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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION

Climatic effects of nuclear war, including nuclear winter

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

[Original: Russian]

[21 September 1989]

1. The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic notes with satisfaction that the study was conducted by a representative group of authoritative experts. The Group's conclusions are founded on research conducted in a number of countries as well as on an international basis, involving, inter alia, the World Health Organization. This gives them still greater weight.
2. The conclusion of the Study to the effect that a nuclear war, if it were unleashed, would be totally unlike any previous form of warfare is of key significance for an understanding of the military and strategic realities of the second half of the twentieth century. Any of the consequences of a nuclear war referred to in the Study, be it the global ecological and population crises, the depletion of the ozone layer, radioactivity, the prospect of widespread starvation as a result of the breakdown of agricultural production or the complete breakdown of public health care, makes the use of nuclear weapons morally unacceptable. As for the totality of all those factors - which, moreover, possess a synergetic effect - it would, as the study rightly points out, lead directly to the disintegration of the infrastructure of society, the possibility of recovery even in the long term being uncertain. A point of fundamental importance is that the risk of unprecedented consequences is equally great for combatant and non-combatant countries.
3. The study thus points to the need for those who have not yet done so to rethink the role of nuclear weapons in the contemporary world and the significance of military and strategic concepts based on the possibility of their use.
4. The need for all States, irrespective of their differences, and for all social forces and strata of society to concert their efforts in the struggle for the removal of the nuclear threat and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons follows logically from the Study's conclusions.
5. It is essential to establish a close interaction between science and politics in elaborating a practical course of action for States with the aim of guaranteeing genuine universal security. To this end, it would be useful to continue scientific research into the consequences of military conflicts in the contemporary world supersaturated with means of destruction, including mass destruction.
6. The Byelorussian SSR considers that the Study's conclusions on the problem of the climatic and other global effects of nuclear war are deserving of the widest dissemination, inter alia, within the framework of the World Disarmament Campaign.
7. For its part, the Byelorussian SSR is taking steps to have the Study and its conclusions disseminated through its press and the public organizations concerned.

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CHINA

[Original: Chinese]

[30 August 1989]

1. The Chinese Government supports General Assembly resolution 43/78 D, and a Chinese consultant expert has participated in the preparation of the "Study on the Climatic and Other Global Effects of Nuclear War".
2. The series of conclusions reached by the study on the basis of extensive scientific research should be given full attention, such as:
 - (a) A major nuclear war would entail the high risk of a global environmental disruption;
 - (b) The widespread impact of such a nuclear war on climate would constitute a severe threat to world food production;
 - (c) The socio-economic consequences of such a nuclear war would be grave.
3. The Chinese Government is fully aware of the danger of nuclear war. Therefore, China is consistently opposed to the arms race and dedicated to maintaining world peace and security. China stands for nuclear disarmament and calls for effective measures for a comprehensive prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons, thus removing the danger of nuclear war once and for all. To this end, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which possess the largest and most advanced nuclear arsenals in the world should bear a special responsibility for halting the nuclear arms race and achieving nuclear disarmament. They should take the lead in halting the testing, production and deployment of all types of nuclear weapons, and in drastically reducing and destroying all types of nuclear weapons they have deployed inside and outside their respective countries. After this, a broadly representative international conference with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States can be held to discuss steps and measures towards thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. Pending the attainment of the goal of complete nuclear disarmament, as an effective measure to prevent nuclear war, all nuclear-weapon States should undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances, and to refrain from using or threatening to use such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones. The very first day of possessing nuclear weapons the Chinese Government declared that at no time and under no circumstances would China be the first to use nuclear weapons. The Chinese Government is ready to continue working, together with the international community, for the maintenance of world peace and security.

MEXICO

[Original: Spanish]

[31 August 1989]

1. From the moment when nuclear weapons first made their appearance on the scene, disarmament became a pressing need for the international community. The existence of such weapons threatens the very survival of mankind, since not only would the direct effects of a large-scale nuclear exchange lead to the death of hundreds of millions of people, but its indirect effects would also cause the deaths of thousands of millions. A large-scale nuclear war would also entail a high risk of climatic disturbance throughout the world, the indirect effects of which would also cause thousands of millions of deaths.

