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Chairman: Mr. RANA (Nepal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 45 TO 66 AND 155 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. MASON (Canada): It is with great pleasure that I have come here today to make a statement on behalf of Mr. Fred Bild, who chaired the study by the Group of Qualified Governmental Experts regarding the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Study on the role of the United Nations in the field of verification" (A/45/372). The report was adopted by consensus at the Group's final meeting in New York in July. Mr. Fred Bild, who chaired the Group during its four working sessions, would be with us today but for the fact that he has assumed the position of Canada's Ambassador to China and was unable to return from Beijing for this presentation.

As representatives are aware, there has been growing interest in the past few years in the issue of a role for the United Nations in the field of verification. A number of initiatives have been put forward by Canada and by a number of other States. Early in 1988 the countries of the Six-Nation Initiative proposed that the Secretary-General should prepare an outline of an integrated multilateral verification system and late that year two draft resolutions were introduced in the First Committee, one initiated by Canada, France and the Netherlands and the other sponsored by the countries of the Six-Nation Initiative. Subsequently, a single composite resolution was adopted by the General Assembly (43/81 B of 7 December 1988), which led to the study report now presented by the Committee. In the resolution the General Assembly called upon the Secretary-General

"to undertake, with the assistance of a group of qualified governmental experts, an in-depth study of the role of the United Nations in the field of verification that would:

(Ms. Mason, Canada)

"(a) Identify and review existing activities of the United Nations in the field of verification of arms limitation and disarmament;

"(b) Assess the need for improvements in existing activities as well as explore and identify possible additional activities, taking into account organizational, technical, operational, legal and financial aspects;

"(c) Provide specific recommendations for future action by the United Nations in this context."

In the first of its four sessions, it became obvious that the debate over the shape of these recommendations would be the most difficult issue to resolve. Before tackling this question head on, however, the Group decided to explore the generic verification issues. Accordingly, it drafted and re-drafted several descriptive chapters dealing with the nuts and bolts of verification.

The natural tendency, of course, is to begin one's reading of such a report with the conclusions. While this is perhaps inevitable, I strongly urge the reading of the chapters which precede the conclusions. In many respects, these first chapters may well prove to be of significant value. Long after the dust has settled on the political questions as to whether this or that recommendation should be acted upon and in what way, the existence of an agreed descriptive survey of this complex issue will provide a firm basis for constructive discussion and action for years to come.

When it came time to look at the recommendations, the Group carefully examined all of the potential recommendations that could have been made. In the first area, it was decided that a great need existed for a central repository of information on verification. All too often researchers and officials in various countries - primarily those which have not dealt first-hand with verification - have difficulty in readily acquiring either technical or methodological studies that are widely

(Ms. Mason, Canada)

available in other parts of the world. It was agreed that the existence of a consolidated data bank of published materials and data provided on a voluntary basis by Member States on all aspects of verification and compliance would greatly ease the difficulties experienced by those interested in verification throughout the world. In this regard my delegation was pleased to note, in the statement of Under-Secretary-General Akashi on Monday, the intention of the Department for Disarmament Affairs to modernize and strengthen its disarmament data base. Canada views this initiative as a particularly useful endeavour, one that could make an important contribution towards the implementation of the recommendation in the verification study concerning a data bank.

Following on from the idea of a data bank, the Group considered the prospects for, and possible benefits of, using the United Nations to promote exchanges between experts and diplomats. The Group agreed that such exchanges would be of benefit to both the experts and the diplomats. Experts could help diplomats in defining solutions to problems faced at the negotiating table, while the diplomats could assist the experts in focusing their work on those areas most in need of intensive research.

Those two recommendations of the Group suggest that the United Nations should take an active role in facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and the spread of expertise in verification. The Group did not unanimously agree, however, that the United Nations become involved in the actual activities of verification at the present time in the absence of a specific mandate to do so. But such activities were discussed at length by the Group. In paragraphs 174 to 252 members of the Committee will find a careful consideration of possible activities and a description of their organizational, technical, legal, operational and financial

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implications. These discussions were the most detailed of their type yet conducted in any United Nations forum and are fully reflected in the report.

In examining its third recommendation, regarding the role of the Secretary-General in fact-finding and other activities, the report points out that "... the experience gained from the Secretary-General's fact-finding activities could be helpful in connection with certain arms limitation and disarmament agreements that lack explicit verification provisions." (A/45/372, para. 271)

By advocating that the Secretary-General's capabilities in this area be broadened, or that the means by which existing capabilities are carried out be expanded, the Group was recognizing that the United Nations Secretariat already plays an important role in contributing to the verification of certain types of arms limitation and disarmament agreements. Of course, as the Group noted, the Secretary-General should engage in these activities only when given a specific mandate to do so, and nothing should interfere with his flexibility in this regard. To this end the Group gave a specific example of an agreement that could benefit from the expansion of the Secretary-General's fact-finding mandate should the adherents to the treaty agree.

While the recommendations of the Group may not be as ambitious as some would have liked, I wish to emphasize that this report has been agreed by consensus and it is clear that in order to make progress, there must be as broad a basis of support among Member States as possible. In this regard, I consider it important to underline the Group's view that

"the development of a United Nations verification organization must be seen as an evolutionary process". (A/45/372, para. 276)

(Ms. Mason, Canada)

On the whole, I strongly believe that the Group's recommendations represent the most ambitious agenda for United Nations action which could achieve consensus at this time. The recommendations provide a clear outline for immediate action, both on the part of the United Nations Secretariat and the individual Member States of the Organization. Indeed, it should be stressed that speedy implementation of these recommendations will require of individual Members concrete actions in support of the Secretariat. The compilation and indexation of materials for the verification data bank, for example, will be greatly eased if those Member States possessing existing data banks or computer indexes were to make these available to the Secretariat. In his recent speech to the General Assembly, my Minister, Mr. Clark, outlined Canada's intention to undertake just such an action. I urge other States in a position to do so to follow this lead.

The Group of Experts has done its job. It has unanimously outlined a path of action for us to take. It has also examined the complex issue of verification in its generic sense, and provided us with the most thorough elaboration of the issues yet produced by any global, multilateral study on the subject. On behalf of Mr. Fred Bild, I should like to express warm appreciation to all the experts who participated in the study - several of whom are present in this Committee - and who contributed so much to the successful outcome. My delegation hopes that the Member States of our Organization will demonstrate the will to translate this solid, practical accomplishment into concrete action. During the course of this Committee's work, Canada, jointly with France and the Netherlands, will introduce a draft resolution requesting that appropriate action be taken towards implementing the recommendations in the report.

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria): Please accept our delegation's congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are convinced that your able guidance will help realize our expectations for a fruitful session.

I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections to their respective posts. You may rely on the full co-operation of the Bulgarian delegation in the discharge of your responsible duties.

Our greetings and best wishes go also to Mr. Milan Komatina, President of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to take this opportunity to express once again the Bulgarian Government's appreciation of the work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and particularly of the contribution of Under-Secretary-General Mr. Yasushi Akashi to the cause of disarmament. Bulgaria will continue its close co-operation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

I shall try not to succumb to the temptation to explain to my colleagues here why we believe the world now is different from what it used to be a year ago. I fully subscribe to the views expressed by previous speakers on the favourable impact of the end of the cold war. For the first time ever there does appear to exist a possibility of a future harmonious and peaceful world made up of a family of free and equal nations. I would particularly like to emphasize the importance of the reunification of Germany as a historical symbol of the end of the post-war division of Europe. The landslide of democratic changes in Eastern Europe and the unprecedented co-operation between the Soviet Union and the United States are directly linked to the revival of the United Nations to play the role in world affairs its founding fathers expected it to play.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

Against this background, we are seriously concerned over the latest events in the Persian Gulf, which fall in sharp contrast to the overall trends to which I have just referred. The unprovoked aggression against a small neighbouring State was clearly and categorically condemned by Bulgaria. My country is abiding strictly and unswervingly by its obligations under the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, regardless of the extremely unfavourable economic and financial consequences. This, we believe, is our contribution to the efforts of the international community aimed at consolidating a new world order that provides reliable guarantees of the security of all nations, and of smaller States in particular.

An analysis of this year's general debate in the General Assembly shows that less time was devoted in statements to the problems of disarmament per se. Some may perhaps conclude that interest in these problems is waning. This, however, would be a mistake: disarmament has simply entered a new stage, having rid itself of pompous rhetoric and ideological confrontation, and has become an element of practical politics. States are now focusing their efforts on concrete practical steps to resolve existing problems by discarding old stereotypical thinking and empty verbal exercises. Today it is becoming clear that in order to be effective and fruitful, arms reduction and disarmament efforts should in any case be accompanied by a general restructuring of armed forces and defence policies on the basis of reasonable sufficiency for defence.

The evolution in the doctrines of the leading military Powers has given rise to new hopes for progress in strengthening international security and disarmament. In this context, we welcome the London Summit declaration of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the latest agreements between the Warsaw Treaty and NATO. NATO and the Warsaw Treaty can and should become guarantors of, and

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

instruments for, the transition from bloc-based security to collective security in Europe.

We support the efforts of the Soviet Union and the United States aimed at reaching, soon, an agreement on reducing strategic offensive weapons, which we regard as a radical measure for nuclear disarmament and an important factor for strategic stability. We expect this new agreement to become an incentive for broadening the process of nuclear, chemical and conventional disarmament at both the bilateral and the multilateral levels. In this context, we welcome the impeccable implementation of the INF Treaty, which inspires better hopes for the future.

Bulgaria is currently reassessing its concept of global, regional and national security in the new conditions. Our goal is to make this concept a practical one that corresponds to our immediate task at home, to our true national interests and the actual priorities of the international community.

We are convinced that security can only be mutual, comprehensive and indivisible, and that it should be sought only within the framework of co-operation and on the basis of a balance of interests, taking into account not only the military and political aspects of security, but also its economic, social, ecological and humanitarian dimensions. Solutions involving military muscle are already a thing of the past, as is the cold war itself. Recurrences of the former, which we now see, only serve to demonstrate that such approaches are doomed to failure.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

Today, security can be based solely on the equitable existence of flourishing democratic societies made up of free and creative individuals. There is general agreement among the main political forces in Bulgaria that the security of the State and the people should be sought primarily in the context of the newly emerging European structures of collective security, an important component of which should be the balance of interests of the Balkan States.

Bulgaria actually acted in accordance with these views in 1990. The most vivid examples in that respect are our significant unilateral measures for disarmament and the conversion of military potential. In the current year we have cut down our defence budget by 12 per cent and carried out significant reductions in armaments and military personnel. The length of service in the army is to be reduced from 24 to 18 months. It is our sincere hope that this example will be followed by our neighbours without undue delay. As President Zhelev stated in his address to the General Assembly, what our country has done in this field so far is only a beginning. Bulgaria is prepared to work actively, openly and with the necessary imagination, together with the other Member States, to broaden the disarmament process and strengthen confidence and security in Europe and world-wide.

I should like to emphasize our conviction that the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and the final elimination of the possibility of their use is not an issue that is of concern to individual States or groups of States only. It is indeed a top priority for the entire international community. That is why the positive results achieved at a bilateral level, between the Soviet Union and the United States and between the two major alliances, cannot serve as an alternative to effective multilateral efforts in this field, particularly within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. Bilateral and multilateral efforts should complement and enrich each other and should serve as incentives to each other.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

Bulgaria attaches particular importance to the work of the multilateral forums dealing with disarmament and security. Apart from political good will, another factor for improving their effectiveness is the rationalization of their activities. I am referring here to the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee. We support the concrete proposals concerning the First Committee, such as reducing the number of draft and adopted resolutions and the time for general debates, as well as the examination of certain issues every two, even three, years, and we are prepared to assist in this respect. I should like to point out that we fully support the commendable efforts of the Department for Disarmament Affairs to establish a comprehensive, easily accessible and constantly updated data base on disarmament. We believe that this data base would considerably facilitate the preparatory work and the actual holding of negotiations.

An important part of the collective work of building a peaceful and secure world is to be found in the efforts to guarantee the horizontal non-proliferation and vertical reduction of nuclear weapons, including, among other things, a ban on the production of fissionable materials for military purposes, the reliable prevention of the proliferation of military missile technologies, and the guaranteeing of the security of peaceful nuclear facilities. Of course, in this connection it is extremely important to achieve a global ban on the testing of nuclear weapons.

