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Chairman: Mr. JAROSZEK (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

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The CHAIRMAN: Last week the First Committee concluded its important debate on the conclusion of a world treaty on the non-use of force in international relations. Today it is beginning the discussion of the disarmament items on the agenda, which is, I believe, a most appropriate continuation of its work.

The impressive number of items -- all together 18 -- and the time allotted for their consideration reflects the weight and importance of these problems of our world. Most of them are not new to this Committee; to mention but a few, we have the elimination of chemical weapons, reduction of military budgets, complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests, nuclear-free zones, world disarmament conference, prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environment modification techniques, prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, and a number of others which, indeed, come under the notion of general and complete disarmament, the ultimate goal of the efforts and desires of the entire international community.

The very subject matter of our deliberations also indicates, I submit, the many-sided efforts that have been undertaken by the international community, some of them for many years now, to achieve progress, and it reminds us in a compelling manner that disarmament lies at the heart of world development today.

We are aware, naturally, that the General Assembly of the United Nations, and, in particular, its First Committee, is not the only forum of disarmament discussions and negotiations. In fact, such negotiations are being conducted on all planes of international endeavour. Bilaterally, they centre on the important Soviet-American Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT); regionally, they are taking place in Vienna within the framework of the talks on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in central Europe; multilaterally, they are proceeding in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and at consecutive sessions of the General Assembly.

Yet, discussions in this Committee have their own special significance as, on the one hand, they represent an attempt to unite in one and consolidate

(The Chairman)

our experiences and, on the other, they are bound to give new stimulus to further disarmament negotiations. Thus, through our debates which have the double characteristic of review and stimulus, the United Nations continues to be a centre for harmonizing world disarmament efforts. But, however complete the review, whatever the negotiating mechanisms, the stimulus for further progress depends first and foremost on the readiness in political terms which States are able to muster and on the degree of agreement their political will allows them to achieve in bilateral and multilateral forums designed for disarmament negotiations.

I am stressing this latter aspect of our work for, if we want to promote the easing of tension, if we are really determined to pursue the processes of détente on a global scale and further consolidate them, disarmament is necessary. It is at the same time feasible, because progress in normalizing international relations and fostering détente increases that mutual confidence among States which is so indispensable for the achievement of meaningful disarmament.

(The Chairman)

At the centre of the problems of disarmament, the questions of nuclear disarmament remain of paramount importance, and it is my strong hope that we may add some helpful new arguments to the efforts aimed at their solution.

With regard to the non-nuclear field, I feel that I would not be fulfilling my duties as Chairman if I did not point out that this year we are perhaps in a better position than before. The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament has submitted a new product of its work: the draft convention on the prohibition of military or other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. It is indeed encouraging to note this new result in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. I am sure it would be to the credit of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament if we in this Committee could give our approval to the draft, and hence contribute to the exclusion of yet another important environment from the evils of the arms race.

It is likewise with appreciation that we note the new developments that appear to have narrowed the differences in relation to the ban on chemical weapons, as well as the growing understanding of the problems of the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

I remain sure that the discussions we are beginning today will bring progress -- if not on all the items under discussion, as I would sincerely hope -- at least in those which most of us consider ripe for solution.

In keeping with the practice followed in the past by the First Committee, a practice which proved to be very useful, I would propose that in the general debate delegations refer to all, some or only one of the disarmament items on the agenda, according to their own choice. They will have the right to come back to any of the items at a later stage, if they wish to do so. In order to utilize efficiently the time available to the Committee to discuss disarmament problems, I should like to repeat the appeal I made to members at our second meeting to submit as much in advance as feasible draft resolutions pertaining to the different items, so as

(The Chairman)

to provide sufficient time for necessary consultations. We shall consider the draft resolutions in the order in which they are submitted on each particular item.

I would also suggest to the Committee that the first three weeks of our work -- that is, from today, 1 November, through 19 November -- be devoted to a general debate. We would therefore have two more weeks to discuss draft resolutions -- on the understanding that if some of the drafts are submitted sooner, the Committee will be in a position to deal with them without delay.

If I hear no objection to the method of work that I have outlined, I shall take it that the Committee decides to follow it.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: Before calling on the representatives whose names are inscribed on the list of speakers for this meeting, I should like to welcome the members of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament who have come from Geneva to participate in our work. I wish to extend a cordial welcome also to Mr. Risto Hyvarinen, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, who is attending our meetings on disarmament items.

Mr. KUZNETSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The First Committee is now embarking upon a consideration of the most important and urgent problem of contemporary international relations: the problem of the cessation of the arms race and disarmament. The General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Brezhnev, in his statement at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee on 25 October this year stressed that in the struggle for lasting peace there is today no more important task than that of halting the arms race and embarking upon disarmament. The scale and significance of the questions of disarmament require a broad and comprehensive

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

discussion of those questions and an active joint search for the mutually acceptable solutions which they have long awaited.

The position of the Soviet Union on questions of disarmament was clearly and distinctly set forth at this session of the General Assembly in the statement of the Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Mr. Gromyko. The Soviet Union firmly and consistently believes that the arms race must be halted, that it must be reversed and that we must achieve a genuine breakthrough in disarmament matters.

We attach primary importance to the preparation of concrete measures that would make it possible, in the final analysis, genuinely to move towards disarmament. The Soviet Union is ready to work together with other States in solving this problem and to display a constructive, businesslike approach. That is convincingly demonstrated by the Soviet memorandum on questions of ending the arms race and disarmament, submitted for the consideration of this session of the General Assembly.

The peoples of the world see in disarmament a reliable path to the strengthening of peace and international security. Now, when the world is witnessing an increase in arsenals and armouries, especially of atomic weapons, when every year hundreds of billions of dollars are spent on the preparation of death-dealing weapons, weapons of mass destruction -- that is, the material basis of war -- the cessation of the arms race and disarmament have become an imperative of the day, an important factor for peace and a pledge of the prevention of war.

We must not forget another important aspect of the matter. After all, the tremendous sums of money now being spent on military preparations could and must be devoted to the struggle against universal problems: backwardness, illiteracy, hunger, disease, environmental pollution, and many other problems connected with the raising of the standard of living and the material and cultural standards of peoples and with the economic development of States.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

We must say that in recent years it has been possible to make some progress towards the curbing of the arms race and the reduction of the threat of war, primarily nuclear war. Treaties have been concluded designed to halt nuclear weapons testing and to stop the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and limit strategic armaments. All this rebuts assertions that the efforts in the field of disarmament are futile and even fruitless.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

The Soviet Union has never shared and does not share this pessimism. Of course, disarmament is by no means an easy matter, but given goodwill and a serious attitude it is possible to achieve concrete results in restraining the military preparations of States. The most recent example is the draft convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile environmental modification techniques submitted by the Committee on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations. This draft convention is the fruit of collective efforts and careful reflection on the views of the large number of States which took part in producing this document.

Approval by the General Assembly of this draft convention in its present form and the earliest possible opening of the convention for signature would be a new important step towards the limitation and slowing down of the arms race and would be in keeping with strengthening the security of peoples and the preservation of the human environment.

Of course, the Soviet Union realizes that what has been achieved in the field of disarmament is, despite its importance, but a beginning. We need new firm, collective efforts to move faster towards the attainment of our final goals. Here a broad field of activity has been opened up for all countries, large and small, developed and developing, nuclear and non-nuclear. It is not enough now to talk about disarmament or to make appeals for disarmament. We must turn from words to deeds, and that is precisely the idea of the Soviet memorandum on questions related to ending the arms race and to disarmament. The memorandum is a long comprehensive document containing a programme of disarmament measures which are most urgent at the present time. The memorandum contains concrete Soviet points about the lines along which the struggle against the arms race should primarily be conducted and how, in our view, in practical terms, we could begin to resolve the most important problems in the field of disarmament, and what we need to do to that end.

I should like to stress particularly that the memorandum includes some substantial new elements which take into account the views of many States. These have been dictated by the desire of the Soviet Union to make easier the search for a practical way of facilitating the solution of key outstanding problems. In this connexion it is appropriate to remark that the Soviet Union

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

is ready to embark upon immediate implementation of all the measures provided for in the memorandum or initially on just a few of them, proceeding step by step from one stage to another.

Permit me now to explain the views of the Soviet delegation on some key issues involved in the struggle to end the arms race and to achieve disarmament.

The Soviet Union continues to see its major task as that of achieving general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. At the same time it is ready to move towards that goal in those areas in which it seems feasible to attempt to achieve concrete measures to curb the arms race.

A task of tremendous importance now facing mankind in the field of disarmament is that of halting of the nuclear arms race and bringing about full and complete nuclear disarmament. The Soviet Union has always favoured the banning of this weapon of mass destruction and its elimination from the arsenals of States. It struggled for this even at the time when nuclear weapons made their very first appearance and when objectively it would have been easier to come to an agreement on the prohibition of such weapons.

With similar persistence, we are continuing to struggle for a solution of this problem now. However, we must realize that this task has become immeasurably more difficult. Our experience shows that in existing conditions the most promising approach to the curbing of the nuclear arms race is a multi-level one. Such an approach should provide for reaching understandings and agreements on quantitative and qualitative limitations on offensive and defensive systems of strategic nuclear weapons and also on the cessation of further qualitative improvements in nuclear warheads, moving subsequently towards the cessation of the production of nuclear armaments, reduction of stockpiles and, finally, the destruction of all accumulated stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Of course, parallel with and at the same time as nuclear disarmament we must produce and put into effect measures to limit and reduce both the armed forces and the stockpiles of conventional weapons of States, because they too constitute a great danger for the peoples of the world.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

In order to curb the nuclear arms race we must first of all end all nuclear-weapons testing. It is precisely this which would make it possible to stop the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and prevent the emergence of new types of nuclear weapons. In this context, definite new results have been achieved. There is the Moscow Treaty of 1963 prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, which also limits the possibilities of producing new types of nuclear weapons, particularly super-powerful types. It has also made it easier to prevent radioactive fall-out which would affect the human environment.

A further step was the Treaty of 1974 between the USSR and the United States limiting the underground testing of nuclear weapons and banning the conducting of underground explosions above a certain threshold. Furthermore, in the light of the great significance of nuclear explosions for many industrial purposes, the Treaty of 1976 between the USSR and the United States on underground nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes established a system for the conducting of such explosions which totally eliminates the possibility of using them for purposes of improving nuclear weapons. Thus a genuine foundation has been laid for the final solution of the problem of prohibiting all nuclear-weapon testing.

The time has come to resolve this problem, and the Soviet Union now proposes that we conclude a treaty on the general and full prohibition of nuclear-weapon testing. Such a draft treaty has already been submitted to the United Nations, and the General Assembly has expressed itself in favour of specific talks in order to achieve agreement on the full and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon testing.

As we know, in talks on the cessation of nuclear tests certain States have been artificially complicating the question of control. The majority of experts in this field believe that contemporary science makes it possible to exercise effective control by means of national technical means. Therefore the Soviet Union, like many other countries, believes that these means are quite sufficient for reliable guarantees of observance of the agreement, particularly since there exist possibilities for the development of co-operation in the field of the international exchange of seismic data.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

However, the United States and certain other Western countries have stated that we must provide, in addition, for on-site inspections.

The Soviet Union, in a spirit of goodwill, is ready to take part in the search for a generally acceptable agreement, on such a basis of compromise that decisions concerning on-site inspection would be taken voluntarily and the parties to the treaty would have the assurance that the treaty obligations were being complied with.

The Soviet Union expresses the hope that this new constructive proposal which it has put forward will facilitate solution of the problem of the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapons testing, as this would be a substantial contribution to halting the nuclear arms race.

Of course, the halting of tests would be complete and generalized if all States, primarily all nuclear States were to become parties to this treaty. Furthermore, the threat of nuclear war would be immeasurably greater if in the course of the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons other States not possessing nuclear weapons at this time were to be drawn in; hence the need for a reliable way of preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons. This problem is dealt with in the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The obligation to renounce the dissemination of nuclear weapons has become a norm of contemporary international life. However, not all nuclear-Powers are parties to the Treaty. Even some non-nuclear States such as the Republic of South Africa and Israel, among others, which are capable, on the basis of their level of industrial and technological development, of creating their own nuclear weapons do not wish to adhere to the Treaty.

It is important, therefore, for us to do everything we can to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and make it genuinely universal. The danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is made even worse by the fact that, as a by-product of the operation of nuclear-power stations a fissionable substance is formed and accumulated -- namely, plutonium -- which can be used for the creation of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

With the development of international co-operation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities involving States not parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, such dangers will increase if the deliveries of nuclear material, equipment and technology are going to be carried out without any control or with inadequate control.

We must be vigilant in seeing to it that the supply of nuclear material, equipment and technology to non-parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty is carried out in conditions which would entirely eliminate the possibility of those States producing nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosive devices. And here a particular responsibility is borne by States which supply nuclear material, equipment and technology. Nuclear exports cannot be categorized as purely commercial operations. It is not a commercial or trade issue, as certain States which supply nuclear material are inclined to assert. Rather, it is a major policy question -- a question of international peace and security.

Insofar as the Soviet Union is concerned, in its nuclear export policy it abides strictly by the principles which have emerged on the subject. The Soviet Union firmly believes that the system of controls with regard to nuclear installations and materials in non-nuclear States should be comprehensively improved, and should be conducted by the International Energy Agency. The whole system of international control over the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons should be subject to the most scrupulous, careful and constant attention and improvement. The Soviet Union continues to be ready for wide co-operation with all interested States for this purpose.

An important task in the winding down of the arms race is the prohibition and the destruction of stockpiles of chemical weapons, which constitute a dangerous and deadly means of warfare. The urgency of this problem is determined primarily by the fact that not only are the stockpiles of these weapons of mass destruction growing, but the types of weapons are constantly being improved and this constitutes a very serious threat to international peace and security. With the conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the question of prohibiting chemical weapons is now assuming particular urgency.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

The Soviet Union continues to stand for a comprehensive solution to this problem -- that is, the full and simultaneous prohibition of all forms of chemical weapon and the destruction of stockpiles of those weapons -- and, along with other socialist countries has long been proposing an agreement on this. Unfortunately, because of the reluctance of our partners from the Western countries, the talks that have been held on this subject have not yet opened any prospect for the attainment of an all-embracing agreement of this kind.

In the circumstances, the Soviet Union has expressed its readiness to search, as a first step, for an agreement on the prohibition and elimination of the most dangerous and deadly forms of chemical weapons. In this regard, an important part could be played by the implementation of the well-known Soviet-American agreement regarding the conclusion of a convention on a prohibition of chemical weapons of precisely that scope, as a first step towards their total prohibition. Control over the observance of the prohibition of chemical weapons can and must be based, in the Soviet view, on national means. At the same time, the Soviet Union is ready to consider the possibility of using additional procedures, particularly to discuss methods of verifying the destruction of stockpiles of chemical weapons contained in the arsenals of States. We believe that if other States also displayed a constructive approach, there would be no reason for any further delay in solving this major and entirely timely problem.