2. Given that the second general objective of Mexico's policy with regard to disarmament is the need to prevent a nuclear war, in view of the implications it would have for all forms of life on Earth, the Government of Mexico, together with Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sweden, submitted a draft resolution at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, which, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to make the necessary arrangements for the reproduction as a United Nations publication of the Study on the climatic and other global effects of nuclear war which he had prepared with the assistance of a group of consultant experts.

3. Of late, the nuclear arms race has continued and intensified in volume. Faced with the threat of universal annihilation, Mexico has concluded that the old distinction between the strong and the weak has become meaningless. Consequently, as can be seen from recent peace and disarmament initiatives, we are resolved that countries like our own, that do not have nuclear arsenals, should participate actively in all aspects of disarmament, since the protection of this planet is the responsibility of all the peoples that inhabit it. Consequently, the report submitted to us calls upon the nuclear-weapon countries to halt the build-up of their arsenals and to undertake not to use those weapons as means of settling disputes, or as deterrents with which to maintain an absurd balance of power, given that the results of their use constitute a serious threat to the existence of all forms of life on the planet.

4. The conclusion reached by the Group, that a nuclear confrontation would lead to a total disruption of the environment, is also a matter for concern.

5. During the first month following a nuclear war, solar energy reaching the Earth's surface in mid-latitudes of the northern hemisphere could be reduced by 80 per cent or more. This would result in a decrease of continental averaged temperatures of between 5° and 20° C below normal within two weeks after the injection of smoke during summer months. The functions of production, distribution and consumption in existing socio-economic systems would be completely disrupted. Flora and fauna would face extinction; and the few survivors would die of starvation. In view of these facts, to embark on a nuclear war would be suicidal.

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6. Changes in the climate caused by a nuclear confrontation, with a cooling of the ocean and the atmosphere, might cause the sea to freeze out of season, plunging the land masses of the northern hemisphere into a prolonged cold spell which could persist until the following summer. This would destroy marine life, and with it, one of man's food resources that would prove difficult to replace. In view of this threat, and on the basis of the information contained in the Study, the Government of Mexico urges all Member States to exploit marine resources rationally and at all costs to prevent their contamination as a result of nuclear tests.

7. The report makes it clear that the direct effects in the areas where explosions occurred would be catastrophic, in terms of both the loss of human life and the destruction of life-supporting infrastructure, and that the collapse of global networks of finance, trade and communications, would exacerbate the global indirect effects on climate and its implications for food production. In this regard, the Group of Experts rightly points out that production capacity would be impaired by the extensive damage to infrastructure, while access to any remaining natural resources would be limited because of the disruption of transport systems and the disabling of communications by the direct effects of the blast. Similarly, the shortage of equipment, machinery, spare parts and services would have major industrial consequences. The findings of the Study in this regard are not exaggerated, nor do they exceed the bounds of probability. The Study should therefore be circulated with a view to bringing about universal awareness of the danger entailed in the event of the accidental or deliberate unleashing of a nuclear war.

8. Mexico shares the Group's uncertainty regarding the likelihood of recovery, since this would depend on how fast surviving communities and national entities could re-establish such links as communications, international transportation and trade, and develop or promote alternative sources of supplies. Clearly, much of the world's surviving population would be adversely affected for many years and society would, in many instances, be reduced to subsistence levels. Be that as it may, Mexico shares the view that long-term recovery from a major nuclear war would be uncertain. Furthermore, it is unlikely that any new social order that emerged would either resemble, or be an improvement upon, that which preceded it.

9. In this context, it should be recalled that as early as 1985, in the Delhi Declaration (A/40/114-S/16921, annex), the Governments of Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and the United Republic of Tanzania, echoing other studies done on the subject, stated

"As a result of recent atmospheric and biological studies, there have been new findings which indicate that in addition to blast, heat and radiation, nuclear war, even on a limited scale, would trigger an arctic nuclear winter which may transform the Earth into a darkened, frozen planet, posing unprecedented peril to all nations, even those far removed from the nuclear explosions. We are convinced that this makes it still more pressing to take preventive action to exclude for ever the use of nuclear weapons and the occurrence of a nuclear war."

10. The fact that no one would escape the horrible consequences of the use of nuclear weapons confirms the principle that disarmament is a process that involves all the peoples of the world.