Bulgaria has reasons for deeming the Third Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) successful despite the unexpected confrontation that prevented the adoption of a final document and ill served the cause of non-proliferation. What is important is the fact that the majority of States unequivocally confirmed their adherence to, and support for, the aims of the Treaty as well as their awareness of the important role it plays in strengthening world peace and security.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

More active efforts are needed for the conclusion, in 1991 if possible, of a comprehensive, universal and fully verifiable convention banning chemical weapons. Regrettably, prospects in that field are dimmer now as a result of the absence of a major political breakthrough in the negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament. We are seriously concerned over threats of the use of chemical weapons in the Persian Gulf region. Bulgaria welcomes the Soviet-American agreement on the partial elimination of the stockpiles of those weapons of the two countries as the beginning of effective chemical disarmament. We should like to hope that this would truly contribute to the timely completion of the work on the convention banning all chemical weapons.

In its desire to universalize the process of disarmament and to make it more comprehensive, Bulgaria has joined a number of other States working for the inclusion of naval issues in the agenda of the disarmament forums. The need to clarify and elaborate common views of the international community regarding the role of naval forces in safeguarding and strengthening peace and stability under current conditions has again been highlighted by the recent events in the Persian Gulf.

An expression of our awareness that this process should be initiated by steps for strengthening confidence and security at sea is the hosting last September by Bulgaria of a seminar on this topic organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs with the participation of politicians, researchers and military experts from 25 countries. It showed what we believe are fields of common interest in this sphere that can be utilized. In this connection, I should like to express our view that the United Nations study on naval disarmament should be updated.

Bulgaria is maintaining its traditional interest in the issue of granting non-nuclear-weapon States reliable guarantees against the use or threat of use of

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

nuclear weapons against them. It is our view that the time is ripe for the adoption of a single resolution on negative security assurances and we will do everything possible to meet this goal at this session. We look forward to the co-operation of a wide circle of interested States in this respect.

As one of the sponsors of the resolution on the conversion of military resources to civilian purposes adopted by consensus at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, Bulgaria will continue its broad consultations on this issue. We expect States to provide their views on, among other things, the problem of studies on conversion which has already been raised in their replies to the Secretary-General. We could, for instance, consider two parallel projects: first, a group of government experts on the topic "Possible patterns and programmes for conversion of military resources for civilian purposes: political and military implications", and secondly, a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) project on the topic "Economic and social aspects of conversion".

Bulgaria is looking forward to the forthcoming signing, in Paris, of the Treaty on reducing the conventional forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Treaty to equal levels. We are convinced that such a treaty, followed by successful negotiations on the gradual elimination of tactical nuclear weapons and the elaboration, within the framework of the all-European process, of a new generation of confidence- and security-building measures and the broadening of the sphere of their implementation, would eliminate the threat of surprise attack and the possibility of mounting large-scale offensive operations on the old continent.

(Mr. Kostov, Bulgaria)

At the same time, I should like to emphasize Bulgaria's vital interest in seeing significant reductions, under conditions of complete equality for all States as regards guarantees for their security, and the elimination of the imbalances in the armed forces in all regions, including south-eastern Europe. Our efforts in this area are in keeping with our desire to see the Balkans become a region of lasting peace, security and good-neighbourly co-operation.

Mr. AMIGUES (France) (interpretation from French): As this is the first time my delegation is speaking in the First Committee allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election and to assure you that the French delegation will do its utmost throughout our work to facilitate your task, as well as that of the other officers of the Committee and the Secretariat.

Today I should like, as a supplement to what was stated by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Twelve member States of the European Community, to give France's point of view.

While success has been achieved in the area of regional disarmament and in certain aspects of Soviet-American nuclear disarmament, multilateral disarmament has been at a standstill. Moreover, in defining the specific areas of action that fall within the purview of the international community, the United Nations has a decisive role to play in improving international security from the viewpoint of disarmament. Here, the recent progress made by the Organization in the area of the maintenance of peace should make us work together to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of multilateral disarmament.

The representative of Italy referred to the magnitude of the changes which have taken place in Europe since the last session of the General Assembly and I see no need to go back to that. The summit meeting of the 34 States participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which will be held in Paris from 19 to 21 November next, will mark the culmination of these developments

(Mr. Amigues, France)

and at the same time mark the end of an era of division and confrontation. For the first time these 34 States will make their voices freely heard and, on an equal footing, will debate the future of Europe. In Paris the first agreement will be concluded on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe, an event which is unprecedented in the history of disarmament. It will reaffirm the new nature of the relationships among the members of the ex-blocs. It will also usher in future disarmament negotiations, even more far-reaching and complete, which this time will be of interest to all the European and North American countries.

