

Fifteenth special session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 7 June 1988, at 10 a.m.

Mr. ANDREOTTI (Italy) (interpretation from French): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Peter Florin on his election to the presidency of this special session of the General Assembly. I believe that under his wise guidance this third special session devoted to disarmament will achieve long-awaited

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positive results. I should like also to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose activity in the cause of peace and security has never been as essential as it is today.

Since the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Genscher, has already stated the position of the European Community - which is also the position of my country - on the subject of this third special session, I shall confine myself to adding some points which I consider to be important.

This special session is taking place in the wake of the summit meeting between the United States and the Soviet Union in Moscow. Apart from the results achieved on that occasion, and those which immediately preceded it, the summit meeting confirms that the two major Powers are committed to a permanent process of negotiation, the objective of which, in the field of armaments as in all other sectors, justifies the most ambitious expectations.

I do not believe that the results achieved to date, which would have been unthinkable even a couple of years ago, can be considered as having been gained for all time: in fact, I think that a particularly appropriate psychological climate is required to consolidate and improve them and that distrust must be gradually replaced by a mutual trust built up through concrete events and specific initiatives, supported by consistent behaviour and constructive political will.

The overwhelming majority by which the United States Senate ratified the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate- and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Agreement - shows the extent to which the American nation is committed to the peace effort.

In the Soviet Union also, fundamental choices have been made in the plans for transforming its society and the revision of its approach to international relations. That is an important and encouraging turning point which must be given

strong external support in order to prevent domestic resistance from obstructing the process of renewal.

The results have been appreciated by those countries which, like Italy, have, working within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance and together with its European Community partners, throughout the years insisted that Europe should exercise all its influence and prestige to keep the dialogue open, even during times of sharp confrontation between East and West.

I believe that none of the preceding special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament have been held in a more favourable or more lasting international framework. It is certain that not all the results of such intensive negotiations will bear fruit as quickly as we had wished. We had hoped that the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on a 50 per cent reduction of offensive strategic weapons would have been concluded at the Moscow summit meeting. That was not to be, and we regret it. However, we consider the reaffirmation of the determination of the two countries to make a deep cut in the most dangerous of their weapons as positive.

Violence and war are even today arbiters of politics in many parts of the world; but increasingly negotiation is seen to be the only means of putting an end to conflicts that have lasted for years. We have seen the results achieved through negotiations in Afghanistan, thanks to the tenacious efforts of the United Nations; but in other areas also, from Angola to Cambodia, where open conflicts involving the interference of foreign forces are taking place, possible solutions are finally emerging. The two major Powers are no longer viewing regional crises in terms of confrontation but rather as a possible -albeit still uncertain - ground for co-operation. By decreasing the areas where force is used, that policy is working in a concrete way in favour of a reduction of military arsenals.

There is another factor that contributes to the favourable climate in which this special session is taking place and that is the successful review of the non-proliferation Treaty.

Italy accepted the limitations inherent in that Treaty, considering it to be a starting point not only for halting the spread of nuclear weapons but also for reducing existing arsenals. The achievement of that objective depended primarily on the two major Powers but also involved all those countries which had a stake in military balances. For the first time, because of the agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union on intermediate-range nuclear weapons and above all because of the agreements being negotiated for a drastic reduction in strategic weapons, the previous trend is being reversed.

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This strengthens the case for adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We therefore hope that this trend will bring about a further increase in the number of countries which voluntarily renounce having their own nuclear deterrent. The recent decisions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and of Spain are particularly significant in this respect.

This third special session, which is taking place in such a positive context, provides a good opportunity to give a vigorous new impetus to the objectives of disarmament, peace, and security.

Since the dialogue between the two major Powers, supported by the contributions of their respective allies, has been so successful in the case of the agreement on intermediate weapons, it is now time to ensure the necessary balance between bilateral and multilateral talks and adopt a more dynamic approach to the latter. This should be emphasized as we begin our work, to prevent stagnation in multilateral disarmament, which would contrast with the current dynamism of international relations.

However, in our quest for the increasing rationalization and effectiveness of the role of our Organization, we must retain the appropriate distinctions between areas of competence and the different parts played, such as the universal scope of the action of the General Assembly and its deliberative bodies, and the more specific negotiating power of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is more difficult to envisage a role for the Security Council in the field of arms control. Nevertheless, the Security Council must continue to work to prevent the use of force and to promote a more stable political climate conducive to arms reduction. I am thinking of the importance of the Security Council's role in resolving regional tensions, also through the good offices of the Secretary-General. Such tensions fuel the arms race and the drain of military expenditures. In this connection all the experience of the United Nations,

especially that of recent years, confirms how essential it is to maintain the unity of the Council and its permanent members.

The Geneva Conference on Disarmament has for perhaps too many years been the site of negotiations on a comprehensive ban of chemical weapons. However, despite universal revulsion against that type of weapon the desired objective is still far off. We think that the banning of chemical weapons must involve the rapid destruction of all arsenals, particularly the larger ones, and an immediate halt in production under a strict verification system.

Since we are aware of the complexity of verification, we sponsored an international seminar of scientists on the subject in Rome on 19 and 20 May. Following the scientists' recommendations on direct experimentation to develop more rigorous and innovative inspection methods, we intend to invite a group of international specialists to visit a chemical facility in Italy to study the problems of verification of non-production.

We are also prepared to support in the near future regular exchanges of detailed data, the ways and means of which should be agreed upon. We are ready to establish stricter measures of control over the export of chemical substances which could be used for military purposes, measures similar to those already adopted to prevent nuclear proliferation.

Our objective is to have an international convention with the adherence of all States. We hope that political and economic considerations will not stand in the way of the rapid banning of these weapons, which are still used in current conflicts and which might be used again in the future, despite their devastating effects.

The third special session should also contribute to encouraging a decrease in the levels of conventional weapons. The approximately 140 conventional conflicts of the post-war period have taken a toll of more than 20 million casualties.

In Europe, the in balance unconventional weapons causes malaise and mutual suspicion, and absorbs huge amounts of resources. There too there are innovative signs which we hope will be confirmed in the next few months. We intend seriously to test the willingness of the countries concerned to eliminate the asymmetries which exist in their favour, by means of adequate negotiated reductions, thus eliminating the need for an increase in the military arsenals of Western countries.

In the negotiations which have just begun in Vienna between the members of the two alliances we shall be able to tackle this problem at its roots, bearing in mind also the positive impact that could result from the achievement of a balance in conventional armaments, which is currently the main area of disagreement in our region. This could be an example or model for situations of open or latent tension in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, we would hope that the transparency promised, and already in part put into effect by the Soviet Union in the social sphere, will be extended to military budgets, allowing an open discussion which would eliminate fears that sometimes derive only from ignorance of the intentions of others.

For the last 10 years the Italian Government has acted in support of the control and limitation of trade in conventional weapons. I realize that this is a difficult issue and that it is not the first time it has been raised in this framework. Nevertheless, we intend to pursue it, and are encouraged by the growing expectations of international public opinion as regards complete transparency in this field also. We have advocated the establishment of rules to this effect within the European Community. We should also like this issue to be discussed at the United Nations.

No aspect of arms control today seems as delicate or as promising as verification. Verification is a problem which is both political and technical. It is political because verification cannot be separated from trust; therefore, it

must be based on an overall climate of international relations. It is also a technical problem that presents considerable difficulties because of the complexity of the verification structures as we progress towards agreed upon destruction of weapons.

We believe that verification can become the ground for ever-broader agreement. A procedure for joint verification of nuclear tests was formulated in Moscow, which could lead to a progressive reduction in their number and size, so that this aspect of security would also not be exempt from quantitative limitations.

