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Chairman: Mr. GOLOB (Yugoslavia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

OBSERVANCE OF DISARMAMENT WEEK

The CHAIRMAN: This morning the Committee is observing Disarmament Week. I have been asked to read out at the outset a message from the President of the General Assembly on this occasion. The message reads as follows:

"The proclamation of Disarmament Week marks a time for serious and sober reflection. The primary task of the United Nations is 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...'. While all wars must be of concern to us, in the atomic era clearly the greatest threat is that of nuclear war.

"Since 1945 nuclear weapons have not been used, a situation for which the United Nations deserves considerable credit. However, we cannot pretend that during those years the world has made any progress toward disarmament, either as regards nuclear or conventional weapons. To the contrary: there has been a steady increase in both the number and the sophistication of weapon systems. There are now in the world's arsenals some 50,000 nuclear weapons, the combined explosive power of which is equal to more than one million Hiroshima bombs. This amounts to three tons of TNT for every man, woman and child in the world.

"Today the world spends in excess of \$500 billion annually on armaments, with this amount increasing dramatically from year to year. The Brandt Commission has observed: 'There is a moral link between the vast spending of arms and the disgracefully low spending on measures to remove hunger and ill-health in the third world.' A prime goal of the United Nations system must be first to decelerate this level of expenditure, and then to move toward true disarmament.

"Clearly, the United Nations' shortcomings in the field of disarmament are not for lack of effort. From the beginning of the Organization, disarmament has been a central concern. Today the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly is devoted almost exclusively to disarmament.

(The Chairman)

"In 1982, the General Assembly will hold its second special session on disarmament. The first special session, held in 1978, did not result in any major breakthrough. But there were some accomplishments of significance in the Final Document which, importantly, was adopted by consensus. It is essential that we build on these accomplishments, and seek other areas in which progress is possible, in our preparation for the second special session.

"In the final analysis, disarmament can be accomplished only if the nation States who are devoting so much effort and so many resources to the arms race decide to stop. The United Nations remains the most valuable international mechanism to aid in this process. But the necessary political will must be shown in the capitals of the Member States. If it is not, and this insane arms race continues, the Governments of the world will have failed the people they were created to serve."

I now call on the Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Disarmament, who will read out the message from the Secretary-General on the occasion of Disarmament Week.

Mr. MARTENSON (Assistant Secretary-General, Centre for Disarmament): I have been asked to read out a message from the Secretary-General on the occasion of Disarmament Week 1981. The message reads as follows:

"The United Nations Disarmament Week offers us, each year, a renewed opportunity to focus our attention on the urgency of stopping and reversing the arms race. It reminds us of the necessity to establish an international climate conducive to lasting and stable peace in the world.

"This year again, the occasion is darkened by the shadow of deteriorating international relations. We witness ominous strains, crises and conflicts in various parts of the world, accompanied by a relentless arms race. These developments, with their inherent risks for the future of all mankind, have aroused the deep concern of the world community. But concern alone is not enough. The deadly momentum of the arms race

(Mr. Martenson, Assistant Secretary-
General, Centre for Disarmament)

must be halted. The vicious circle of suspicion and hostility leading to increased armaments which in turn cause greater insecurity, needs to be broken.

"The quest for disarmament flows from the quest for a world order which would assure freedom from growing want and fear. It signifies the imperative need to release nations from the bondage of the illusion that security can be attained only through weapons of destruction. It also implies a correction of mankind's priorities. We cannot claim any rationality in the allocation of our collective resources when enormous sums are expended on armaments while hunger, disease and ignorance daily become more acute.

(Mr. Martenson, Assistant Secretary--
General, Centre for Disarmament)

"Measures to build confidence among States are the essential condition for progress towards peace. There are few elements more conducive to creating and increasing confidence among States than effective and verifiable disarmament measures. The dialogue through which such measures can be concretely achieved needs to be given fresh impetus.

