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Chairman: Mr. PASTINEN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 125 (continued)

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/33/279, A/33/312)

Mr. BLOMBERG (Finland): The seriousness of the involvement of Governments in the special session on disarmament and its preparations was an overwhelming indication of the importance that they attach to disarmament. The high level of representation and the contents of the general debate as well as the efforts by all delegations to reach a positive result reflected a sense of urgency. More perhaps than ever before, world public opinion was focused on the issues of disarmament.

In a review of the achievements of the special session on disarmament, the first thing to say is that the Final Document was adopted by consensus. This gives a reason for satisfaction on all sides. Despite the generally felt anxiety over the slow progress of disarmament negotiations, the results of the special session demonstrate a common willingness to tackle the difficulties.

At the same time we have to be realistic about the achievement of the special session, for consensus inevitably implies compromise. The end product of the process of bargaining and mutual accommodation can never be one that wholly pleases everyone. The essence of consensus is that everybody can live with it and, at best, without too much difficulty. Decisions adopted by consensus can sometimes be fragile; if stretched they might collapse. This applies in particular to the complex structure of the Final Document of the special session. Implementation of its decisions and recommendations should, we believe, be conducted in the same spirit of compromise as was witnessed in its formulation and adoption.

The text of the Final Document is rather specific at some points and provides for measures of implementation. In some other areas the modes of implementation are left to the various organs. As we understand it, the purpose of the present agenda item is to discuss, and take action on, matters where the Final Document makes explicit reference to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Blomberg, Finland)

In practical terms the most important outcome of the special session was clearly the decision on disarmament machinery. Accordingly, we now have two main deliberative bodies, the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission. The enlarged negotiating organ, the Committee on Disarmament, will begin its work in January 1979.

The Disarmament Commission has already had its first, organizational session. The outcome is recorded in its report to the General Assembly, adopted last Friday by consensus. The first working session of the Commission will be held in May/June 1979. In the view of my delegation, there is considerable need to organize and co-ordinate the deliberative work on disarmament so as to avoid duplication and overlapping between the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission. The report of the Commission is helpful in this respect. It remains for this Committee and subsequently the General Assembly to establish the main outline of the division of labour between the First Committee and the Commission.

The First Committee is the organ for an annual overview of all current disarmament issues. In this respect it performs the substantive functions of the General Assembly. The agenda of the First Committee has already been streamlined in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Final Document.

The First Committee is a forum for stocktaking in the field of disarmament. It issues directives for further work within the United Nations system. The newly established Disarmament Commission, on the other hand, being a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, is best suited to working out elements of the programme on disarmament to be submitted to the General Assembly and through it to the negotiating body.

The mandate of the Disarmament Commission is outlined in the Final Document. In the view of my delegation the recommendations contained in the Commission's report concerning the organization of its work are well-founded. Let me stress only one particular point. As it was not the intention of the special session to duplicate the functions performed by the First Committee, it is incumbent upon the Commission to avoid any general review or debate on the problems of disarmament. Instead, as I have already indicated, the Commission should concentrate on certain well selected issues and proposals deemed urgent.

(Mr. Blomberg, Finland)

The position of the Committee on Disarmament in the entire machinery is clear and unequivocal. It is the negotiating organ and it reports to the General Assembly. My delegation is convinced that the Committee, with its new, enlarged membership and organization, will discharge its duties vigorously and with determination.

The Government of Finland attaches great importance to allowing non-members to contribute to the work of the Committee, as defined in the Final Document. My Government has a long record of co-operation with the Geneva Committee on Disarmament and we are determined to continue our contributions to the work of that enlarged Committee whenever and wherever possible.

As an element of its follow-up, the special session decided that a second special session on disarmament would be convened. The date of the second session is for the present regular session to decide. While we consider the convening of a second special session to be important and consistent from the point of view of an orderly follow-up, we do have doubts that too frequent a convening of special sessions could detract from the efficiency and impact of the very institution. Taking into account the potential inherent in the renovated disarmament machinery, especially in the Disarmament Commission, we consider a three-year interval, for instance, all too short. We are reminded of the case of the sixth and seventh special sessions on economic matters, which will have a follow-up session in 1980, after a lapse of five years.

(Mr. Blomberg, Finland)

In the view of my delegation, the need for and the timing of that further special session and other assembly sessions devoted to disarmament depends, in the final analysis, on the degree of success in the implementation of the decisions of the first special session on disarmament. The more meaningful the results reached in following the guidelines and provisions of the Final Document, the greater the need for further sessions. In our view, this relationship also applies to the convening of a world disarmament conference. The timing of the second special session should be decided accordingly.

