cent (and allocate a share of the reduction to development assistance), the Soviet Union itself makes virtually no information known about its military expenditures. The annual "Military budget" of the Soviet Union consists of one word - "Defense" - and one total figure. The word has never been defined, explained, or elaborated upon in any way. There is universal agreement by expert observers throughout the world, including experts from the Soviet Union, that whatever the word "Defense" may signify, it is not even remotely comparable to what most other countries include in their military budgets and expenditures. Thus, this single total figure is useless and is used by no one, not even by Soviet economic analysts. Because of this, non-Soviet observers are obliged to make their own estimates of Soviet military spending. These estimates are at least three times larger than the official Soviet "Defense" figure and, in the case of the more soundly based estimates, seven or more times. Under these conditions, agreements to reduce the military budgets and expenditures of Western States, which are public and well known, and to impose strict controls over their military efforts in return for unverified reductions in the completely unknown Soviet and other Eastern figures are obviously inconceivable.

4. The Soviet Union and its allies have had ample opportunity to consider the question of making known their military expenditures since 1973, when the Soviet proposal for agreed reductions of military budgets put the issue on the General Assembly's agenda, and since 1974, when the first expert group reported on the problems associated with this proposal. Despite the substantial progress made in the ensuing decade by a series of expert groups and by participating States in developing and demonstrating a functioning reporting system, the Soviet Union has not made the slightest movement towards relaxing the shrouds of secrecy over its military establishment and making its own proposal workable.

5. The repeated calls of the great majority of States in the General Assembly for wider participation of States in the standardized reporting of military expenditures have gone unheeded by the Soviet bloc. There is every prospect that such calls will continue to receive the same response. This is evident from the recent report of the Disarmament Commission on its working group dealing with the reduction of military budgets (A/CN.10/1983/CRP.4). 1/ In an annexed paper submitted by five Eastern bloc countries 2/ with the support of the Soviet Union, the Eastern position is that:

1/ Reproduced in Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/38/42), para. 23.

2/ Ibid., annex X.

(a) Negotiations on agreements to limit military expenditures should begin immediately [That is, while the Eastern expenditures remain a complete mystery and the Western expenditures are made extensively known to the world];

(b) Efforts within the United Nations to bring about a better balance of openness and transparency are aimed at deflecting attention from effective disarmament agreements;

(c) It is almost impossible to solve practical and theoretical problems involving data and thus discussion of them would be futile [This despite, the steady and encouraging progress made by the United Nations expert groups in reporting and comparing standardized military expenditures];

(d) Existing total figures are completely sufficient for the conclusion of effective agreements [That is, there is no need for more data either before or during negotiations or after agreements are concluded, and this in the face of the claim that:]

(e) It is impossible to compare military expenditures between countries with different social systems [That is, market economies and centrally-planned economies - ignoring the fact that economic comparisons between such economies and involving similar problems are frequently made and accepted where sufficient data is available].

6. Thus, the Eastern position is that negotiations should begin immediately to agree to mutual reductions of things that are not and cannot be made comparable, and no efforts to make them comparable should be made. In essence, therefore, Eastern claims would need to be taken at face value, without a valid data base by which to assess current spending levels and reach agreements on reductions and without a means of verifying actual reductions.

7. The obvious unreasonableness of this position makes it evident that the potential for reaching effective and verifiable agreements to limit and reduce military spending, and thus to increase international security and the availability of resources for development, is an insufficient incentive for the Soviet Union to give up its obsession with secrecy. A decade of repeated calls and patient waiting by the international community have produced no results. New approaches, perhaps involving other kinds of incentives, are clearly needed to produce movement. It is for this reason that President Reagan proposed to the second special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, in July 1982, that an international conference be held to seek ways to encourage wider participation in reporting and greater openness on military matters generally, particularly by the Soviet Union.

8. The search for such new incentives and initiatives must be made primarily by those States that do participate (or are considering participation) in making known to the world the details of their military spending, that do see the advantages of openness and transparency both to themselves and to others. They should give thought to the various possibilities open to them and have their representatives

meet in conference to consider these ideas. Such an international conference should be open to all who are interested in participating, and any results should be transmitted to the General Assembly.

9. Greater openness and the loosening of the secrecy obsession are of great importance for the objectives of arms control, disarmament and international security. Those States which recognize that fact should make immediate and concerted efforts to help bring about such conditions.
