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REDUCTION OF MILITARY BUDGETS

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT: CONVENTIONAL DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 25 January 1989 from the Permanent Representative of
the German Democratic Republic to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a statement made on 23 January 1989 by the Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, Erich Honecker, concerning the decision by the National Defence Council on the reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments in the German Democratic Republic (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under the items entitled "Reduction of military budgets" and "General and complete disarmament: conventional disarmament".

(Signed) Dr. Siegfried ZACHMANN
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary

ANNEX

Statement made on 23 January 1989 by the Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic on the decision by the National Defence Council to reduce armed forces and conventional armaments

Endeavouring to make another constructive contribution to the process of disarmament, in which no hiatus should be allowed to occur, to demonstrate good will and readiness to reduce armed forces and conventional armaments through actions and hoping to give other European States an impulse worth reflecting on, the National Defence Council of the German Democratic Republic decided the following:

1. The National People's Army of the German Democratic Republic will be cut, unilaterally and independent of negotiations, by 10,000 troops.

2. This substantial reduction of personnel strength of the National People's Army includes:

The dissolution of six tank regiments;

The dismantling of 600 tanks or refitting of them for civilian use;

The disbandment of one squadron of combat aircraft; and

The taking out of service of 50 fighter planes.

3. At the same time, the national outlay for defence will be cut back by 10 per cent.

4. The cuts are to be completed by the end of 1990, and the German Democratic Republic's National People's Army will be restructured so as to give it an even more defensive character.

The State Council Chairman, Erich Honecker, reported on this decision taken by the National Defence Council of the German Democratic Republic on the occasion of the visit of Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, to the German Democratic Republic on 23 January. He further announced that, in close co-ordination with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the following schedule was envisaged with regard to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the German Democratic Republic:

The Twenty-fifth Tank Division, the Thirty-second Tank Division, two independent tank training regiments and eight independent battalions will be withdrawn as early as in 1989;

The Seventh Tank Division, the Twelfth Tank Division, the air-assault brigade, three training regiments, including one tank training regiment, and three independent battalions will be removed in 1990;

The Soviet army's motorized rifles and tank divisions remaining on German Democratic Republic territory will be given an even more defensive character over these two years.

The statement by the State Council Chairman stressed that the German Democratic Republic acted by virtue of its historical responsibility and its humanist task to do everything to ensure that never again war, but only peace, would emanate from German soil. This task was seen by the German Democratic Republic as going beyond the vital interests of its own people; it was seen in a broader dimension. Today peace and security were necessary to guarantee the very existence of humankind as a whole. Given the risk of a nuclear inferno and considering the devastation that was caused by two world wars in this century, that awareness was growing especially in Europe too.

As a State situated at the dividing line between the two most powerful military organizations, the German Democratic Republic wanted European-based technical nuclear weapons to be included in the disarmament process and their modernization prevented.

Erich Honecker reaffirmed support of the German Democratic Republic for creating nuclear-weapon-free zones in Northern Europe, the Balkans and other regions.

The German Democratic Republic Head of State also endorsed a Swedish proposal to establish a corridor free from battlefield nuclear weapons in Central Europe.

It was time, he added, to "get down to business" at negotiations at Geneva on the prohibition of chemical weapons and to sign as quickly as possible a convention banning such arms completely.

The successful conclusion last week of the Vienna Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) paved the way for 23-nation talks on cutting conventional forces and armaments, he said.

That the world could look to the future with more hope despite continuing concerns was also due to a positive trend of solving international conflicts peacefully. In this context, Erich Honecker paid tribute to the growing role of the United Nations and Sweden's active participation in peace-keeping operations of the world body.

The German Democratic Republic supported all initiatives that were designed to reduce military confrontation, bring about stability and build and strengthen trust.
