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SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
DEVOTED TO DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 1 March 1977 from the Permanent Representative
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United
Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 28 February 1977 from A. A. Gromyko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, concerning the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in which he presents some observations of the Soviet Union concerning the conduct of that session.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 51 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) O. TROYANOVSKY
Permanent Representative of the USSR
to the United Nations

* A/32/50.

ANNEX

Letter dated 28 February 1977 from the Minister for Foreign
Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the
Secretary-General concerning the special session of the
General Assembly devoted to disarmament

In connexion with the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its thirty-first session concerning the convening of a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, this letter presents some observations of the Soviet Union on matters relating to the conduct of the special session.

1. Since the first days of its existence, the Soviet State has consistently devoted its efforts to ensuring peace, ending the arms race and bringing about disarmament. In recent years, as a result of the conclusion of a number of international agreements, it has been possible to limit the arms race somewhat in certain areas. Questions involving disarmament and the limitation of armaments, including rocket and nuclear weapons, are being discussed in current multilateral and bilateral negotiations. The developing process of the relaxation of international tension is creating favourable opportunities for the realization of other, more radical steps in the solution of the problem of disarmament.

However, although some progress in checking the arms race has been made, the race still goes on. Advances in science and technology, which should bring benefit to the peoples of the world, continue to be used for the production of increasingly destructive and sophisticated weapons capable of annihilating people and the material and cultural values they have created. More and more States are becoming involved in the arms race; the lessening of international tension has not yet brought a reduction in the stockpiles of weapons and in the immense financial resources spent on accumulating and perfecting them.

The task of halting the arms race is therefore all the more essential. Striving to help bring about the attainment of that goal, the Soviet Union submitted for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly at its thirty-first session a Memorandum on questions of ending the arms race and disarmament. That document contains a comprehensive programme of serious and urgent measures in the sphere in question. It states new and specific observations taking account of the views of many countries; those observations were dictated by the Soviet Union's aspirations for peace and its desire to facilitate the search for a solution of the problems still remaining unsolved. As L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, declared, "Our policy is not to strive for superiority in armaments but to strive for their reduction, for a lessening of military confrontation".

The Memorandum mentions the main areas for co-ordinated action by States: cessation of the nuclear-arms race, reduction and subsequent elimination of nuclear weapons, prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests, consolidation of the régime of

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non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, prohibition and destruction of chemical means of warfare, prohibition of the development of new types and new systems of weapons of mass destruction, reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments, establishment of zones of peace in the Indian Ocean and other regions, and reduction of military budgets.

Realization of the measures discussed in the Memorandum would undoubtedly be a great step forward on the road to ending the arms race and to disarmament.

2. The curbing of the arms race requires the combined efforts of all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, large and small, developed and developing. On the basis of that principle, the Soviet Union put forward the proposal that the problem of disarmament should be considered in its entirety in the widest and most authoritative forum - a world disarmament conference. Such a forum would be truly universal; it could consider in a qualified manner and in the necessary depth the whole complex of questions concerning disarmament and could adopt effective decisions regarding them. The proposal to convene a world disarmament conference is supported by the overwhelming majority of States, which shows that there is a growing conviction in the world concerning the need to hold it. The General Assembly, at several of its sessions, adopted a number of decisions in favour of holding a world disarmament conference.

The special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament could constitute an intermediate stage on the path towards a world disarmament conference. Without replacing the existing and proven forms of disarmament negotiations, the special session of the General Assembly could facilitate consideration of the problem of disarmament at a world disarmament conference, in which all States would participate.

3. The agenda for the special session should, in the view of the USSR Government, provide for a broad exchange of views on the problem of disarmament with regard not only to the fundamental approaches to the question at the present stage but also to the basic directions of the priority efforts of States in the disarmament field, with a view to attaining the main, ultimate goal of all efforts in that field, namely general and complete disarmament. In that connexion, the session could also devote attention to partial measures directed towards limiting and halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament, and to measures taken on a regional basis.

The special session could culminate in the adoption, for example, of a final political declaration reflecting the joint approach of States to those questions.

4. A most important task facing the session is that of determining the further steps to be taken towards the practical preparation and holding of a world disarmament conference at the earliest possible time. Such a conference, if properly organized and provided with machinery for adopting effective decisions and with the working bodies needed for carefully elaborating and achieving practical agreement on them, taking into account the security interests of all States of the

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world, could formulate concrete, effective measures designed to solve the problem of disarmament. That approach would at last ensure that a turning point was actually reached in the solution of disarmament problems and in the curtailment of the arms race, the limitation and reduction of arms, and progress towards general and complete disarmament.

5. In deciding questions relating to the preparation and holding of the special session, consideration must be given to the vital importance of disarmament questions for the fate of the world and to their specific nature and significance for maintaining the security of States. Both the preparatory work and the organization and holding of the session itself must fully reflect the lofty responsibility of all States of the world, especially the great Powers, which possess the most powerful weapons and armed forces. Decisions at the session should be taken in such a way as to exclude entirely the possibility of damaging the security interests of States.

The special session should be prepared in a thorough and comprehensive manner. The organization of work and the composition of the Preparatory Committee established for that purpose should also take into account the special nature of the disarmament questions with which they will deal; in particular, the Committee's structure should reflect the actual role which States play in this field.

6. The Soviet Union proceeds from the premise that the convening of the special session of the General Assembly and its decisions should assist the work of existing channels of disarmament negotiations, which are faced with the task of working out practical steps and arrangements aimed at halting the arms race and bringing about disarmament.

A. GROMYKO
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR
