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A statement was made by:

Mr. Garcia Robles (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF ALGERIA

The CHAIRMAN: Allow me first of all to convey to the representative of Algeria on behalf of all members of the Committee our heartfelt condolences for the disaster caused by the devastating earthquake in El-Asnam, which has resulted in a tragic loss of life and material damage. I would request my brother from Algeria to transmit to the people and the Government of Algeria our profound sorrow and deepest sympathy at this difficult time.

AGENDA ITEMS 34 TO 40, 42, 44 TO 49 AND 121

GENERAL DEBATE

The CHAIRMAN: As agreed upon at our last meeting the Committee starts today its general debate on all disarmament items, which is scheduled to close on 31 October. May I, in that connexion, urge delegations to inscribe themselves on the list of speakers promptly, so that we may make full use of the resources allocated to the Committee. As you will also recall, the list of speakers will be closed on 21 October at 6.00 p.m. I do not think that the Committee wishes to go back again to the question of its programme of work and therefore I intend to abide strictly by that deadline.

As we take up disarmament items, allow me to say a few words in my capacity as presiding officer of the Committee. Since we met last year, a number of events have led to a deteriorating international situation. Those events need not to be discussed here substantively, since they are being considered by other organs. But they have had a negative impact on disarmament efforts at a time when military expenditures continue to increase and the arms race is far from being stopped. Two and a half years after the adoption of the Final Document of the first special

(The Chairman)

session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, we are nowhere near what I might call the "take off" stage in the implementation of the Final Document. Much remains to be done, and I believe that everyone in this conference room is aware that, however difficult our tasks may be, progress in disarmament is essential for international peace and security as well as for development.

In spite of the anxieties caused by recent trends in international relations, or maybe precisely because of them, disarmament efforts need to be intensified. Some signs have emerged recently which lead me to hope that, building upon them, the international community might proceed further along the road to disarmament.

First, the United Nations Conference on the use of certain conventional weapons has reached, after more than six years of negotiations in various forums, significant agreements which seemed to be almost unattainable only a few weeks ago.

Secondly, the Committee on Disarmament has begun preliminary negotiations on certain aspects of some items on its agenda in the four ad hoc working groups established by it. The reports of these working groups form an integral part of the Committee's report. The Committee's decision to set up those working groups has rightly been described as a major achievement in the history of the negotiating body, and it augurs well for the forthcoming 1981 session of the Committee.

I should like to draw particular attention to the report of the Committee on Disarmament. As members are aware, this Committee is the only multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament issues under the auspices of the United Nations. It is indeed the negotiating arm of our deliberations, for it takes into account the recommendations made by the General Assembly. Its report should therefore be of special interest to us, the more so since it clarifies the progress made so far, the problems encountered, the issues under negotiation and those still awaiting negotiation. I am sure its report will provide the necessary insight into the work of the negotiating forum, which is so essential for our meaningful deliberations and further recommendations.

(The Chairman)

Once again our agenda contains a substantial number of items reflecting the deep concern caused by the accelerating nuclear arms race which, if not checked by concerted efforts within the framework of the United Nations, may increase the risks to mankind's survival. As we take the different paths to disarmament, we should not postpone undertaking the journey on the road to nuclear disarmament, especially as the nuclear-weapon States are now participating in the work on the negotiating body. This is a unique opportunity, open for the first time after many years of diplomatic activity, to engage in realistic and effective negotiations.

At the same time, we should not forget the pain and sorrow brought about by the use of conventional weapons in conflicts. The Final Document offers us, within the context of its programme of action, a wide range of measures which, coupled with confidence-building, should enable us to make progress in the difficult tasks ahead of us.

During the last two sessions of the General Assembly, the First Committee has given special attention to the review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament. Members will no doubt continue to stress the importance of this review and will make every effort to ensure the implementation of what has already been accepted by consensus.

In that connexion, may I note that a sub-item dealing with preparations for the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament appears for the first time on our agenda. This important question requires action by the Committee at its present session. I hope, therefore, that members will address themselves to those organizational matters relating to preparatory work.

While preparations for the second special session assume particular relevance, we must also adopt the elements of the Declaration of the 1980s as the second Disarmament Decade. The report of the Disarmament Commission contains recommendations in that respect, and I am sure that the Committee will duly take them into account.

(The Chairman)

A number of studies requested by the General Assembly are now in progress. Others have been completed or are nearing completion. All of them contribute to our understanding of the complex issues involved in disarmament. The Committee has before it a number of items dealing with studies which should be reviewed and considered during this session.

May I also draw the attention of the Committee to the publication of the 1979 Disarmament Yearbook, which is being distributed by the Secretariat in time for our general debate.