In my opinion, the principle of joint verification of the process of creation of nuclear devices from the origins of that process has many implications for possible future developments. Together with scientific co-operation by both sides, it increases the transparency of the two systems. Nothing is more dangerous in the nuclear era than a condition of permanent uncertainty.

In so far as verification is concerned, we would like greater United Nations involvement. What is needed is a more flexible and realistic approach which, while avoiding all interferences in the present negotiating processes, would allow for greater involvement by States in the verification phase.

Consistent with its previous position, Italy is in favour of the elaboration of the principles of verification under United Nations auspices. It is also in favour of studying - on the basis of past experience and the work of certain States - the modalities that would allow the United Nations to provide specific support and facilitate the identification of even the most advanced technology and appropriate machinery for multilateral disarmament. Our objective should be to provide a technical base which would be available to all for the purpose of promoting greater reliability.

Furthermore, we have accumulated useful experiences for multilateral control, for example in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I wonder whether we could draw inspiration from that experience and establish a body of experts to investigate the alleged use of chemical and bacteriological weapons.

Among the items of great importance before this special session is the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Government of Italy believes that, in the context of general and complete disarmament, space must be an area for peaceful activities, and that its use and exploration must contribute to the well-being of all and, in fact, enhance the spirit of community among States.

The two major Powers are fully aware that unregulated competition in the deployment of weapons in outer space would be extremely costly, without increasing security. The United States and the Soviet Union are negotiating on this point also in Geneva, in the belief that an agreement can be reached which would reconcile the freedom of research of one side with the mistrust of the other. We hope that every type of research and activity can be freely pursued in outer space, extending to it the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. A recent proposal along these lines concerns a joint peaceful expedition by the

United States and the Soviet Union to the planet which bears the name of the Roman god of war. That proposal deserves our full attention.

The work of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva remains at a preliminary stage on the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Here too we hope that the Conference will make more incisive progress, despite undeniable problems of politics, strategy and technology. But it is precisely technology that can provide better security conditions at lower levels of armament.

I think that, everything considered, all the developments that are taking place - from the joint control of nuclear tests to outer-space expeditions and the improvement of verification systems - point to greater scientific co-operation.

It is not science that has created the means of destruction, but politics which has directed scientific resources towards the wrong objectives. It is this starting point that must be changed. Scientists can and must work together, and if this international co-operation is achieved politicians throughout the world will be helped in building structures of peace at the service of all. Science is making our world a smaller one. We must strengthen this phase of renewed international détente by supporting freedom of movement, of men and ideas. That not only will help to ensure stability in East-West relations, but will also lead to development projects for developing countries. And that brings me to my last point.

Our security is tied not only to arms reduction but also to the more widespread observance of the principles and norms of the United Nations, including respect for human rights and a broader and more significant recognition of their role also in the field of security. It is precisely in the United Nations that we have been able to discuss the links between disarmament and development, and the negative effects of economic inequalities on international stability.

The United Nations has devoted particular attention to the reallocation of resources to peaceful objectives. That is not a short-term process and, in fact, it involves a change in the international climate, both in East-West relations and in regional balances. However, we believe it of great political significance that the problem has been confronted and common consideration of it encouraged in terms which promote a convergence of this issue with the achievement of general and complete disarmament.

General and complete disarmament remains the ultimate objective, in a framework of stability, transparency and respect for the principles of the United Nations. It is an objective to be reached gradually, but one which must guide and bring together the actions of countries with different economic and social structures and with equally various international policy orientations. We shall serve our cause not with generic statements of principles but, rather, as events of recent years have proved, with tenacious negotiations to reduce gradually the level of forces and to dismantle the psychological and material structures which led to this situation.

That is not a goal for the future, but one of the main thrusts of our policy. We wish our conduct to be consistent with it. In history, opportunities do not arrive on schedule, like railway trains, but unexpectedly. It is our task as politicians to seize these opportunities. Maybe no other generation could do more in similar circumstances, but I think that none should dare do less.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.