It is no secret that in order to increase the deadly power of weapons the latest advances of science in the realm of laser technology, nuclear physics, radio electronics and other areas are being used. In the absence of any limitations that would effectively block this use of scientific and technological advances there may turn out to be a genuine possibility of the emergence in the near future of new forms and systems of weapons of mass destruction even more deadly and dangerous than nuclear weapons. At present it is difficult to foresee what dangerous turn of events may occur in this field. But we should forget another point: it is, after all, much more difficult to ban already existing weapons than in good time to prevent the development of new forms of such weapons; hence the urgency and timeliness of this question, which covers the substance of the whole problem of limiting the arms race and preventing war.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

All this makes urgent the adoption of measures which would prevent this dangerous development of events. It is precisely for this reason that the Soviet Union is proposing the conclusion of an international agreement that would prevent the development and production of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction.

The discussions going on in the Committee on Disarmament have revealed not only growing interest in the Soviet proposal but also the prospects for its implementation. Of course, there still lies ahead a great deal of work on defining and specifying the subject of the prohibition and deciding on the provisions of the agreement itself.

In this regard, in connexion with the fact that in the course of talks the desire has emerged to make a concrete approach to defining new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction the Soviet Union has put forward in its memorandum its considerations and views on defining the subject of the prohibition itself. We are convinced that this should give the talks greater objectivity and purposefulness. The question of prohibiting the development of new systems of weapons of mass destruction is a major topic. It calls for speedy and responsible action, primarily from the industrially developed countries.

The Soviet Union continues to believe that a great deal of attention should be paid to the problem of reducing armed forces and conventional armaments. We should not lose sight of the fact that the power of the so-called conventional weapons grows every year. This makes it urgent for us to adopt practical measures to reduce air forces, artillery, tanks and other contemporary forms of weapons as well as the armed forces equipped with them. In this regard, the Soviet Union has put forward quite a number of concrete proposals and expressed its readiness to hold talks on this subject both within the framework of general and complete disarmament and as an independent measure, and we confirm this position. The Soviet Union is ready to hold talks on the reduction of armed forces and armaments. It has taken an active part and has shown a constructive and business like approach in the talks on the reduction of forces and armaments in central Europe which are taking place in Vienna.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

The Soviet Union is still ready, as it always has been, to co-operate in solving the problem of the elimination of all foreign military bases on the territory of other countries, which constitute a source of serious international complications. One of the most promising approaches to the curbing of the arms race and to disarmament is the reduction of the military budgets of States. The position and proposals of the Soviet Union on this question are, we believe, well known. The memorandum confirms the readiness of the Soviet Union to continue to make efforts to achieve concrete results on this question. The USSR has shown flexibility with regard to the practical figure from which we could begin reducing military budgets, and is ready to achieve understanding on a higher figure than 10 per cent, which had formerly been discussed in the United Nations, as well as on a lower figure, as a first step, for 1977.

It is important, in our view, to make this question the subject of business-like talks as soon as possible and to come to an agreement on initial measures, which could be followed by further steps, so that instead of the present constant growth in the military expenditures of many States the practice of a systematic reduction of such expenditures could be initiated.

The resources that would be freed by this could be used for the purpose of the economic and social development of countries, and this should include ensuring employment, the development of new sources of energy, solving the food problem and giving assistance to developing countries.

The Soviet Union continues to be ready to co-operate with interested countries in creating nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in various parts of the world. It is important, however, that such zones should be genuinely free of nuclear weapons and genuinely zones of peace in total conformity with universally acknowledged norms of international law.

The Soviet Union has taken a positive stand with regard to the proposal to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace put forward by a number of African and Asian States belonging to that part of the world. We are sympathetic to the concern shown by the Indian Ocean countries in connexion with the fact that certain geographically-remote countries are developing military bases there. So far as concerns the Soviet Union, it has no such bases. Furthermore, it has expressed its readiness to begin, along with other Powers, a search for ways and

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

means of reducing on a reciprocal basis the military activities in the Indian Ocean and in the regions directly adjacent to it and of resolving the key issue: that of eliminating foreign military bases there.

The tasks in the field of disarmament are major and exist at various levels. Talks are going on on these subjects in various forums and organs, and have, on the whole, justified themselves. However, from the point of view of achieving a major breakthrough in resolving the disarmament problem, still this is a task which in all its dimensions confronts all States of the world, it is of tremendous importance that it be considered in the broadest possible and most authoritative international forum. This requirement would be met by convening a world disarmament conference at which all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, great and small, developed and developing, Members and non-members of the United Nations, could harness their efforts in the cause of halting the arms race.

The idea of holding a world disarmament conference enjoys broad support throughout the world. For example, the non-aligned countries, at their Conference in Colombo in August this year, called in a resolution on disarmament for:

"an early agreement on the convening of the World Disarmament

Conference in order to promote the solving of basic issues of general and complete disarmament under strict international control".

(A/31/197, annex, p. 127)

The General Assembly, at its thirty-first session, must make its views known and felt in order to accelerate the convening of a world disarmament conference. At the same time, the Soviet Union is sympathetic to the idea of convening a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the question of disarmament, and this is spelled out in detail in the Soviet memorandum. It is important that such a session not be just a regular session and that it make a positive contribution defining ways and means of solving disarmament problems and of producing long-term practical measures in this field. The holding of a special session of the General Assembly should not, however, replace the convening of a world disarmament conference. The Soviet Union views the convening of such a session as an intermediate stage, the decisions of which would pave the way for comprehensive and radical consideration of the whole complex of issues involved in disarmament at a world disarmament conference.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

These are the views which the Soviet delegation wish to put forth in the First Committee on the urgent problem of disarmament. These views are dictated by the sincere concern of the Soviet State for international peace and security and by its desire to facilitate the earliest possible advance of mankind towards halting the arms race and towards disarmament.

(Mr. Kuznetsov, USSR)

Time does not wait. As was stressed by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Mr. Brezhnev, in a recent interview for French television:

"The struggle against the increase in armaments has now become a burning topical issue of the day."

The peoples of the world are entitled to expect from the United Nations tangible results in the matter of halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament. As far as the Soviet delegation is concerned, we are ready at this very session of the General Assembly, to make a constructive contribution to the search for mutually acceptable decisions and solutions in the interest of strengthening peace on earth, and we call on the delegations of all Member States of the United Nations to help us in this.

Mr. MARTIN (United States of America): This being the first time this year I have spoken in this Committee, permit me to congratulate the officers of the Committee on their election and particularly you, Mr. Chairman, with whom I have had the pleasure of doing business for many years. I am certain that under your wise and judicious guidance this series of meetings of the First Committee on disarmament will produce the results that we all hope will come from our labours.

1976 has seen gratifying progress in multilateral disarmament. Notably, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), fulfilling the General Assembly's request in resolution 3475 (XXX), has negotiated and forwarded to the Assembly a draft convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. The United States considers that adherence to this convention will effectively eliminate the serious dangers that the hostile use of such techniques may pose. The convention thus will protect the security interests of all States parties with respect to this means of warfare. Therefore we think it is extremely important to correct a mistaken impression which seems to have arisen in the minds of at least one delegation at the CCD and at this Assembly.