Finally, I would like to stress that the Chair will always be available to assist delegations at any stage of our deliberations. The work of a deliberative body also requires sometimes difficult negotiations and I wish to assure you that all the officers of the Committee are prepared to co-operate with the membership in achieving agreements which would reflect the widest possible support of the Committee.

After these few preliminary remarks, I am pleased to observe the presence among us of the participants of the fellowships programme on disarmament. I am sure that they will benefit from the well known expertise and experience of the members of the First Committee.

Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish):

For a number of years in Geneva, Sir, I have had occasion to admire your valuable and outstanding work in the Committee on Disarmament. I feel, therefore, fully entitled to express the opinion of my delegation regarding the First Committee's good fortune in having you as Chairman to conduct its deliberations.

Before turning to the subject at hand, may I say that my delegation fully shares the feelings that you have expressed regarding the earthquake which has, regrettably, very recently struck Algeria. The Government of Mexico at the highest level has already transmitted to the Government and people of Algeria the profound condolences of the Government and people of Mexico. May I add to them the condolences of the Mexican delegation.

Just a little more than two years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus a series of emphatic pronouncements expressing its alarm at the threat to the very survival of mankind posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. It stressed that at the present time mankind was faced with an unprecedented threat of self-destruction, since the arsenals which had been accumulated - and here I quote the words of the General Assembly - "... are more than sufficient to destroy all forms of life on earth" (Resolution S-10/2 para. 11). After stressing the urgent need to eliminate the possibility of a nuclear war, the General Assembly uttered this fateful phrase: "Mankind is confronted with a choice: we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation." (ibid. para 18)

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

It would seem that these words have gone with the wind; or perhaps they never even reached the ears of those who need to hear them most. The news that we have been given regularly by what we call the mass media since that time, far from providing us with any comfort, has, in fact, at times caused us real concern. Early this year, for example, all the talk about war on television, on the radio and in the press was such that so cool and level-headed a magazine as The New Yorker pointed out that it really did not seem appropriate to speak of a "third world war" for obvious reasons. It said that the writer of an article in a United States newspaper had commented that

"The numeral 'III' was misleading, because it falsely suggested some similarity between nuclear 'war' - a convulsion of meaningless destruction that would be over in half an hour - and World War I and World War II, which were actual wars, involving military campaigns and the like, and lasting several years each. The numeral 'III' also carried the same unfounded implication as the word 'world', for it suggested a continuing numerical series, with a possible IV and V to follow, whereas in actuality the series, together with the world itself, might end at III". (The New Yorker, 4 February 1980 p. 25)

The writer had also felt that the phrase "to go to war" used on television and in the press sounded wrong, and had added that:

"In a nuclear clash, no one would go to war; war would come to us, in a twinkling, finding us at our breakfast tables or in the bath, or on our way to work. Although the peril was in one sense remote ... it was also all around us and in us, among the coffee cups and in the silences of our conversations."

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"Among other things that we Americans felt was a dim and helpless anger that somehow we and our families and friends and everyone and everything we saw about us had been judged expendable by someone, somewhere. What was particularly strange was that while it seemed impossible that anyone could ever decide that the world was expendable (expendable for what?), just this eventuality was now being discussed, without any signs of astonishment or dread, by the television commentators, who, having talked over a few strategic points, passed on smoothly to other subjects." (ibid.)

After those first months of 1980, certain reports, interpreted in various ways, came to the forefront of the news and these reports motivated the members of the Group of 77 participating in the second review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in Geneva to state their views on the subject in the following terms:

"Recently, an alarming trend has also arisen towards a 'new strategy' for the use of nuclear weapons based on the theory of a limited nuclear war which could be won by one of the parties of the conflict. This theory is unquestionably illusory, but it involves the very real danger of making 'thinkable' and more immediate the hypothesis of a world nuclear war which, in the judgement of the General Assembly, could certainly mean the end of the human species."

In light of the background I have just sketched, I believe that, despite man's natural reluctance to think of disagreeable things, we should force ourselves seriously to contemplate some fundamental points, among which are undoubtedly the possible genesis and development of a nuclear war and its terrifying and inescapable effects.

As a modest contribution to these necessary reflections, I shall begin by briefly noting a few recent accidents in the sphere of nuclear weapons which prove better than long speeches how relative and fortuitous is man's control over these terrible instruments of mass destruction.