"The second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, to be held next year, should provide us with the appropriate forum for a meaningful initiative towards this end. I, therefore, appeal to Governments to help make that special session the start of a new and productive phase in disarmament negotiations. Non-governmental organizations which reach wide segments of society can render significant assistance in advancing this goal. They, therefore, have an important role to play in informing the public and enlisting their support for policies to arrest the arms race.

"The very first sentence of the United Nations Charter expresses the determination of the peoples of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Let us dedicate ourselves with renewed vigour to the fulfilment of this highest imperative of our age."

The CHAIRMAN: I believe that representatives will share my opinion that the messages sent by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General are important ones, and that our appreciation for those messages should be transmitted to them.

I now call upon the representative of Hungary, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. RACZ (Hungary): I should like first of all to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to participate in this special meeting of the First Committee commemorating the start of this year's Disarmament Week. I should like to make a statement on behalf of the delegations of Bulgaria, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Hungary.

(Mr. Racz, Hungary)

This is already the fourth consecutive year in which we have celebrated Disarmament Week. It was the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978 which proclaimed

"the week starting 24 October, the day of the foundation of the United Nations, as a week devoted to fostering the objectives of disarmament". (Resolution S-10/2, para. 102)

Today's meeting, which is the last observance of Disarmament Week before the forthcoming second special session devoted to disarmament to be held next year, provides a solemn opportunity for every State to re-commit itself to disarmament, to reaffirm its faith in disarmament and to renew its efforts to halt and to reverse the arms race. It also provides an opportunity to mobilize world public opinion and to remind the new generations of the devastation of past wars.

The present international situation and the senseless arms race give special importance to this year's Disarmament Week. The arms race, especially the nuclear arms race, continues unabated. World military expenditures now exceed \$500 billion per year. New weapons of mass destruction are under development, with the openly declared aim by some States of gaining military strategic superiority. One of the latest phases of this dangerous development is the decision on the development and production of the neutron bomb. Vast human and material resources are used for military purposes. A military doctrine has been elaborated on the waging of so-called limited nuclear war. All this is accompanied by an atmosphere of military psychosis. In the final analysis, mankind has to face the growing danger of the outbreak of a nuclear holocaust, which under the present circumstances could start by human error or by technical malfunction.

In this dangerous situation, nothing can be more important, nothing can be more urgent than the preservation of mankind from a nuclear catastrophe. In the opinion of the countries on whose behalf I am speaking, as of many other countries, this task should have the highest priority. Guided by this consideration, we welcome and support the proposal of the Soviet Union submitted to this session of the General Assembly, entitled, "Prevention of nuclear catastrophe: Declaration of the General Assembly"; we expect broad support for this vitally important proposal.

Disarmament is an ideal of socialism which is deeply rooted in its very nature and substance. The socialist countries, from year to year, have put forward

(Mr. Racz, Hungary)

proposals aimed at halting and reversing the arms race and at preserving mankind from a nuclear holocaust. In the struggle for peace, security and détente, the socialist States have always shown and will continue to show a constructive approach, goodwill, realism and readiness to take into account the legitimate rights and interests of others. They are ready to negotiate on the banning of every weapon, as well as on the reduction of military budgets. They are ready for the resumption of the talks which have been suspended or broken off.

If we admit that disarmament is the number-one global problem, we have to admit too that the solution of that problem would create favourable conditions for the solution of other global problems that mankind is facing. The vast human and material resources released by disarmament would make it possible for mankind to solve effectively such global problem as underdevelopment, hunger and illiteracy, to mention but a few of them. That is why disarmament and development are so closely interconnected in the activities of the United Nations.

Each year, Disarmament Week provides an excellent opportunity to mobilize world public opinion for fostering the noble cause of disarmament. In our work we have to count on the support of public opinion. We have to count on the important contribution of non-governmental organizations. As was the case in connexion with the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we expect important contributions from those organizations to the work of the second special session as well.

At the same time, it is very important that all governments should have the responsibility to educate peoples for the purposes of peace and understanding among nations. In this respect, the socialist countries lay special emphasis in their educational activities on peaceful coexistence among countries having different economic and social systems.

In conclusion, I should like to assure members of the Committee that we will never cease doing everything possible to achieve tangible results in the field of disarmament. I appeal to all States not to take steps which would further complicate the already dangerous situation. We have to combine our efforts to halt the growth of tension so that real progress can be attained in the field of disarmament.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Spain, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and other States.

Mr. ARTACHO (Spain)(interpretation from Spanish): It is my honour to speak, on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, at this special meeting of the First Committee in observance of the beginning of Disarmament Week.

This is the fourth time that Disarmament Week has been observed throughout the world since the General Assembly decided, at its first special session devoted to disarmament, to proclaim the week starting 24 October, the day of the foundation of the United Nations, as a week devoted to fostering the objectives of disarmament. In the countries on whose behalf it is my honour to speak today, Disarmament Week is observed with a series of events aimed at mobilizing public opinion with regard to the need to make progress in the cause of disarmament.

(Mr. Artacho, Spain)

It must be recognized that the present international situation is not such as to suggest that in the near future positive steps will be taken toward the final objective of disarmament. However, this situation, which has brought on an arms race which is continually gaining momentum, should be an incentive for the international community to persevere in this important task.

It is certainly fitting that the General Assembly should have decided to have Disarmament Week coincide with the day of the founding of the United Nations for, as the Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament says:

"the United Nations has a central role and primary responsibility in the sphere of disarmament." (S-10/2, para. 27)

I wish on this occasion to reaffirm the commitment of the Western European and other States Group to the objective of adopting effective measures for genuine disarmament in a climate of constructive dialogue.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the Ambassador of Angola to make a statement as Chairman of the Group of African States.

Mr. DE FIGUEIREDO (Angola): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the African Group and the delegation of the People's Republic of Angola, I should like to express our best wishes to you, Sir, and to the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur of this Committee.

Disarmament has an intrinsic and vital connexion, not only with development, but with the very survival of mankind. As we observe Disarmament Week, we should all ponder on the arms race, on nuclear arms and systems and on military budgets. And we should think of the millions of those who die of hunger and malnutrition, the millions of children who die before the age of five of entirely preventable causes, of the millions rendered homeless by an act of man or nature. We need to think of the hundreds of developing countries, with their countless millions of inhabitants, for whom so much could be done with the money, materials, manpower, technology and research at present devoted to the arms race.

(Mr. De Figueiredo, Angola)

At this time it would behove us to think of the \$500 billion spent annually on arms, almost one million dollars a minute. The cost of one modern tank alone can help build clinics, classrooms or health programmes for the poor in the developing countries, or even for the deprived and exploited in the developed countries.

It is time for us to take stock of the arms madness, nuclear and conventional, that seems to be enveloping the world - not just the great Powers, but also a number of developing countries whose levels of militarization are not commensurate with the supply of basic needs and services to their people.

We have many resolutions, declarations and conventions before us which, if implemented, would be able to stop the upward spiral of arms sales, development and stockpiling. Our own continent of Africa has long had an agenda item on the denuclearization of Africa; in contravention of that, the racist régime in South Africa has successfully embarked on, and completed, its acquisition of nuclear capability, in addition to having the most advanced and sophisticated military machine in Africa, to serve its racist imperialist military expansionism. South Africa's nuclearization, weapons and armaments are a threat not only to the independent countries of southern Africa but to all of Africa. It should be one of the objectives of disarmament, and of Disarmament Week, to highlight not only the dangers of the arms race, but also the catastrophic dangers of having sophisticated arms and other war materiel in the hands of racists and Zionists who use them not just against independent States, but also against defenceless refugees, unarmed civilians and all those struggling for their inalienable rights.

We, the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement which includes all African States except the racist régime, cannot remain neutral on the issue of disarmament, much as we prefer our political non-alignment. Disarmament is increasingly becoming the sine qua non of development and survival. The astronomical sums spent on arms make the issue abstract; but hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy: these are not abstract but the concrete conditions of everyday life for the growing millions of destitute, those whose lives are lived at a level beyond the comprehension of most of us present here.

