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Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

Third session, 23-27 June 2003, New York

Views of Member States on the objectives, agenda and timing of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

I. Introduction

On 1 December 1999, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/54 U, entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", paragraph 2 of which reads as follows:

"Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of States Members of the United Nations on the objectives, agenda and timing of the special session and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session".

The request was further reiterated by resolutions 55/33 M and 56/24 D. Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General invited Member States to provide information on the subject. With reference to the reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/130 and Add.1 of 13 July and 26 October 2000; A/56/166 of 3 July 2001; and A/57/120 of 28 June 2002) entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", the replies received from the Governments are reproduced below.

II. Replies received from Governments*

Bangladesh

[11 May 2000]

Bangladesh calls for an early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Despite the fact that the United Nations Disarmament Commission was unable to reach a consensus on the objectives and the agenda for the fourth special session, Bangladesh considers it important to

* Paragraph numbers in each reply may not correspond with those of the original document.

continue the search for a consensus in the appropriate forum. We continue to believe that nuclear disarmament should remain the highest priority for us. In the context of the emerging challenges in the area of international security and disarmament in the post-cold war era, an agreed plan of action to deal with these in the true spirit of multilateralism remains an enduring objective for the fourth special session. Bangladesh believes that only a special session of the General Assembly can address the broad subject of disarmament, taking into account in particular its relationship to development, with the comprehensiveness and thoroughness it deserves. [Source: A/56/166]

Brunei Darussalam

[11 June 2001]

1. Brunei Darussalam welcomes the proposal and initiative to hold the special session aimed at strengthening the coordinating work on issues pertaining to disarmament. These efforts are in line with Brunei Darussalam's position, as a peace-loving nation. Brunei Darussalam believes that the special session will give the opportunity for all Member States to actively participate in the search for means to address various disarmament issues. Of particular importance, the special session will undertake a review of the objectives and measures that have been or should be taken.

2. Brunei Darussalam does not have any suggestion for topics to be included in the agenda for the special session but would agree that the issue of the relationship between disarmament and development should be included. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the proposed agenda will aim at meeting the objectives of general and complete disarmament. [Source: A/56/166]

El Salvador

[29 April 2002]

Bearing in mind the objectives of resolution 56/24 D, the Government of El Salvador recalls that undertakings have been made on the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and on the control and reduction of conventional weapons. With regard to those undertakings, the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America refers to the prohibition of such weapons. Concerning the agenda and timing of the session, the Salvadoran authorities share the view that it is important that there should be a consensus among Member States on the objectives and agenda of the session, as well as a favourable climate conducive to the attainment of clear and practical results as a basis for deciding on the timing of the special session devoted to disarmament. [Source: A/57/120]

Guatemala

[5 June 2002]

1. Objectives

Ratification by Member States of the treaties for the prohibition of nuclear tests and mines.

On the basis of the treaty for the prohibition of mines, the introduction of measures to control the use, stockpiling, production and illegal marketing of anti-personnel land mines.

Establishment of mechanisms to bring about nuclear disarmament and to prohibit the production of material for the manufacture of atomic weapons.

Exchange of information and coordination between the security forces of the States Members of the United Nations in order to combat illicit arms trafficking.

Establishment of safeguards for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of such weapons.

2. Programmes

Imposition of sanctions on countries that allow the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons, munitions and explosives following the end of armed conflicts.

Ways of avoiding the use or threat of toxins and chemical and/or biological agents. [Source: A/57/120]

India

[11 May 2000]

1. India remains committed to the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament whose objectives and agenda will review and assess the implementation, as well as reaffirm, the principles and priorities of the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament agreed to by consensus. India believes that the fourth special session, in order to be credible, should focus on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament and put forward a positive and future-oriented programme building on the achievements of the past. This would be possible by reaffirming the principles and priorities agreed to by consensus in the Final Document of the first special session with a view to preserving what has been achieved, evaluating where we stand at the beginning of a new millennium, and defining a programme of action to pursue the unfinished task in the future.

2. India was therefore disappointed that the deliberations of the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission did not achieve a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the fourth special session.

3. As for the timing of the fourth special session, India believes that in accordance with resolution 54/54 U, it would be meaningful and appropriate to convene the session following the emergence of a consensus on its agenda and objectives.

4. The call for the fourth special session was an Indian initiative at the ministerial meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cairo in 1994. Since then, India has consistently supported the resolutions of the Movement on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The meeting of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in April 2000, reiterating the decision of their Heads of State/Government at the Summit of 1998 held at Durban, South Africa, conveyed their support for convening the fourth special session “to review and assess the implementation of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament while reaffirming its principles and priorities”. India fully supports the proposal by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and will strive constructively for its realization. [Source: A/55/130]

Lebanon

[14 June 2001]

The relevant Lebanese authorities have no views to convey on the objectives of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in view of the fact that Lebanon does not possess any weapons of mass destruction. It strongly supports the agreements on disarmament and arms limitation, and it will participate in the international efforts being made to achieve these objectives. [Source: A/56/166]

Mexico

[16 May 2001]

1. Mexico attaches great importance to the special sessions of the General Assembly held in 1978, 1982 and 1988 for a comprehensive review of the situation of disarmament, arms control and international security.
2. In 1994, Mexico expressed its support for the proposal contained in General Assembly resolution 49/75 I for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly on this topic and gave its backing to General Assembly resolution 55/33 M entitled “Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament”.
3. Mexico believes that consultations should begin on the aims and agenda of this special session, the convening of which will be debated at the next session of the General Assembly. In this process account should be taken of the work of the 1999 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. [Source: A/56/166]

Pakistan

[24 October 2000]

1. Like other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Pakistan firmly believes that the principles and priorities, as set out in the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament, remain valid in the post-cold war period, and thus should be pursued without exception. The fourth special session on disarmament, therefore, should serve to build on past accomplishments. Any effort

that seeks to promote the security interests of a few countries is bound to be counter-productive. Disarmament cannot be achieved unless pursued in a non-discriminatory manner, that is, on the basis of equal security for all States, irrespective of their size and status.

2. Pakistan therefore believes that the proposal of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to convene the fourth special session to review and assess the implementation of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament while reaffirming its principles and priorities offers a suitable approach to attain the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

3. As in the past, Pakistan will continue playing its positive role in the matter, and hopes that the fourth special session will be convened sooner rather than later in the interest of international peace and security. [Source: A/55/130/Add.1]

Qatar

[22 May 2001]

Review and appraisal, first of all, of past implementation of relevant resolutions.

Rectification and remedying of shortcomings, if any.

Elaboration of a programme to be implemented in stages beginning with nuclear disarmament, as a first priority, before moving on to subsequent stages.

A clear commitment and an assurance from all, during the special session, concerning the implementation of agreements in this domain. [Source: A/56/166]

[29 April 2002]

- Compelling the major States to halt the production and utilization of nuclear weapons.
- Achieving general and complete disarmament subject to effective international safeguards.
- Mobilizing the international community and public opinion with a view to the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and limiting and reducing conventional weapons.
- Utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Qatar hopes that the agenda of the special session of the General Assembly will include these objectives and that the session will be convened as decided by the Secretary-General. [Source: A/57/120]

Russian Federation

[17 May 2000]

1. The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, with reference to the enquiry by the Department for Disarmament Affairs of 14 March 2000 concerning the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, has the honour to inform him of the following.

2. From the point of view of the Russian Federation, the main work of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could be to try to comprehend the aims of disarmament at the current stage of world development.

3. In the Russian Federation we are convinced that this forum should conclude with the adoption of important and long-term decisions designed to set the tone for disarmament at the beginning of the new millennium. Such results can be achieved only by careful preparation of the special session and a calm and businesslike atmosphere during the session, free from sterile polemics and unconstructive and unrealistic approaches. Otherwise there is a danger that this important political event will prove to be as unsuccessful as the two previous special sessions on disarmament. The Russian Federation is prepared to work together with others with a view to establishing appropriate conditions for the holding of the fourth special session. [Source: A/55/130]

[16 May 2001]

1. The Russian Federation considers it a matter of urgency to hold a special session with a view to discussing practical means of resolving current aspects of the strengthening of strategic stability, further limiting the arms race, including preventing it from spreading to new areas, the consolidation and development of non-proliferation regimes for weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and the development of substantive legal and contractual foundation in the field of disarmament.

2. The Russian Federation is ready to support the early holding of such a session. [Source: A/56/166]

Syrian Arab Republic

[17 May 2001]

1. The Syrian Arab Republic supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in order to consider and appraise the implementation of the outcome of the 1978 first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and so as to provide an opportunity to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to mobilize the international community and public opinion in favour of the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and of the control and reduction of conventional weapons.

2. While the Syrian Arab Republic supports the convening of the session, it stresses the importance of the international community having the sincere political

will to implement the decisions of the first special session as showing the way towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the achievement of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. In view of the fact that no consensus was reached at the second and third special sessions, the Syrian Arab Republic believes that the adoption by the General Assembly of a consensus resolution on this important subject would reflect the genuine desire of the international community for the session and thus the importance of establishing the earliest possible date for its convening.

3. The results of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons confirm the need for the fourth special session devoted to disarmament to focus on the priorities of the international community with respect to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and on the establishment of a precise timetable for that purpose. [Source: A/56/166]