Three weeks ago, newspapers all over the world published on their front pages a story illustrated with sensational photographs which must have captured the attention of all readers, however jaded they might have been with the abundance of events of regional or world significance. In fact, it was not for naught: the reader learned that in the state of Arkansas on 19 September a gigantic intercontinental missile of the Titan II type had exploded. Then followed a series of significant data such as that the missile measured 32 metres in length, weighed 150 tons and had a range of 11 thousand kilometres. The nuclear warhead, hurled some 200 metres beyond the site of the explosion, was of ten megatons: that is, its destructive power was equivalent to ten million tons of dynamite, or around 700 times greater than that of the atomic bomb which destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. The silo's cover, made of concrete and steel and weighing

740 tons, flew through the air and was smashed to pieces. The explosion left a crater some 90 metres in diameter.

However awesome this calamity, however incalculable the consequences which might have resulted if, as sometimes happens, the experts who said that it was impossible for the very powerful nuclear warhead to have exploded had been wrong, its international effects would have been limited. They would have underscored, in a tragic way, how prudent and worthy of emulation was the stand taken by the 22 States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco - among them - who decided to keep their territories under a régime of the total absence of nuclear weapons.

Very different and chilling, on the other hand, might have been the consequences to everyone of the three nuclear alerts which have occurred over the past 12 months in the United States as a result of separate errors in their electronic systems on 9 November 1979 and 3 and 6 June 1980 respectively.

With regard to the first of these false alerts, the report that I shall now read is taken from the French magazine Le Nouvel Observateur. I chose it because, while it agrees in all essentials with the data published in the New York press, it has been written in such a way that one feels - one might even say lives through - the full immediate effects of a nuclear alert and the inexorability of its development as long as there is no confirmation that there were no grounds for alarm. The report in question reads as follows:

X "The last nuclear war lasted ten minutes. It took place on Friday, 9 November 1979, when American soldiers mistakenly pushed the first buttons of the doomsday machine. At 10.50 a.m. on that day, all across the United States, in all the control rooms of the strategic forces, innumerable little lights started to blink. The computer terminals, with a neutral and discrete whisper, signaled the arrival of a formation of nuclear missiles launched from a submarine somewhere in the northern Pacific.

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"Reconnaissance planes take off immediately from many air bases thousands of kilometres away. From the Caribbean to Alaska, from Greenland to the Philippines, including submarines submerged in all the oceans and space satellites circling the globe every hour of the day and night, the immense American military apparatus is invaded by an intense electronic hum. With limited, precise gestures, and by pre-arranged instructions, thousands of silent technicians put into effect the great countdown. From Montana to Arkansas, in the Dakotas and Wyoming, above the deep silos containing the inter-continental missiles, the heavy armoured domes are unfastened. The order for all civil aircraft of the North American continent to land is about to be sent over the airwaves. The time has come when it will be necessary to inform the President of the United States that the country is under nuclear attack. Four minutes later, the 110 B-52s, on permanent alert with about a 1500-megaton payload, were about to take off. But at the last instant everything is halted, in view of the results of the first verification efforts: it was a computer in Colorado Springs which played that unfortunate trick on the 'headquarters for the end of world', sending through the warning circuits a message on magnetic tape which was to be used only for routine exercises. Technically, war had started on its own, and men who had no intention of beginning it were able - this time, at least - to avert it."

As far as the two most recent false alarms are concerned - those of June of this year - apparently they occurred in much the same way as that of November 1979. The New York Times, for example, reported the following:

"In the incidents on June 3 and June 6, about 100 B-52 nuclear-armed bombers were readied for takeoff after a duty officer at the Strategic Air Command received computer data indicating that a Soviet missile attack was under-way. In each instance, officials revealed, President Carter's airborne command post, a specially-modified 747 airliner crammed with communications gear and based at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, was also prepared for takeoff."

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

The conclusion to be drawn from facts of the kind I have just put forward requires technical expertise that I do not possess. Let me therefore refer this Committee to the words of Robert C. Aldridge, a space engineer, expert in undersea military technology and author of various books, who, in an article published in The International Herald Tribune of 26 July 1980, declared as follows:

"Three times in seven months the U.S. strategic nuclear forces have been placed on higher alert because of an electronic malfunction. Last November 9 the NORAD computer indicated an attack by submarine-launched ballistic missiles; on June 3, it indicated a wholesale attack, including sub-launched weapons. Three days later it signaled that missiles had been fired from submarines lurking 1,000 miles off the U.S. coast could reach their targets in 10 minutes or less. The November scare lasted six minutes, and the June alarms lasted three - a considerable portion of the allotted decision time. It is terrifying to think of the consequences had the alerts lasted only a few crucial minutes longer."