At whatever juncture the second special session is convened, another condition for its success will be adequate preparations. The session should be held only after thorough and comprehensive preparations. The experience gained in the context of the first special session should be fully utilized to this effect.

The Final Document makes a reference to several proposals and suggestions, both specific and general, which were put forth for the consideration of the special session, but on which the session did not take action because of the complexity of the issues involved and the short time at the disposal of the special session. As the Final Document rightly points out, a number of proposals and suggestions by Member States became an integral part of the work of the special session and deserve to be studied further and more thoroughly. Therefore, it seems to my delegation reasonable that the Final Document and all the official records of the special session should be transmitted for appropriate consideration to the deliberative and negotiating organs, including the Disarmament Commission and the Committee on Disarmament.

In the course of the special session a number of proposals were made for studies in the field of disarmament. On some of them the session took action while others were merely noted in the Final Document and deferred to a later date. In general, the Final Document reflects the view that studies to be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations should be geared to facilitating disarmament measures. My Government fully shares this view, and we find it important as an aspect of the guidelines for studies.

(Mr. Blomberg, Finland)

The guidelines can be studied more thoroughly on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General. We look forward to the contribution of the advisory board of eminent persons in this field to be set up by the Secretary-General in this matter.

At the initiative of the Nordic countries, the special session decided to conduct a study on the interrelationships of disarmament and development. My Government is willing to co-operate with the expert group set up for the study and looks forward to results from it. In our view, the study is a response to the growing awareness of a crucial facet of disarmament, the pressing need to release resources from the arms build-up to social and economic development.

The Finnish Government warmly welcomes the decision of the special session to establish a programme of fellowships on disarmament. The programme will be implemented in consonance with the guidelines to be submitted by the Secretary-General. In our view, the main objective of the fellowship programme is to promote expertise in disarmament, particularly in the developing countries.

The special session adopted specific measures to increase the dissemination of information about the armaments race and the efforts to halt and reverse it. These measures include tasks both for the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and for Governments and non-governmental organizations. In accordance with the decision of the special session that publicity should be given to the Final Document, the Finnish Government has published the Final Document in the Finnish language for wide distribution.

Mr. ADENIJI (Nigeria): Mr. Chairman, just before you adjourned the meeting yesterday, I had wanted to ask for permission to speak to indicate that because of the fact that my delegation had not seen - I suppose because they had not been issued - certain documents relating to this item, it might be difficult for me to make a statement this afternoon. However, in order to co-operate with you, I shall deal with such parts of this item as I can without reference to the documents, and would seek your indulgence in allowing me to speak again at a later stage in the consideration of this item when the two documents which I have in mind have been issued. I have since found, this afternoon, that in fact one of the documents has been issued, although the other still has not, so I would ask you to be good enough to call on me at a later stage to comment on the documents.

Historic as the first United Nations special session devoted to disarmament was, it is the view of my delegation that the ultimate verdict on the session - that is, on its success or its failure - will be determined not by the mere fact of its reaching a consensus on the Final Document, important as that was, but by the extent of the implementation of the Programme of Action. This is why my delegation attaches considerable importance to the item on the review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the special session.

It is necessary that the General Assembly should ensure that the consensus document does not suffer the fate of many documents which have been carefully negotiated and thereafter have remained neglected and unimplemented. In future years the task of the General Assembly in reviewing the implementation of the suggestions, decisions and recommendations of the special session will be greatly facilitated by the Disarmament Commission acting in accordance with paragraph 118 (a) of the Final Document. For this year, however, since the Disarmament Commission did not have the opportunity of having any substantive session on this subject, I think its consideration in the First Committee will perhaps have to be a little more detailed than it would be in the future.

In approaching item 125, however, it is not the intention of my delegation to attempt an elaborate assessment of the special session. As a matter of fact, we believe that this is not the purport of item 125.

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

We believe that that item calls upon us to examine the specific decisions and recommendations of the special session with a view to giving further impetus to the implementation of those that have not yet been implemented.

The ultimate objective of the efforts of the United Nations in the area of disarmament is general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Progress towards this objective requires the conclusion and implementation of agreements on the cessation of the arms race. Since the international community has recognized that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization, the special session quite rightly adopted specific measures aimed at removing this threat. Some of these measures appeared so ripe for implementation that it was the expectation of my delegation that by the time we had begun this review such measures would in fact have been carried out.