The positive conclusion of these negotiations is the logical result of the efforts launched here by France in 1978 during the first special session of the General Assembly with its proposal for a disarmament Conference in Europe. Our delegation will submit a draft resolution on the subject of confidence-building measures and security and of conventional disarmament in Europe, which we hope will win consensus as has already been the case now for two years.

The strategic nuclear negotiations, after the significant progress made at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990, have slowed down. We hope, however, that the objective, solemnly reaffirmed by President Bush and President Gorbachev in Washington on 30 May last, of concluding the START treaty by the end of the year, can be achieved. From the point of view of France it is indispensable for the two great Powers, although they are conducting other arms-control negotiations, to retain at the forefront of their priorities the commitments they have undertaken to reduce, in the near future, their clearly excessive nuclear arsenals.

Everyone in this forum is well aware of the conditions which France set a long time ago for its participation in the nuclear-disarmament process. These still stand. There should be no doubt that the day these conditions are met France will make its contribution to the process which has begun.

(Mr. Amigues, France)

Concerning our nuclear experiments in the South Pacific, France, whose Prime Minister declared that France could understand the feelings that they might evoke on the part of certain coastal States, has the right to hope that those States, for their part, will make an effort to understand the needs of France's security policy. France has no alternative for maintaining an independent defence than that of maintaining a deterrence capacity, the credibility of which requires that it should incorporate all necessary technical progress. France must therefore pursue its nuclear tests at a pace and in conditions dictated by technological requirements. It is because of these requirements that France has decided to decrease the number from eight to six annually. France has decided to make this decision public and each year to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning those tests that were conducted the previous year. That choice, like the visits of independent experts which France has hosted in the past, demonstrates the attitude of transparency and dialogue which it intends to maintain towards the States in the region in so far as this is compatible with the preservation of its security interests.

This choice was reaffirmed at the highest level by the President of the Republic, who decided that each nuclear test would be followed by a communiqué immediately released to the Press. France regrets that certain States of the South Pacific region have chosen not to respond to this will for openness and dialogue and have preferred to take a polemical stance. For our part, we do not intend to embark on such a path. However, we do wish it to be made known as clearly as possible that our position of openness will continue to go along with the maintenance of the credibility of France's nuclear deterrence capacity.

(Mr. Amigues, France)

We are obliged to note that the disarmament dealt with within the United Nations has not yet achieved success and that the persistence of certain types of inflexibility has delayed the emergence of a realistic concept of multilateral disarmament. Should we simply regret this? No, indeed now we must demonstrate realism as well as imagination. Here we continue to assert that the mirages of general and complete disarmament are illusory. We propose, as we had already done in 1988, to single out the major areas for action in the disarmament field which should be dealt with by the international community as represented by the United Nations. We shall list five.

First, the preparation and strengthening of disarmament requires that we promote verification, that we ensure transparency and avoid proliferation. Concerning verification, we welcome the fact that the Group of Experts convened by the Secretary-General in accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/81 B, was able to conclude its work last July. The study, and a French expert participated in its drafting, in our view provides the basis for future thinking on the role which could devolve on the United Nations in the area of verification.

(Mr. Amigues, France)

Among the conditions necessary for any progress in the disarmament field is transparency in military matters, in particular, in the matter of budgets. I see no need at this stage to go back over the various proposals made by France both in 1987, during the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, and in 1988, during the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Those proposals are still valid.

The third pillar of disarmament is non-proliferation. Proliferation has become a crucial problem in the chemical field. Its uncontrolled development is likely severely to affect international security and to jeopardize the success of the Geneva negotiations designed to conclude a convention for a general ban on chemical weapons. Therefore, it is important that the United Nations do everything in its power to recall the commitment of the international community not to contribute to the spread of chemical weapons, in accordance with the Declaration adopted by the Paris Conference.

As to nuclear non-proliferation, France is pursuing an active policy. It has made clear its interest through its participation as an observer at the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In addition, we have noted with considerable interest the conclusions reached last July by the experts convened by the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution 43/75 N to draft a comprehensive study on nuclear weapons. The study emphasizes that the nuclear non-proliferation régime is as important as ever. Its strict observance is of continued fundamental importance.