The convention does not permit in any sense the hostile use of environmental modification techniques to generate such potentially catastrophic phenomena as earthquakes, tidal waves, cyclones or hurricanes, or alterations in climate patterns, weather patterns, ocean currents, the state of the ozone layer or the ionosphere. These phenomena are specifically listed illustratively in an agreed understanding forwarded by the CCD to the General Assembly together with the convention text itself. In that understanding the CCD agreed that all those phenomena, when produced by hostile use of environmental modification techniques, would result, or could reasonably be expected to result, in widespread, long-lasting or severe destruction, damage or injury. The convention thus would prohibit any hostile use of environmental modification techniques to cause any of those phenomena as a means of destruction, damage or injury to another party. Therefore the generation of any of those catastrophic phenomena is absolutely prohibited under the convention. There can simply be no dispute on this point.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

In this respect, the convention is consistent with the identical drafts submitted at the CCD in August 1975 and referred to in resolution 3475 (XXX). However, responsive to the views of numerous other countries as set forth in a genuinely multilateral negotiating process, the present text also reflects a number of very significant modifications of the original drafts.

For example, the questions of peaceful use of environmental modification techniques are dealt with much more extensively in the text before this Committee. Thus, the preamble of the convention now refers to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on international responsibilities with respect to the environment; and article III, besides providing that the convention shall not hinder peaceful use of environmental modification techniques, now calls for the fullest possible exchange of scientific and technological information concerning such use. The article also includes an undertaking to contribute to international economic and scientific co-operation in the preservation, improvement and peaceful utilization of the environment, with due consideration for the needs of developing areas.

Article V of the convention contains an innovation in multilateral arms control compliance procedures. It provides for the convening of a consultative committee of experts, upon the request of any State party, to undertake appropriate findings of fact and provide expert views in connexion with any problems the requesting party raises with respect to the objectives or application of the convention. The consultative committee should afford all parties the assistance of international expertise which might otherwise be unavailable, for factual findings and explanations concerning what may be highly complex technical questions. We consider the provisions for the consultative committee a genuine advance over previous practice.

In another change from the original draft, article VIII of the convention adds provisions for a review conference five years after entry into force. The conference is to examine, in particular, the convention's effectiveness in eliminating the dangers of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. If, contrary to our expectations, the convention is deemed to have proved ineffective, the conference could then consider remedial action. Thus the draft this Committee is called upon to consider is the result of intensive negotiations which have produced an intricate cloth of compromises of many sincerely felt points of view. It will be impossible to unravel one strand without unravelling the entire fabric.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

My delegation believes that, taken as a whole, the environmental modification convention, as reported by the CCD, is worthy of broad acceptance. Accordingly, we think it should be commended by the General Assembly and opened for signature and ratification as soon as possible. We will support a resolution to that effect and hope that most other delegations will do the same. The CCD worked with great determination and diligence to produce the text of the environmental modification convention this year. The adoption of such a resolution by the Assembly will recognize the Committee's accomplishment and enable it next year to concentrate on other important subjects on its agenda.

Since the thirtieth session of the General Assembly useful work has also been accomplished in international consideration of controls on chemical weapons. The CCD's discussions on this subject during 1976 have been active and constructive. We were encouraged by increasing acceptance of the concept of a phased approach to a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, and by progress on the question of defining the agents to be covered in the initial phase. The Committee's deliberations also reflected increased awareness of the central importance of verification problems relating to restraints on chemical weapons. In this connexion, while maintaining our reservations regarding reliance on national technical means, we have noted with interest the statement on verification of destruction of chemical weapon stocks contained in the disarmament memorandum recently submitted to the General Assembly by the Soviet Union.

The CCD's consideration of chemical weapons questions this past summer was complemented by technical consultations between United States and Soviet experts. These talks were helpful in clarifying the views of the two sides on a variety of complex issues, especially those relating to verification, and in identifying some areas of agreement. Both sides considered the consultations useful and agreed that they should be resumed at a future date to be determined. Our view remains that continuation of such consultations cannot in any way substitute for the CCD's ongoing work in this very important arms control area.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

Indeed, during the Committee's 1977 session we expect it to devote major attention to chemical weapons issues. We look forward particularly to hearing the views of others, and to offering our own, on the draft convention submitted last August by the United Kingdom in a very welcome initiative. More generally, the United States expects to participate actively in the continuing search for solutions to the difficult and complex problems which we still face as we pursue our common objective of effective measures for the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Besides its work on environmental modification and chemical weapons, this year the CCD showed renewed vitality and procedural flexibility in other ways as well. For example, in connexion with questions related to nuclear testing, an expert group was established under CCD auspices to study possible measures of international co-operation in detecting and identifying seismic events. The group has made a promising beginning. Its prospective contribution would be enhanced, however, if experts from regions of the world now unrepresented or underrepresented on the panel would join in its subsequent work. Also, the Secretary-General's working group on the reduction of military budgets met twice in Geneva, maintaining informal contact with various CCD delegations. The working group has produced a valuable report which clarifies definitional and other technical issues relating to the comparison of military expenditures.

The CCD's accomplishments this year renew our conviction that under existing circumstances the Committee constitutes the best available vehicle for multilateral disarmament negotiations. On the other hand, we acknowledge the continuing interest shown by many countries in a more general forum, and in particular the attention currently being devoted to the question of a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. My delegation is prepared to consider an appropriate resolution that would set in motion preparations for a special session in 1978. If it proves possible for us to support such a resolution, we would hope to take part in the preparatory activity, which must be careful and thorough if the special session is to make progress.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

Once again this year, an important topic for consideration by the First Committee is the question of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Committee's discussion can be expected to span a range of international efforts in the non-proliferation field; but the most immediate focus, as specified in the title of the agenda item, will be the implementation of the "conclusions" of the Conference to review the operation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty which was held in May 1975.

Less than a year and a half has passed since the Review Conference. Nevertheless, the collective findings and recommendations of Conference participants, as well as the momentum and international interest generated by the Conference itself, have stimulated new or accelerated activity in several critical areas of the non-proliferation effort. This activity has already yielded some substantial results.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

It is also encouraging that some of the principal accomplishments of the last 18 months have involved the co-operation not only of parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) but also of States that have not yet chosen to adhere to the Treaty. In our view, this reflects the near-universal appreciation of the threat to mankind posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the recognition that success in preventing such proliferation depends on the concerted efforts of all groups of States. Permit me to review briefly some of the gains that have been made in the last year and a half.

Significant steps have been taken, in conformity with the Review Conference recommendations, to increase the effectiveness of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. These include:

First, efforts to develop new verification techniques and instrumentation;

Secondly, broadening of safeguards coverage in agreements with non-nuclear-weapon States not parties to the NPT; and

Thirdly, negotiation and approval of agreements to implement the voluntary offers by the United States and the United Kingdom to place their civilian nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards.

In early 1976, as a result of consultations with other nuclear suppliers, the United States adopted as a national policy certain principles that will govern future nuclear exports. We were informed that other Governments would do the same. Strengthening common nuclear export requirements was an important consensus recommendation of the Review Conference. This recommendation reflected the recognition by suppliers and recipients alike that the exercise of special responsibility by supplier Governments would promote the security and economic interests of all States.

Efforts to implement Review Conference recommendations on the physical protection of nuclear materials have been pursued on several fronts. Major suppliers have decided to include provisions in their nuclear co-operation agreements requiring adequate levels of physical protection in recipient countries. The IAEA has issued a revised set of recommendations on physical protection. In addition, the United States has suggested an international convention that provides for physical protection of nuclear materials in transit and for international

(Mr. Martin, United States)

collaboration in the recovery of lost or diverted materials, and encourages participating countries to adopt measures conforming to international criteria for effective physical protection.