(Mr. De Figueiredo, Angola)

Disarmament should be applied not just to nuclear arms, but to many other categories as well: weapons of mass destruction, weapons using biological and chemical agents, weapons such as the neutron bomb, weapons stationed in outer space or placed on the ocean floor. Use of the atomic bomb has already shown us that the effects of such weapons are not limited to the primary victims, they also put a curse upon future generations in the form of genetic damage and alter the environment, affecting the delicate balance of the ecosystems that have sustained life for millions of years.

Disarmament is one of the most vital issues of our times, and we should accord it the serious treatment it deserves. We, the African States, during Disarmament Week call for the denuclearization of Africa through control of South Africa's nuclear machine; we extend our solidarity to those regions which are also seeking to create nuclear-weapon-free zones in their areas; we appeal for negotiations between those Powers which possess the capability to blow up the earth; and we hope for the success of arms limitation and reduction talks. We have the right to be concerned about our survival; we have the right to demand that we leave a habitable and hospitable earth and environment for future generations.

During Disarmament Week, we once more affirm our support for all disarmament and related efforts and proposals: those aimed at averting nuclear catastrophes, those aimed at creating societies living in peace, those aimed at confidence-building measures. The African continent places great hope in the 1982 second special session on disarmament. Let us stockpile food, not bombs.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call upon the Ambassador of Jamaica to make a statement in his capacity of Chairman of the Group of Latin American States.

Sir Egerton RICHARDSON (Jamaica): It is most appropriate that Disarmament Week should be launched so soon after United Nations Day. It is a reminder to all of us of one of the basic objectives of the United Nations

(Sir Egerton Richardson, Jamaica)

which is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to this end to eliminate the weapons of war through general and complete disarmament. The Latin American States, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak today, are pledged to the achievement of this objective.

Our nations are profoundly concerned at the tremendous escalation in the arms race, and the increased sophistication, accumulation and spread of weapons of mass destruction. All life on this planet is today threatened by a nuclear holocaust which can come about as much by human error or miscalculation as by conscious decision. The United Nations must deal with this peril faced by mankind arising from the nuclear confrontation. We urgently need a nuclear test-ban treaty and we need to make progress towards nuclear disarmament.

(Sir Egerton Richardson, Jamaica)

At the same time, we should not overlook the continued expansion in the arsenals of conventional weapons and the growth in the arms trade, especially to developing countries. With every passing year, the dimensions of the problem increase. World military expenditure is now in the region of \$600 billion annually. It is tragic that the world's resources should be squandered in this wasteful acquisition of the tools of destruction when so much need exists for that wealth and energy to be put to constructive use to meet mankind's social and economic needs.

All of this shows the need for us to redouble our efforts for disarmament. Regrettably, the record of the United Nations is far from adequate. There has been no disarmament. But persevere we must, because disarmament is a matter of survival. Peace and our very existence are at stake.

At the regional level, the Latin American Group of States has demonstrated its commitment to peace and disarmament. Under the Treaty of Tlatelolco a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been established in the region banning the manufacture, acquisition, transfer, or emplacement of nuclear weapons within the region. This stands as an example for other regions to follow as a means of protection against the nuclear peril.

During this week, public discussion and other activities will focus on the dangerous level of the arms race, the increase in international tension and the drift towards the cold war. It is important for the ordinary citizen to become aware of the present dangers and the urgent need for corrective action by Governments. Already it is clear that public awareness of the problem has advanced significantly to the point where citizens, groups and non-governmental organizations are applying pressure on Governments for effective measures towards disarmament. They are demanding of Governments that the long-term interest of global survival be put before considerations of power.

(Sir Egerton Richardson, Jamaica)

We must respond to the challenge of our time and begin the process now. The arms race must be stopped so that we may be able to create a world order in which relations between States will be conducted within a framework of peace.

The Latin American region already has one example of a nation which has forsworn the use of conventional arms and decided that it can do without a standing army. Unfortunately, its example has not been followed either by its neighbours or by any other countries in any other parts of the world. We bring this example to the attention of the other Groups within the United Nations family, and we ask you "Who in your number will be next to forswear a standing army, to forswear the expansion of conventional arms and to effect unilateral disarmament?".