Finally, as regards ballistic missiles, the international community has, above all, devoted its attention over the past years to preventing risks linked to the development of missile systems, particularly if they go along with the spread of nuclear weapons. We currently find ourselves confronting new problems linked to the proliferation of biological and chemical weapons. To cope with the threat

(Mr. Amigues, France)

posed by missile systems in this context, a number of countries have paid particular attention to implementing a régime of control of missile proliferation. Moreover, other States have recently decided to respect these constraints. In the interest of international security, the broadest possible adherence to this régime would be welcome.

Another major responsibility of the international community in the field of disarmament concerns the negotiations which are, essentially, universal. I will refer to two areas in this regard. The conclusion of an international convention banning chemical weapons remains our priority in the area of multilateral disarmament. We must note that, of the three major disarmament negotiations currently under way - along with conventional disarmament and Soviet-United States negotiations on the reduction of strategic arsenals - the chemical negotiations are the least advanced. This we regret.

Granted, the goal is ambitious and the stakes are highly complex. However, while the efforts made by all have been commensurate with them, they have yet to yield all the results we had hoped to see after the Paris Conference, which had demonstrated the unanimous will of the international community to spare no effort for the success of the negotiations.

There is an imperative need to go back to basics. The nature of these difficulties is such, and they are so interrelated, that considerable time is still needed in Geneva to settle the details for their solutions. The negotiations there risked becoming seriously bogged down, which would be all the more harmful in the present context. New political impetus is therefore required for a successful conclusion. This is why we have proposed the convening of the Conference on Disarmament in a ministerial session by the end of the first quarter of 1991 at the latest.

(Mr. Amigues, France)

France attaches the greatest of importance to the Review Conference on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, to be held in 1991. We hope that it will provide an opportunity to strengthen the authority of this legal instrument.

Regarding negotiations, there is a third idea for the Organization - the harmonization of regional efforts. We believe that, for the sake of realism, the major importance of the regional limitation of conventional weapons should be emphasized, as well as the contribution of confidence-building measures. There, too, it must be shown that disarmament must not merely be the domain of the few but, rather, the concern of all. The European continent, which has seen one of the most significant build-ups of conventional weapons, will soon set an example in disarmament and in confidence-building. This effort must be pursued in Europe itself. But it is clear to us that there are other regions of the world where the level of arms is very high, and where it would be particularly pressing for negotiations to begin. This is the full meaning which we attach to the document on conventional disarmament at the regional level adopted by consensus by the Committee on Disarmament at its last session. This is also what was emphasized by the President of France on 24 September, when he stated to the General Assembly:

"In building the future we must also pursue disarmament, an area in which Europe has provided the first actual proving-ground. But as all present here today are aware, disarmament is a world-wide necessity ..." (A/45/PV.4, p. 49-50)

Fourthly, research in the disarmament field is also an area where the United Nations has a major role to play. In the past, we have put forward significant initiatives, in particular the one leading to the establishment of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in 1980. This institute, which

(Mr. Amiques, France)

will soon be marking its tenth anniversary, has proven its ability fully to carry out the mission entrusted to it at the outset. It is therefore important that the Institute be granted the necessary financial means for its proper operation. In this spirit, France will submit this year a draft resolution concerning the tenth anniversary of UNIDIR which, it believes, should easily achieve consensus.

The last area in which the role of the international community can be strengthened is that of the solidarity of States concerning disarmament through the extension of the efforts undertaken in the area of the relationship between disarmament and development. France, which welcomed the holding in 1987 of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, continues to bear in mind the Final Document adopted by consensus by that Conference. France hopes that the current progress achieved in disarmament will allow us in due time to justify that step by allaying the apprehensions of those who had hesitated to participate in that initiative. France would find most positive a resumption of this idea in order to give concrete form in due time to the relationship between disarmament and development which, with the progress we hope to see from negotiations, will increasingly appear as a long-awaited reaction of solidarity.

This is the position, known to all, of my delegation. We find ourselves at a crossroads: either we do nothing but limit ourselves to deploring in solemn statements the lack of progress in multilateral disarmament, or we work realistically to enhance the effectiveness of the First Committee. Then, we will have an opportunity to allow the Organization to make full use of its possibilities.

Mr. KARHILO (Finland): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to see you presiding over this important Committee. My delegation is well aware of the many demanding offices of trust you have held at the United Nations. The work of the Committee will surely benefit from your skill and experience.