In paragraph 51, for instance, the special session considered that the cessation of nuclear-weapon testing by all States would make a significant contribution to the aim of ending the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and the development of new types of such weapons and of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The session therefore required that the tripartite negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty, which was in progress, should be urgently concluded and the result submitted for full consideration by the negotiating body with a view to the submission of a draft treaty to the General Assembly at the earliest possible date.

As is now well known, the draft text on which the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament would have worked has not been submitted. This is the first area of disappointment in the determination of nuclear-weapon States to maintain the momentum which the special session led us to expect. My delegation believes that the time has come for the General Assembly to lay down a strict time frame for the submission of the tripartite draft to the negotiating body. Since this subject will also feature prominently in our consideration of the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament and in our consideration of item 38 in particular I shall confine myself at this stage to giving an indication that after the special session the General Assembly cannot merely adopt its routine resolution on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

In the area of the limitation of strategic arms the special session, in paragraph 52, called upon the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to conclude at the earliest possible date a SALT II agreement and to transmit its text to the General Assembly. Press reports would indicate that chances of the conclusion of a SALT II agreement in the near future are bright; however, the General Assembly cannot rely on press reports. The two negotiators should, in the context of agenda item 125, inform the General Assembly of the status of their negotiations and the time when they expect to conclude those negotiations. Such information would greatly assist the General Assembly in taking a decision on this matter.

It is also the view of my delegation that bearing in mind paragraph 50 of the Final Document of the special session, the General Assembly should charge the Committee on Disarmament with working out modalities for embarking on the negotiations envisaged in that paragraph.

In paragraphs 21 and 75 of its Final Document, the special session decided that an agreement on the elimination of all chemical weapons should be concluded as a matter of high priority. Since an initiative on this subject is being awaited from the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, an indication of when to expect the result of the initiative would also be useful in further consideration of this subject by the General Assembly.

Turning to the consideration of conventional weapons by the special session, I should like to make reference merely to paragraph 86, which directed the 1979 Conference on Prohibitions or Restrictions of Use of Certain Conventional Weapons to adopt agreements on specific categories of such weapons. The result of the Preparatory Conference for the 1979 Conference will be before the First Committee and my delegation will have more to say about that Conference under agenda item 49.

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

Mr. Chairman, in your statement at the 3rd meeting of the First Committee, held on 6 October 1978, you made mention of certain specific recommendations of the special session; namely, recommendations on guidelines for studies, guidelines of the programme for fellowship on disarmament, the report of the Disarmament Commission and the date of the second special session. To these I may add the decision on an annual disarmament week and the expert study on the relationship between disarmament and development.

On this last point - that is, the expert study on the relationship between disarmament and development - my delegation is gratified that the Secretary-General has promptly appointed the group of experts, which in fact has already held its first meeting and has mapped out its task. The General Assembly should again re-emphasize its wish, expressed in paragraph 95 of the Final Document, that the study should be forward-looking and policy-oriented. This, in our view, is the only way in which maximum benefits can be derived from the study.

The proclamation of the week starting 24 October as Disarmament Week was in recognition of the need to direct world-wide attention to the necessity and the benefit of general and complete disarmament. If the aim is to be realized, then the celebration of the Disarmament Week should not be confined to the United Nations Headquarters.

Rather, in the view of my delegation, it should be celebrated in all countries with appropriate local programmes developed by Governments. The Centre for Disarmament can of course make suggestions to assist Governments in developing their local programmes. My delegation would therefore propose that the Centre should submit to the session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, to be held in 1979, a model programme which, on approval by the Commission, will be conveyed to Governments as suggestions for developing their own local programmes in celebration of the week annually.

Member States may also be requested to inform the Secretary-General, in future, of the activities carried out in their countries to mark the Disarmament Week. Such information should be compiled and published by the Secretary-General.

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

Since, as I said at the beginning of my statement, the documents expected from the Secretary-General on two of the specific recommendations which you yourself mentioned - that is, guidelines for studies and guidelines of the programme for fellowship on disarmament - either have not been released, or have only just been released, my delegation will have to reserve its comments on these documents for a later meeting of the Committee.

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

Meanwhile, may I turn my attention briefly to the decisions of the special session on machinery for disarmament deliberation and negotiation. In this respect I believe that we can congratulate ourselves on the prompt action that has been taken to implement those decisions. On the one hand, the Disarmament Commission has been convened; on the other, the Committee on Disarmament has been constituted, thanks to the efforts of the President of the thirty-second session of the General Assembly. What is left at this point is for the General Assembly to express its fervent hope that all States entitled to membership of the Committee on Disarmament will participate effectively in its work. In particular, the General Assembly should re-emphasize the importance that it attaches to the participation of all the nuclear-weapon States in the negotiating body now that it has been appropriately reconstituted.