We have continued to fulfil our commitments under NPT article IV, reaffirmed at the Review Conference, to facilitate the exchange of nuclear technology and materials for peaceful purposes consistent, of course, with the restraints required by articles I and II. Through our bilateral co-operative arrangements for the supply of nuclear reactors and fuel, as well as our expanded contributions to the IAEA's technical assistance programmes, we have demonstrated our determination to assist developing countries, particularly those parties to the NPT, in meeting their growing energy requirements.

The Review Conference gave impetus to the search for safe and economical alternatives to nationally-owned sensitive nuclear facilities, such as uranium enrichment and chemical reprocessing plants. Specifically, it encouraged active consideration of multinational nuclear fuel cycle centres. In accordance with that recommendation, the IAEA's study of such multinational centres is under way. We believe it is desirable, among other approaches, to continue studying the idea of a few suitably sited multinational fuel cycle centres to serve regional needs, when effectively safeguarded and economically warranted. Through these and related means we can minimize incentives for the spread of dangerous fuel cycle capabilities.

We continue to support the validity of the Review Conference finding that the technology of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes is still at the developmental stage. None the less, considerable progress has been made in implementing the Conference's recommendations on peaceful nuclear explosions. The Conference asked that the IAEA expedite examination of the legal issues involved in, and commence consideration of the structure and content of, the international agreement or agreements contemplated in NPT article V. In response, the IAEA Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions -- itself the result of a Review Conference recommendation -- has studied various legal and other factors involved in the establishment and operation of an international peaceful nuclear explosions service and plans to advise the Board of Governors on these matters during 1977.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

The recommendations contained in the Review Conference Final Declaration do not, of course, deal only with safeguards and co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Participants in the Conference recognized, as had the negotiators of the NPT itself, that national security and political considerations are the motivating factors in a decision to acquire nuclear explosive capabilities. Accordingly, in the long run, any successful approach to the non-proliferation problem would have to deal satisfactorily with concerns in these areas. This recognition was reflected in several consensus recommendations concerning strengthening of the security of non-nuclear-weapons States and the cessation of the nuclear arms race.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

The United States attaches great importance to these recommendations and plans to work actively towards their implementation. Efforts have already been made to put the recommendations into effect, but we can share the regret that has been expressed that more rapid progress has not proved possible.

The United States recognizes that alleviation of the legitimate security concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States is a critical component of international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Unfortunately it is easier, however, to state the objective than to devise practical and effective means of promoting it. Reluctance to forgo the nuclear-weapons option often arises from local conflicts and insecurities whose origins are invariably complex and rarely subject to quick solutions.

For its part the United States has tried to promote the security of non-nuclear-weapon States in a variety of ways, such as efforts to assist in solving regional conflicts, for example in the Middle East and in southern Africa, encouragement of regional arms control arrangements and the provision of positive security assurances such as Security Council resolution 255 (1968). In addition, in exercising the right of collective self-defence the United States and a number of other nations have entered into mutual security relationships for the purpose of deterring and defending against armed attack. We believe that these alliances, by providing sufficient assurance regarding security needs, have had a major impact in influencing States involved to renounce the nuclear-weapon option.

On the other hand, we have not been able to accept proposals for universally applicable assurances on the non-use of nuclear weapons because we have not discovered any formulation that would effectively serve the varied security needs of non-nuclear-weapon States, including our allies. However, we are prepared to consider any appropriate means of strengthening the security of those States, provided such means do not affect detrimentally existing security arrangements which, as I have just noted, are important components of the non-proliferation effort.

As Secretary Kissinger stated in a plenary meeting on 30 September, we continue to approach the non-proliferation problem in full recognition of the responsibility that we and other nuclear Powers have in limiting our

(Mr. Martin, United States)

nuclear weapons arsenals. Mindful of this responsibility, and in line with the Review Conference recommendations on the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), the United States and the Soviet Union have continued actively to pursue an agreement, based on the Vladivostok accord, on the limitation of offensive strategic arms. We should like to stress, however, that we would not regard such an agreement as the final step in the SALT process. We are determined to begin negotiations on further limitations and reductions in the level of strategic arms as soon as possible following the conclusion of a SALT II agreement.

The Review Conference expressed the hope for early solutions to the technical and political difficulties that have blocked agreement on an effective comprehensive test ban. So far these difficulties have not been resolved. However, in our view some important steps have recently been taken towards our common objective of achieving a comprehensive test ban. In particular, we believe that the threshold test ban Treaty and the integrally related Treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions -- the latter of which was signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in May 1976 -- place significant restraints on United States and Soviet nuclear explosions. Moreover, the threshold test ban Treaty contains an explicit commitment to continue negotiations towards the cessation of all nuclear-weapon tests, and we are determined to fulfil that commitment.

To sum up, we believe that a reasonably good start has been made but that we must redouble our efforts to put the Review Conference recommendations fully into effect. Of course, international action on non-proliferation should not be confined to ideas outlined at the Review Conference in May 1975. The nature of the non-proliferation challenge continues to change, and accordingly the requirements of a successful strategy to meet that challenge must continue to evolve. The Review Conference conclusions might therefore be regarded simply as a foundation upon which we can build further co-operative international efforts involving parties as well as non-parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear recipients as well as suppliers, and nuclear Powers as well as non-nuclear-weapon States. We sincerely believe that this General Assembly should provide a mandate for such efforts.

(Mr. Martin, United States)

In a major foreign policy statement on 28 October President Ford outlined a programme of international action in the non-proliferation field. Later in our debate my delegation will present a detailed account of that important initiative. We also reserve the right to make statements on other matters as the debate proceeds.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of the United States, Ambassador Martin, for his kind words addressed to the officers of the Committee and to me personally.

The next speaker on the list is the Secretary for External Relations of Mexico, His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Garcia Robles. I am sure that I am expressing the sentiments of the Committee in telling him how glad we are to see him again in our midst.

Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish): I am very grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, for your very kind words of welcome on my return to this Committee. I should like to take this opportunity to extend to you, on behalf of the delegation of Mexico, our most sincere congratulations on your well-earned election to preside over the First Committee's work. For all those who, like me, have worked with you in the past and are therefore familiar with your discreet but fruitful activities in the United Nations, the fact that you are guiding the work of this Committee is a guarantee that, to the extent that it may depend on the Chairman, the most favourable conditions will be established for the successful completion of the Committee's task.

Today the Committee begins its debate on the 18 disarmament items. Indeed, we have before us only one fewer item than the record number of 19 which were on the First Committee's agenda last year. Hence, I think it only fair to state that in the year that has passed since the last session of the General Assembly, nothing has happened that might be described as tangible progress in the disarmament negotiations. The bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union -- the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, usually referred to as SALT -- the aim of which is supposed to be the limitation of the nuclear arsenals of the two super-Powers, are at a complete standstill. As for the various United Nations bodies entrusted with specific disarmament tasks, the position is equally discouraging. No progress has been made this year in the Ad Hoc Committee on the World Disarmament Conference, as is clear from the chapter of its report containing observations and recommendations relating to its mandate. The results of the work of the other Ad Hoc Committee -- the Committee on the Review of the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Disarmament -- have fallen far short of the expectations. And if we turn from these two subsidiary bodies with purely procedural functions to the body entrusted with disarmament negotiations -- the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, usually referred to as the CCD -- we find the most convincing proof of what I said at the beginning of this statement regarding the lack of tangible results.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Once again the General Assembly has before it the voluminous report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. Once again a careful reading of that report brings home to us the absence of political will on the part of the so-called super-Powers -- one or the other, or both -- to agree to compromises leading to true disarmament measures. Once again this report stresses the sterility of the activities of the CCD, in 1976.