"The future ain't what it used to be": this observation, attributed to a well-known American sportsman-philosopher, comes readily to mind as one surveys the international situation. The axioms and verities of the cold war can no longer be confidently projected into the future. After so many years of numbing rigidity and predictability, uncertainty over the shape of things to come is unsettling. Yet we would not have it any other way.

In Europe, a process through which artificial divisions are healed and yesterday's adversaries become tomorrow's partners in security is under way. For Finland, a European neutral, these developments are a source of profound satisfaction. We welcome the united Germany in our midst - in Europe and in this Committee.

While Europe is making progress, all is not well in the world. The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq is a reminder of the continued fragility of international peace and security.

The crisis in the Persian Gulf region underlines the importance of strengthening barriers against the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction. It also testifies to the urgency of a total ban on chemical weapons.

The historic rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States, recently confirmed at the Helsinki Summit, is a vital underlay in any efforts to maintain international peace and security in general and through the United Nations in particular.

Radically improved relations between the two major nuclear Powers have set the stage for further cuts in nuclear weapon. Finland welcomes the progress already

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

made in the negotiations on strategic nuclear arms and looks forward to the conclusion in the near future of a treaty embodying substantial reductions of these weapons and the continuation of the START process.

We attach particular importance to the understanding reached at the Washington Summit in June on a future ceiling on the number of long-range nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles. Politically binding unilateral declarations concerning planned deployments of these weapons are also a step in the right direction. These measures will contribute to stability in our immediate vicinity - northern and arctic Europe.

Ever since the prospect of the large-scale deployment of long-range nuclear sea-launched missiles emerged some years ago, Finland has called for a ban on such missiles. The fact that there is no meeting of minds on how to verify any reduction of these missiles suggests to us that they should be eliminated completely. In the next phase of their talks, the two major Powers should, in our view, seek to prohibit all sub-strategic nuclear weapons deployed at sea.

The fundamental change in East-West relations - so fundamental that the whole concept of East-West division is rapidly turning into an anachronism - has not done away with the necessity of further reducing nuclear-weapon arsenals. The nuclear-weapon States themselves acknowledge this. But this change has drastically reduced the likelihood of a global nuclear war. At the same time, other concerns, obscured for so long by our common fixation on nuclear weapons in the East-West context, have risen to view. They need increasing attention. They need global attention.

The possibility of a nuclear war in a regional context should be foreclosed by universal adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The use of chemical weapons in a regional conflict is not merely a possibility: it is a recent fact.

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

Conventional weapons are being used this very minute. They account for an overwhelming part of global military expenditures. They constitute a clear and present danger. Kuwait is the latest victim.

Multilateral disarmament has a lot to do. There is no shortage of issues on the agenda, present and future. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of results. Successful disarmament global negotiations require a realistic appreciation of the security concerns and interests of all States, as defined by the States themselves. To obtain results, disarmament efforts must be geared to realistically defined objectives and pursued flexibly. For example, a step-by-step approach should not be rejected out of principle. The best should not become the enemy of the good.

No new multilateral disarmament agreements have seen the light of day in more than a decade. But the past decade is littered with multilateral disarmament disagreements. The second and third special sessions on disarmament come to mind readily as examples, not to speak of the enduring disagreements within the Conference on Disarmament. Some of this lack of progress has been attributable to the international situation in general, especially in the early 1980s. Difficulties in East-West relations tended to be reflected in multilateral disarmament efforts. East and West were roundly criticized for hampering these efforts with their own quarrels. With the passing of the cold war, multilateral disarmament talks should therefore make rapid progress. Consensus should be easier to reach. That is not the case, however. There are disturbing signs that multilateral disarmament is threatened by a new cleavage, this time along along the North-South axis. For Finland, multilateral disarmament is not a North-South issue. It is a global issue. All States and regions need to be involved, with equal respect for their security interests. Strengthening international security through disarmament is an endeavour in which all States are demandeurs.

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

Conventional armed forces, if deployed in excessive numbers and in a threatening mode, create instability and insecurity. This has been recognized in Europe, where an agreement on the reduction of conventional forces and a new set of confidence- and security-building measures are close to completion. The emerging new security structure in Europe cannot be squared with the high levels of military capabilities.

The experience gained in conventional arms talks in Europe, while not transferrable as such, could serve as an inspiration for other regions.