The CHAIRMAN: I now call upon the representative of Nepal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. BHATT (Nepal): I have the privilege of speaking on behalf of the Group of Asian States in my capacity as the Chairman of the Group for the current month.

We are observing Disarmament Week at a time when international relations continue to be in a very difficult phase. The conflict of power and interests persists. This situation has led to a further escalation of an already incomprehensible diversion of resources to military purposes and to the refinement of the already very highly sophisticated instruments of total annihilation.

Disarmament Week reminds us of the destruction of war. The threat of war persists so long as the nations of the world continue to seek security through weapons, which in turn leads to the arms race. This week reminds us that the lack of mutual confidence is the root of the disturbing and wasteful arms race. The urgent task before the nations of the world today is to

(Mr. Bhatt, Nepal)

apply the resources nature has so bountifully given us to the economic and social development that will benefit the whole of mankind. Disarmament Week highlights the task before the international community of securing a climate of confidence among States. Co-operative relations among States can be pursued only within such a climate of confidence. It is a goal worthy of pursuit by all nations and peoples.

Disarmament Week also presents an opportunity for Governments and non-governmental organizations to focus public attention and to mobilize public opinion in support of disarmament.

The United Nations is seriously engaged in the quest for the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. These efforts exemplify man's determination to find ways and means of resolving conflicts between States peacefully, without recourse to military force. We are now in the Second Disarmament Decade and are preparing for the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The forthcoming special session provides us with a unique opportunity to translate into reality the undertaking of all members of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The CHAIRMAN: We have now heard important and enlightening statements from the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the Chairmen of the Regional Groups. With the members' permission, I should like to add some remarks of my own on the occasion of our observance of Disarmament Week.

It is entirely appropriate that Disarmament Week be observed in the First Committee. In this context, permit me to make another appeal to this body to take a step forward in the field of disarmament during the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

(The Chairman)

In 1978, when we began observing Disarmament Week, we resolved as well to lay the foundations of an international disarmament strategy which, through co-ordinated and persevering efforts, in which the United Nations should play a more effective role, would aim at general and complete disarmament. under effective international control. That was the way the General Assembly expressed it in the resolution on the Disarmament Decade.

With regard to the situation currently prevailing, I should like to say that the statements we have heard so far in this Committee testify to the fact that the objective of international peace and security through disarmament still remains to be achieved. In fact, the armaments race has been increasing instead of diminishing. It is quite clear from the debate of this Committee that the balance of fear will not prevent the danger of nuclear war, nor is it to be hoped that it will be prevented by partial measures and declaratory statements. Progress in disarmament can be made only in the light of political will and can hardly be advanced by flashes of verbal fireworks.

(The Chairman)

At this juncture, I should like to recall that in the last 20 years, since the Belgrade conference, the non-aligned countries have pointed out time and again that the arms race, particularly its nuclear aspect, has escalated to ever-higher levels of irrationality. Moreover, they stated in Delhi earlier this year that the so-called balance of deterrence among great Powers had not prevented their involvement in regional conflicts and that deterrence has not in any way afforded a dependable device for averting impending catastrophe.

Finally, I should like to stress one aspect of Disarmament Week which seems important to me. In my view, Disarmament Week has a great deal to do with the rights of peoples of all countries to know and to be informed in order that they may be able to influence their destiny: the right to know that the spending of enormous amounts of money on the armaments race is a veritable plague - while we speak of about \$600 billion a year being spent on armaments, the actual figure is probably increasing rapidly and to a level well beyond that sum; the right to know that so many countries are hostages to the armaments race as a way of thinking and a way of life that is without parallel in the history of mankind; the right to know that very little is being done about that and that a great deal more needs to be done if we are to survive; and the right to know how much better off nations would be in a world of security, independence and peace.

I thank delegates for listening to this statement. This brings to an end our meeting on the observance of Disarmament Week.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.