The Assembly seems to have accepted it as an inevitable fact that year after year the CCD should appear before it with empty hands. It appears too that the Assembly has accepted it as one of the rules of the game that the thickness of the report is in inverse ratio to the results attained.

During this debate we shall be told that in 1976 the CCD demonstrated renewed vigour and that it worked very actively during the past year. Some delegations may call attention to the lengthy meetings of the Working Group established this year for the purpose of discussing the contents of an international instrument on the prohibition of military or other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. The delegation of Mexico is particularly pleased that that Working Group -- the establishment of which, incidentally, was suggested by our delegation, although with the name of "Plenary Sub-Committee" -- has fully justified its title through its unflagging activities. It is also a source of satisfaction to us that this year the CCD held -- apart from its usual plenary meetings -- approximately 20 unofficial meetings, sometimes with the participation of experts.

It has been proved without any doubt that the CCD, with the assistance of its Working Group, is capable, if it wishes to do so, of doing effective work in the field of disarmament negotiations. Unfortunately, however, the report proves at the same time that the CCD is hamstrung and rendered impotent by the two States that act as its co-Chairmen. To demonstrate that, one need only note the absence of any serious negotiations in the Committee on Disarmament on what has for years been called the

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

"urgent need" to put an end to all nuclear weapon tests and to conclude a comprehensive test ban agreement. Indeed, in its resolution 3466 (XXX) of 11 December 1975, the Assembly urged the Committee to give that subject the "highest priority" in 1976. This flagrant lethargy seems even more strange when we remember that in six separate resolutions the General Assembly, using language usually reserved for such questions as the policy of apartheid in South Africa, has condemned all nuclear weapon tests; has repeated its conviction that, regardless of the differences on the question of verification, there is no valid reason to delay the conclusion of an agreement on the comprehensive prohibition of such tests, in accordance with the provision -- now more than 13 years old -- in the preamble to the Moscow Treaty; and has particularly stressed that

"the continuance of nuclear weapon testing will intensify the arms race, thus increasing the danger of nuclear war".

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

I do not intend to carry out a comparative study of all the tasks entrusted to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and what its report may indicate about them. Far less am I going to review those 18 items of our agenda to which I referred at the beginning of this statement. In due course and in later statements my delegation will deal with these matters. For the moment I shall limit myself to making some comments and remarks on three points: first, one of the items expressly defined in the agenda -- environmental modification for military purposes; secondly, the convening of a special session of the General Assembly, which doubtless would be discussed under the general heading of general and complete disarmament; and, lastly, the seriousness of the arms race and its incalculable dangers for mankind.

The draft convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques prepared this year by the Working Group of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament has as its immediate background the identical proposal submitted in August 1975 by the Soviet Union and the United States of America. In view of the importance some delegations will doubtless wish to attach to this draft at the present session of the General Assembly and the statement of the previous speaker, it is evident that that when I wrote the words I have just read I was being prescient. In order to clarify some important aspects of the question it may perhaps be appropriate for me briefly to review its origins.

The United States and the Soviet Union dealt with the subject of environmental warfare in one of the summit meetings, as they were called, held in Moscow a little more than two years ago. In the joint communiqué issued on 3 July 1974 the two super-Powers recognized that the use of environmental modification techniques for military purposes could have wide-spread, lasting and serious effects on human welfare and that therefore effective measures should be agreed upon in order to avoid the dangers of the use of such techniques. Further, they decided to hold meetings to achieve those purposes.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

In September of that year, at the request of the Soviet Union, an item was included in the agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly entitled "Prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other hostile purposes which are incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health". In the explanatory memorandum requesting inclusion of the item, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union wrote, inter alia, the following:

"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."

(A/9702, p. 2)

I emphasize the reference to outlawing any such action because those words are the key to the original Soviet proposal. Later, together with 23 other delegations, the Soviet Union submitted a draft resolution annexed to which was a draft convention the first article of which read as follows:

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

"Each of the Parties to this Convention undertakes not to develop meteorological, geophysical or any other scientific or technological means of influencing the environment, including the weather and climate, for military and other purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health, and, furthermore, never under any circumstances to resort to such means of influencing the environment and climate or to carry out preparations for their use."

There can be no doubt that the all-embracing scope of the prohibition contemplated in the Soviet draft resolution was the main reason for the favourable welcome given to it by the General Assembly. In point of fact, resolution 3264 (XXIX) was adopted by 126 votes in favour and none against, with only five Members abstaining, of which the United States was one.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Apparently that country's abstention was due to the fact that the United States Executive had not as yet reached a conclusion on whether the prohibition was to be complete or partial, although it was inclined to accept the view of the Defence Department advocating limited prohibition.

On the other hand, it should be recalled that the United States Senate, on 11 July 1973, had declared itself in favour of an all-encompassing prohibition. On that date, the upper house of the Congress, by an overwhelming majority, adopted resolution 71, in which it requested the United States Government to seek the agreement of other Governments on a treaty that would prohibit the use anywhere of any form of environmental or geophysical modification as an instrument of war.

In 1975, the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament discussed the question of prohibition of environmental warfare and, in August of that year, held informal meetings with experts on the subject. At the end of that month the delegations of the United States and the Soviet Union submitted the identical drafts of the convention which I mentioned earlier and which were a real surprise to many. Despite the fact that a number of delegations had spoken in favour of a complete prohibition, the first paragraph of article I of those proposals read as follows:

"Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury to another State Party." (CCD/471)

In its resolution 3475 (XXX), of 11 December 1975, the General Assembly requested the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to continue its negotiations on the text of a convention on the prohibition of environmental warfare,

"bearing in mind existing proposals and suggestions, as well as relevant discussion by the General Assembly".

That last phrase was included in the resolution in order to respond to the concern of a number of delegations that did not want the negotiations in the Disarmament Committee to lead towards a partial prohibition.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

The delegations participating in the work of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament failed this year to agree on the text of the convention, and an effort was made to disguise that lack of agreement. However, as we gather from a reading of paragraphs 378-387 of the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, as well as the records of its 727th plenary meeting, there exists among the members of the Committee a strong current of opinion against a number of fundamental provisions contained in the draft convention appended to the report.

In this connexion, I wish to stress that, although we feel that the new text of article V prepared by the Working Group, particularly the addition that provides for the convening of a consultative committee of experts for the purposes set forth therein, represents appreciable progress, it cannot in any way allow us to forget the very severe dangers inherent in the provisions of article I of the identical drafts submitted by the Soviet Union and the United States in August of 1975, provisions which, in fact, are also identical to those contained in the draft at present before the First Committee.

In the light of the original Soviet text which I quoted a few moments ago, an all-encompassing text as far its prohibitions are concerned, and categorical and unequivocal in its concepts, the article I which is now proposed to us by the super-Powers is in every respect inadequate and ambiguous. To illustrate what I have termed the "severe dangers" of the new provisions, suffice it to draft this article in positive terms, a form which would be equivalent, from the legal point of view, to the text submitted and which would thus read as follows:

"Each State party to this Convention shall be entitled to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques as the means of destruction, damage or injury to another State Party, provided that such techniques do not have widespread, long-lasting or severe effects."