The question of deciding on the date of the second special session devoted to disarmament has been left to this session of the General Assembly. Several considerations must necessarily be weighed in deciding on the date; among them I should mention the preoccupation of my delegation lest we concentrate on the shadow and leave the substance. I shall explain.

The experience of the first special session devoted to disarmament confirmed the wisdom of those who took the initiative of calling for that special session. However we should not forget the preparatory work that was done over a period of 18 months. In that period the attention of every organ dealing with disarmament was concentrated almost entirely on the preparatory work. If too early a date were fixed for the second special session, preparatory work is likely to divert attention again even from the implementation of the Programme of Action of the first special session. Without implementing the set of programmes elaborated during the first special session, a second special session may find itself in a negative mood directed mainly to condemning, or at best lamenting, the non-implementation of the programme of the first special session. In that situation we would, of course, find that in defence of non-implementation the alibi of time would be invoked. It is therefore necessary that we should

(Mr. Adeniji, Nigeria)

weigh very carefully the timing for the second special session, which my delegation believes is necessary. All we are saying is that it should not be held too soon.

I should like to conclude with a brief comment on paragraph 125 of the Final Document concerning the many valuable proposals and suggestions which were submitted to the special session. The same constraint of time which prevented the special session from studying those proposals in depth will apply during this session of the General Assembly in view of the fact that the First Committee has earmarked only 16 to 20 meetings for those items. Yet it is necessary that the General Assembly adopt recommendations in accordance with which the Secretary-General would transmit the relevant records on those proposals "to the appropriate deliberative and negotiating organs dealing with the questions of disarmament..." (A/S-10/21, para. 125) In other words, I believe that what we should attempt to do at this session, considering the time available to us, can be no more than categorize the proposals into those that ought to be sent to the Disarmament Commission, the deliberative body, or those to be sent to the Committee on Disarmament, the negotiating body.

After studying the proposals, it seems to my delegation that only very few are appropriate at this stage for reference to the negotiating body. Most of the other proposals, in particular those dealing with the creation of disarmament bodies, ought, in our view, to be further discussed in a forum where all Member States are represented. Therefore, we think that such proposals should be referred to the Disarmament Commission, whose report on them would in future guide the First Committee's consideration of them.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Nigeria in particular for the spirit of co-operation which he has been good enough to show to the Chair in making his statement this afternoon, even though all the Secretariat documents have not been issued. Neither the Chairman nor the Committee will have any objection to granting him a second hearing when the documents are made available.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARTISH (Costa Rica) (interpretation from Spanish): I do not like to infringe the rules of procedure, but I feel that I also must congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other officers of the Committee, as well as congratulate the Assembly for having elected you to fulfil your important functions and thus ensure the efficient conduct of the work that begins today on agenda item 125.

My delegation would like to stress the importance that we attach to the consideration of this subject as the first of the items to be discussed by the First Committee now devoted to a study of the wide range of items on disarmament, the goal that we all seek as one of the main objectives of the world Organization.

It was only a few months ago in this same hall that a special session of the General Assembly was devoted to disarmament, and in his report on the work of the Organization for this year, contained in document A/33/1, the Secretary-General made the following reference to the matter:

"The tenth special session of the General Assembly was the largest and most representative meeting ever convened to consider the problem of disarmament." (A/33/1, p. 12)

He termed that an historic session that represented a new approach to the problem.

In the very important statement he made yesterday, the representative of Mexico reminded us that the League of Nations in Geneva convened a conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments in 1932 and 1933, and that despite the preparatory work that preceded it for more than five years that session failed. Yet that infuses us with optimism, because the special session held this year managed by consensus to approve a final document in which a number of fundamental items of the agenda of that session were included.

I shall not refer to those which have already been stressed by a number of speakers in this debate, but I should like to state that my delegation was extremely gratified to see the new format for the negotiating body which has gradually been transformed until, as the Committee on Disarmament, it will, in January 1979, replace the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

We wish to pay a tribute to the hard work done by Latin American delegations, including Mexico and Argentina, to bring about the elimination of the co-chairmanship system which did not fulfil the required conditions enabling the negotiating body to carry out its tasks. Both Mr. Garcia Robles of Mexico and Mr. Ortiz de Rozas of Argentina stressed that very fact in their statements to the Committee.