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

A beginning has been made at the United Nations in dealing with the issue of conventional arms. The Disarmament Commission should now focus on the merits of the regional approach to conventional disarmament.

The related subject of international arms transfers is currently being studied by a group of governmental experts, a Finnish expert among them. The study will be taken up by the General Assembly next year. In our view, one possibility thereafter would be for the Disarmament Commission to address this important subject as one item of its working agenda for 1992.

Finland welcomes the study on the role of the United Nations in the field of verification. The study contains a large number of solid recommendations. We are especially pleased that the idea of a verification data base - an idea put forward by Finland in 1986 - has been embraced as one of them.

We welcome also the comprehensive study on nuclear weapons. We hope that its conclusions, arrived at by consensus, will facilitate future efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

The rapid conclusion of a convention banning chemical weapons is an urgent priority. Chemical weapons are weapons of mass destruction. They have recently been used as such. They could be used again. The negotiations in Geneva have come a long way. We are disappointed that the last negotiating session did not move things forward - indeed, to conclusion. The political will to conclude the convention should finally be summoned. Finland will continue to make its contribution so that the convention, once concluded, will be properly verifiable. The Finnish Project on the Verification of Chemical Disarmament will continue to provide training in verification techniques for experts from among the non-aligned members of the Conference on Disarmament. In our view, a more equitable geographical distribution of verification expertise will enhance universal

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

adherence to the convention. The Finnish Project on the Verification of Chemical Disarmament has, from its very beginning in 1973, kept openness as its hallmark. No aspect of the Project is classified or otherwise restricted. Visitors are welcome. Just last month we had the pleasure of acquainting with the Project our distinguished Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, as well as the participants in the 1990 United Nations disarmament fellowship programme.

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is a security objective shared by the vast majority of States. The need to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty is clearly something on which all States parties participating in its Fourth Review Conference were in agreement. Unfortunately a disagreement about the treatment of one issue - and only one issue - prevented consensus on a final declaration. The language on which consensus was reached at the Review Conference reflects many important achievements. In our view, these achievements should be acknowledged in other international forums. States parties could also adopt them as guidelines for their national policies. For Finland, the Non-Proliferation Treaty stands on its own feet. Neither the assessment of its functioning nor its extension should be linked to the satisfactory resolution of any one issue, however important.

We do consider a comprehensive test ban important. But why set the key disarmament agreement against an important disarmament goal? We want both. One we already have; the other we have to strive for, but without risking the existing Treaty. Anyhow, is a test ban really imaginable in a world where there would be no legally binding constraints on proliferation? Finland supports the conclusion of a comprehensive, universal and verifiable nuclear-test-ban treaty. We welcome the recent decision to establish an ad hoc committee at the Conference on Disarmament, to begin work on this issue. That is the appropriate forum.

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

The partial test-ban Treaty Amendment Conference provides an opportunity to discuss issues related to the banning of nuclear tests. Let us hope that such a discussion will narrow the differences of view that exist in this regard. As a State party to the partial test-ban Treaty, Finland will participate in the Amendment Conference in a constructive spirit.

We support a test ban for both security and environmental reasons. A comprehensive ban would remove the risks associated with underground testing. There is evidence that underground testing is not environmentally safe. Without proper containment, radioactive emissions and leaks can spread far beyond the test sites. This constitutes a particular threat to the vulnerable natural environment in the Arctic. That is why the Nordic countries have recently expressed grave concern over the Soviet Union's plans to move all its nuclear testing to the Arctic islands of Novaya Zemlya.

Finally, I wish to touch upon an issue that, while non-substantive, is of great relevance to our work in this Committee. I refer, of course, to what has become known as the rationalization of our work. If we in this Committee wish to send to the international community a message about the vital importance of disarmament in today's world, that message must be more sharply focused, more tuned to today's realities. I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for having initiated open-ended consultations to this effect.

My delegation would strongly support the merging of resolutions on the same issue, such as the ones on negative security assurances. We should like to see some issues taken up only every other year or every third year. Owing to their long-term perspectives, the resolutions on nuclear-weapon-free zones might be suitable for such periodic treatment.

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

At the end of the day, all depends on self-restraint in introducing new draft resolutions and on readiness to let go of "one's own" existing resolutions if that is required to sharpen our message. The proprietary mind-set simply must go. Once adopted, each and every resolution is our common property.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.