The dangers inherent in this, practically speaking as well as from the legal standpoint, can be judged even more clearly if we bear in mind the explanations of the scope of the phrase "environmental modification techniques" included in article II, in accordance with which that expression would include, inter alia, the deliberate manipulation of natural processes to produce earthquakes, tidal waves, various sorts of cyclones and hurricanes, or to modify the condition of the ozone layer, the ionosphere or the oceanic currents.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

We consider it extremely alarming that anyone can think of legitimizing in an international convention such monstrous acts as those, as long as they do not have "widespread, long-lasting or severe effects", particularly if we take into account the fact that in the definition of such effects there will always, inevitably, be a very significant subjective element.

Moreover, we have to take into account the fact that, among the effects of environmental warfare techniques that are allowed because they are not considered sufficiently "widespread", those that would cover an area of less than several hundred square kilometres would, according to the clarifications of the super-Powers responsible for the draft, be included; and among those that would also be tolerated because they do not fall within the definition of "long-lasting" given us by the super-Powers would be those of a duration of less than "several months or of about a season".

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

What I have just said becomes even more serious if we consider that in this matter we are legislating on a subject, the modification of the environment for military purposes, which is virtually virgin territory and therefore any multilateral instrument that might emerge would constitute a precedent of incalculable consequences for the evolution of human rights in a field which is immensely important for the future of mankind.

For all the reasons I have just given, my delegation considers it indispensable that we delete the qualification, "having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects". The provisions of paragraph 1 of article I, although far inferior to those of the original Soviet text that I have just read out, would then be acceptable to us because the paragraph would then read:

"Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques as the means of destruction, damage or injury to any other State Party".

If, unfortunately, the two super-Powers continued to be reluctant to include in their joint proposal the modification I have just explained and if it were contended that the General Assembly at its present session should approve that text with its present wording, then in spite of its goodwill the Mexican delegation would be unable to support this. We frankly refuse to vote for any effort to give legitimacy, in an instrument supposedly aiming at disarmament, to such monstrous acts of war as those that I have just defined.

What was said here a few moments ago by the United States representative leads me to think that perhaps that argument may not, in fact, be raised. Indeed, if I understood him correctly, the position of the United States delegation is that all phenomena, without any limitation, that are listed in article II are to be absolutely prohibited under the convention.

If that be the case, the solution is perfectly simple. It lies not in making declarations here or in referring to memorandums of agreement but merely in deleting that phrase "having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects". The remedy is simple and is the only legal way of solving this problem. So eminent a jurist as Mr. Martin certainly knows that both the Permanent Court of

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International Justice that functioned between the two world wars and the International Court of Justice have said that when the text of a treaty or convention makes sense it is not justifiable or acceptable to seek interpretations in other documents.

To anyone who may have examined the draft convention that is submitted for our consideration here it becomes obvious that as it stands its meaning is clear but unfortunately its meaning is the one I have dwelt on at length in my statement. If we want it to mean the absolute prohibition of such action, the remedy is simple and is the only legal remedy: to omit the qualifying clause.

I now go on to deal with the second of the three subjects that I listed, namely, the convening of a special session of the General Assembly, and my examination of this second question will be far shorter than that of the first.

In the light of the situation that has been created by the reluctance of the nuclear-weapon States to agree to anything that might mean the adoption of genuine disarmament measures it is axiomatic that the system at present available to the United Nations for disarmament has proved itself over the last decade to be obviously inadequate, particularly in allowing all the peoples of the world -- which, as the General Assembly has stated in many resolutions, have a vital interest in the success of disarmament negotiations -- to make an effective contribution to this subject of such immediate interest to them since in the final instance it is their own survival that may well be at stake.

The General Assembly, it is true, meets every year. But, as we have pointed out before, its agenda is always filled with a series of the most varied subjects. Submerged in more than a hundred of these, the items touching on disarmament obviously cannot be appreciated in all their importance and it becomes impossible therefore in the First Committee to give these items the consideration they warrant. After four or five weeks of a rather hasty debate in which in order to save time, they are studied jointly and not separately, the General Assembly is reduced to approving a series of somewhat routine resolutions which are very similar to those adopted in previous years and which, regardless of their tone of

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deep concern, justified alarm or pressing urgency, in almost all instances, for reasons which we may all deplore but which we have up to now been impotent to modify, are finally buried in inertia, resignation or oblivion in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

For more than five years, the non-aligned countries have been trying to secure the convening of a world disarmament conference whose principal objective would be, as we stated at the outset, the development and study of the possibilities for effective action on the part of the United Nations in this extremely important matter, thus complementing the existing international machinery with an organ of universal membership which, we believe, should meet every three or four years and which, without in any way undermining the supremacy of the General Assembly, on which it would depend so far as disarmament is concerned, would play a role similar to that of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in matters of an economic and social nature.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

We are still convinced that the institutionalization of a world disarmament conference, open without exception to all States and holding periodic meetings such as I have mentioned lasting two or three months, would fill an obvious gap and would make a precious contribution to the work of the Assembly and assist it thus to carry out its responsibilities. Among other tasks, the conference would be called upon to scrutinize carefully the practical implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly to make an objective assessment of the progress achieved in disarmament, to compare the respective advances in armaments and disarmament and to adopt any decisions which might be deemed advisable in the light of its investigations.

Since so far it has been impossible to achieve any progress in the ad hoc Committee, for more than two years in Geneva we have given our support to the idea of holding a special session of the General Assembly, and on 30 October last year in this same First Committee we stated that, if in the course of 1976 it was found impossible to achieve genuine progress on the convening of a world disarmament conference, it would be necessary for the General Assembly at this thirty-first regular session to agree to the holding of a special session in order to consider, among other urgent disarmament questions, the convening of a world disarmament conference.

In the political declaration adopted at the Colombo Conference which was held in August last, the non-aligned nations recommended the convening of that special session to which I have referred "as early as possible and not later than 1978". (A/31/197, para. 139) In the same section of that declaration, section XVII, to which the delegation of Mexico was given an opportunity of making a modest contribution, it was recommended that the agenda for that session should include "a review of the problem of disarmament", "the promotion and elaboration of a programme of priorities and recommendations in the field of disarmament" and "the question of convening a world disarmament conference". (Ibid.)

We are convinced that a decision on this matter brooks no further delay and that it is necessary for the General Assembly here and now to decide to hold a special session on disarmament. In doing so, it would be advisable for the Assembly to decide upon the most propitious place and time for that session. We personally would advocate that the session be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York and that the time be May or June 1978.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

We are sure that this schedule would allow sufficient time to poll all States on their opinions regarding the agenda and other matters pertinent to the convening of this special session. Furthermore, we believe that it would be highly desirable to establish immediately a preparatory committee which would be limited in membership but, obviously, sufficiently representative, and to call upon it to hold a brief organizational session at the beginning of next year, at which time it would set the dates for a substantive session, during which it would examine the views and comments received from Governments, as well as any working papers that the Secretary-General of the United Nations might have requested, as was the case with the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference on the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

I come now to the third of the points that I set myself to examine in this statement. As I said earlier, I am speaking of the arms race and the grave damage and incalculable dangers inherent in it for humanity.