The new system of monthly rotation among all the members will make far more feasible a wider participation in the conduct of the business of the Committee on Disarmament and, to a large extent, facilitate the participation of all the nuclear Powers, an essential condition for negotiations and agreements to be truly effective.

We have heard the encouraging news that France has decided to participate actively in that Committee's work, as announced by the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. We would venture to hope that another nuclear Power which had been absent from the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) will also decide to participate and that we will be able to count China among the active members of the Committee on Disarmament in order to give true impetus to the work to be undertaken, which will doubtless produce positive results if we are able to compound the political will to negotiate towards achieving a goal that we all desire.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

We are also happy that eight more non-nuclear-weapon States have joined the members of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to compose that Disarmament Committee, thus widening the participation of the majority of the Members of the Assembly. My delegation trusts that the negotiating organ thus constituted will be a positive and decisive factor in achieving the goals and carrying out the duties entrusted to it, so that the hopes of the rest of the world will not again be thwarted.

To stress our own specific interest in co-operating in curbing the arms race, Costa Rica proposed an item which we believed should be included in the programme of action examined by the General Assembly but which, unfortunately, did not commend itself for inclusion in the Final Document we are now considering. We suggested providing economic and social incentives for stemming the arms race. Nevertheless, paragraph 89 of the Final Document does to a certain extent outline the general ideas in our proposal. We trust that when the ways and means of implementing the measures mentioned in that paragraph are considered it will be possible to find a way of rewarding those nations that substantially reduce their military budgets and reallocate the resources thus saved to improving economic, social and cultural conditions for their peoples.

This reference to the cultural development of peoples leads me to consider paragraph 107 of the same Final Document, in which the General Assembly

"welcomes the initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in planning to hold a world congress on disarmament education and, in this connexion, urges that organization to step up its programme aimed at the development of disarmament education as a distinct field of study through the preparation, inter alia, of teachers' guides, text books, readers and audio-visual materials." (Resolution S-10/2, para. 107)

It was that idea that led the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Rodrigo Carazo, to state the following to the General Assembly on 27 September last when

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

calling for the creation of a university for peace, which is to be examined in another organ of the General Assembly:

"As we enter the closing years of the twentieth century and near the dawn of the third millennium, the question of disarmament as the basis for the establishment of peace in the world must, in my Government's view, be accompanied by a new vision of peace.

"The purpose of global efforts for disarmament is to eliminate the principal physical instrument of war. All things considered, what is involved is a world-wide decision and a world-wide struggle which may fail to alter the fundamental problem: the absence of a collective and positive will for peace. The struggle for disarmament must therefore be accompanied by a pedagogy of peace; in other words, education for peace. Disarmament may serve to avert imminent disaster; education for peace is a permanent attitude. Disarmament means discarding an instrument of war in order to achieve the objective of peace. Education for peace means creating the real conditions for a peaceful world. Consequently disarmament should advance hand in hand with education for peace." (A/33/PV.11, pp. 44-46).

We are also extremely interested in the contents of paragraph 108, regarding the necessity for specialization in the disarmament programmes of Member States, particularly the developing countries, through the establishment of a programme of fellowships on disarmament. We support the criteria mentioned there for the preparation of guidelines at the present session of the General Assembly, and I should like to express the desire of my Government to co-operate unstintingly in the search for ways and means so that the objectives contained in the Final Document will be achieved and, if possible, be complemented by others that were not included in it but have the same aim, namely, to blaze the trail to the final goal, which is general and complete disarmament under appropriate international controls, so that peace when it is achieved will arise out of confidence and international co-operation and will not be based on fear and mistrust.

Costa Rica is an unarmed country and thus is an exceptional example of how peace can be achieved. Our dedication to peace has been tested

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

time and time again - and recently once more when we were the victims of armed attacks and violations of our territorial integrity and our national sovereignty on the part of the Government of Nicaragua, our northern neighbour, which tried to create an international conflict in order to distract the attention of its own people, weary of long years of rule by an autocratic Government that has denied them democracy and human rights. But my country has borne the offences and the attacks on its sovereignty with patience and has turned to the international organs, thus again proving our love for peace and our trust in international law.

In conclusion, we feel that the time is appropriate to express the great satisfaction that the people of Costa Rica feel at the election of the new leader of the Catholic Church, to which the majority of my people belong. The election of John Paul II is a happy augury, and we beseech God to guide him and care for him for many years so that his fulfilment of his great duties will also help us to achieve peace on earth.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we adjourn, I would draw the attention of representatives to document A/33/312 of 16 October, which contains the Secretary-General's report on United Nations studies on disarmament. I understand that a similar report on fellowships is on the way to publication.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.