With regard to these dangers, although once again this will lead us into what we feel is an inevitable repetition, let us recall the terrifying threat of the existence of gigantic nuclear arsenals. The arsenals of the super-Powers alone have been conservatively estimated to be equivalent to one million bombs of the type that in 1945 destroyed Hiroshima. We must always bear in mind the obvious danger, a danger whose reality cannot be blinked away despite the human tendency to turn away from what is ugly: we must always bear in mind the possible danger of a nuclear conflagration inherent in those arsenals and recall that their destructive power would be sufficient to wipe out 100,000 million human beings, that is, 25 times the number of the earth's inhabitants today. Not in vain and not without reason, it has been stated that apart from the immediate and monstrous extinction of hundreds of millions of human lives, such a conflagration would probably, because of the persistence of the radio-activity generated by nuclear weapons and because of the danger of the partial destructions of the ozone layer in the stratosphere due to the effects of wide-scale explosion of such weapons, make our entire planet uninhabitable.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

The dangers existing in this situation are accentuated by such factors as those described in the latest document issued by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which points out that some sectors, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union have never given up the idea that a nuclear war could be fought and won in the traditional fashion and that those circles have sufficient political power in their respective countries to ensure that the nuclear warheads and their systems of use are increased as rapidly as possible and perfected in order to serve such purposes.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

We are warned in that same SIPRI Yearbook that:

"... the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war has been greatly increased by present official campaigns intended to lull fear of the consequences of total nuclear war" -- and that consequently -- "official efforts to obtain support for a counter-offensive strategy, the first-strike policy and the development of new tactical nuclear weapons are deplorable."

It was obviously events such as those that I have mentioned that led the Holy See -- a State which, as we know, maintains accredited permanent observers at the United Nations -- to declare emphatically in a communiqué addressed to the Secretary-General on 30 April 1976 and distributed in a United Nations document dated 7 May 1976:

"The armaments race ... is to be condemned unreservedly.

"Folly: this system of international relations based on fear, danger and in fact, by virtue of the nature of modern weapons and the situation prevailing on our planet...

"This system of international relations based on fear, danger and injustice is a kind of collective hysteria, a folly that will be judged by history. It is meaningless because it is a means which does not achieve its end. The armaments race does not ensure security.

"In the case of nuclear weapons, it does not afford any additional security because there is already a surplus of such instruments (overkill); it creates additional risks by introducing elements of instability which could upset the 'balance of terror'.

"As to traditional weapons, their proliferation, especially in the third-world countries (trade in arms) creates regional imbalances and can thus generate conflicts or fuel those in process.

"In any case, whether it is a matter of nuclear weapons or traditional weapons, of great or small Powers, the armaments race has become a cumulative process, which has its own dynamics, independent of any aggressive feelings, and which escapes the control of States. It is a machine gone mad." (A/AC.181/1, pp. 16 and 17)

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

To turn to the lamentable economic and social consequences of the armaments race and its profoundly prejudicial effect on peace, the General Assembly, in its resolution 3462 (XXX) of 11 December 1975, expressed its conviction

"... that the ever-spiralling arms race is not compatible with

the efforts aimed at establishing a new international economic order" -- and, I would add here, a new order similar to that advocated in the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, among other basic documents. The clear truth contained in that affirmation becomes even more obvious if we consider that in 1975 in the world as a whole the sum of \$300,000 million was spent for military purposes at a time when more than 500 million human beings were suffering from acute malnutrition and almost 1,500 million were not receiving effective medical assistance.

The recent issue of the SIPRI Yearbook that I mentioned earlier adds the following enlightening details on that specific point. Since the Second World War, more than \$6 billion -- that is, more than \$6 million million -- has been spent on military activities. That unimaginable amount

"... is approximately equal to the gross national product of the entire world in 1975 and is more than five times the gross national product of all the developing countries together. It represents an investment of \$1,500 for every man, woman and child living on the earth today."

The inhumanity inherent in such squandering provoked the justified indignation of the Vatican, which, in the document that I quoted earlier, made the following stern condemnation whose well-earned severity it would be difficult to improve upon:

"... each passing day shows us more clearly that no stable peace can be established between men until action has been taken to ensure an effective, general and controlled reduction of armaments. Each passing day also makes more tragic and dramatic the contrast between intensity of the sums poured into the manufacture of weapons and the widespread and growing material distress of more than half of mankind, which is still waiting to see its most elementary needs satisfied..."

(A/AC.181/1, p.27)

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

The Holy See goes on to state that:

"The massive budgets allocated to the manufacture and stockpiling of weapons is tantamount to misappropriation of funds by the 'managers' of the large nations or favoured blocs.

"The obvious contradiction between the waste involved in the overproduction of military devices and the extent of unsatisfied vital needs (developing countries and the marginal and poor elements in rich societies) is in itself an act of aggression against those who are the victims of it. It is an act of aggression which amounts to a crime, for even when they are not used, by their cost alone armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve." (ibid., p.16)

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

For comparison purposes I think it appropriate to recall a few similar views expressed by the President of Mexico on different occasions. Thus, for example, in 1973 he stated:

"In principle, disarmament means agreement between military Powers. However, the moral conscience of mankind, the political decision of the international majority and its effective participation in the problems concerning all of us constitute the sole imaginable counterbalance to the arrogance of force."

One year later, in 1974, he declared:

"We condemn the arms build-up not only because of the threat of destruction which it entails but because it is also the instrument through which present international injustice is perpetuated."

And in 1975, when speaking before the General Assembly on 7 October, the President of Mexico stated:

"The arms race, with the incredible sums devoted to the manufacture and sale of weapons, is ... an unjustifiable squandering of resources and at the same time proof of the moral crisis afflicting those countries which base their progress on the industry of war and build the progress of key sectors of their economy of such an industry."

"More than anything else, disarmament is a true attempt at liberation: liberation of energy, liberation of resources, liberation of assets, of men of science and of workers. All these elements should then be diverted to a fruitful programme of action, of study and work that will hasten social transformation."

"... If the enormous sums today being spent on armaments were channelled to the over-all development of the world, much would be done then to eliminate the conflicts which today darken the present and future of mankind."

(A/PV.2377, pp. 17 and 18)

The remarkable substantive analogy that we find in the two views, one coming from the Head of a State like Mexico, whose non-clerical status is scrupulously regulated by its own Constitution, and the other coming from the Head of a State like the Vatican, whose Head acts as the spokesman of a religion that has more than 800 million adherents, constitutes the most convincing proof of the universal condemnation which the arms race has earned for itself.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Were the nuclear Powers to ponder the content of the irrefutable accusations contained in those condemnations, they would understand, we hope, why the peoples of the world as a whole believe that there is no time for delay in bringing about a radical change in the present situation; why they advocate convening in the immediate future an extraordinary session of the General Assembly on disarmament, and at some later stage institutionalizing a world disarmament conference, and why they would not be ready to agree that those Powers, and particularly the two super-Powers, should try to use the new machinery and procedures to be set up, as unfortunately has been the case with the organs at present at their disposal, solely to spread smoke-screens behind which to disguise the total absence of any political will to adopt any measures that would signify true disarmament measures, starting with nuclear ones.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to express my warm appreciation to the Foreign Minister of Mexico for his very kind and generous words addressed to me personally.

Mr. MAIGA (Mali) (interpretation from French): I am sorry to have asked to speak at such a late hour. A great philosopher once said that there are two things that reason and wisdom oppose: one is to speak when one should be silent and the second is to be silent when one should speak. I am afraid that I find myself in the second of those situations. For obvious reasons known to everyone, my delegation was unable to participate in the vote on the draft resolution in document A/C.1/31/L.3 which the Committee adopted at its last meeting. I merely wish to state that if my delegation had been present it would have voted in favour of that draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.