The Arkansas accident and the three false alarms that I have just referred to can, it seems to me, serve as a fitting introduction to a series of quotations that I should like to offer now on this subject - that is, the possible genesis and development of a nuclear war, and its effects. Despite their abundance, these quotations, some of the authors of which are among the most eminent civilian specialists and most decorated military men in their respective countries, are but the fruits of a limited selection from hundreds of highly qualified opinions, all of which are in basic agreement, which I have come across in my many years of reading on this subject. My delegation deems it its duty to bring these quotations to the attention of this First Committee in keeping with the General Assembly's appeal in paragraph 105 of the Final Document of its first special session devoted to disarmament, in which it declares:

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"Member States should be encouraged to ensure a better flow of information with regard to the various aspects of disarmament to avoid dissemination of false and tendentious information concerning armaments, and to concentrate on the danger of escalation of the armaments race and on the need for general and complete disarmament under effective international control." (Resolution S-10/2, para. 105)

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

For chronological reasons and because it deals with a document one of whose two main authors was perhaps best qualified to speak on the subject, I shall in the following quotations in the first place refer to the so-called Russell-Einstein Manifesto, which was to serve as the starting-point for the particularly fruitful Pugwash Conferences. In that Manifesto, which was published in London on 9 July 1955, the eleven eminent scientists who signed it declared, inter alia:

"We are speaking on this occasion, not as members of this or that nation, continent, or creed, but as human beings, members of the species Man, whose continued existence is in doubt.

"We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?

"The general public, and even many men in positions of authority, have not realized what would be involved in a war with nuclear bombs. The general public still thinks in terms of obliteration of cities. It is understood that the new bombs are more powerful than the old, and that, while one A-bomb could obliterate Hiroshima, one H-bomb could obliterate the largest cities, such as London, New York and Moscow.

"No doubt in an H-bomb war great cities would be obliterated. But this is one of the minor disasters that would have to be faced. If everybody in London, New York, and Moscow were exterminated, the world might, in the course of a few centuries, recover from the blow. But we now know, especially since the Bikini test, that nuclear bombs can gradually spread destruction over a very much wider area than had been supposed.

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"It is stated on very good authority that a bomb can now be manufactured which will be 2,500 times as powerful as that which destroyed Hiroshima. Such a bomb, if exploded near the ground or under water, sends radio-active particles into the upper air. They sink gradually and reach the surface of the earth in the form of a deadly dust or rain. It was this dust which infected the Japanese fishermen and their catch of fish.

"No one knows how widely such lethal radio-active particles might be diffused, but the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might possibly put an end to the human race. It is feared that if many H-bombs are used there will be universal death - sudden only for a minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration."

Six years later General Douglas MacArthur, speaking to the Philippines Congress on 5 July 1961, declared:

"Global war has become a Frankenstein to destroy both sides. No longer does it possess even the chance of the winner of a duel. It contains now only the germs of double suicide.

"The present tensions with their threat of national annihilation are fostered by two great illusions. The one, a complete belief on the part of the Soviet world that the capitalistic countries are preparing to attack them; that sooner or later we intend to strike. And the other, a complete belief on the part of the capitalistic countries that the Soviets are preparing to attack us; that sooner or later they intend to strike.

"Both are wrong. Each side, so far as the masses are concerned, is desirous of peace. Both dread war. But the constant acceleration of preparation may, without specific intent, ultimately precipitate a kind of spontaneous combustion."

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In 1967 the eminent historian Arnold Toynbee offered this convincing description:

"Each time a new weapon was invented in the past, people said that it was so terrible that it must not be used. Nevertheless, it was used and, although it was terrible, it did not lead to the disappearance of the human race. But now we have something that could really extinguish life on our planet. Mankind has not found itself in a similar situation since the end of the palaeolithic age. That was when we managed to subdue lions, tigers and other ferocious animals. Henceforward the survival of the human race seemed to be assured. But since 1945 our survival has once again become uncertain, for we have, so to speak, become our own lions and tigers. In fact, the threat to mankind's survival has been much greater since 1945 than it was during the first million years of history."

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At the conference held in Washington in December 1978 under the auspices of the Centre for Defence Information to consider the main aspects and consequences of a possible nuclear war, Dr. Bernard Feld, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and editor-in-chief of the distinguished review Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist, stated

"The question I should like to ask myself and ask you is the following:
Could we survive a nuclear war with the Soviet Union?

"In a major conflagration between the super-Powers, the only winners - in my opinion - would be the cockroaches, because it seems that they are much less sensitive to radiation than mammals. Any major city hit by a nuclear weapon of the megaton level, such as those which both the United States and the Soviet Union have, would be completely levelled; it would go up in flames almost immediately caused by the heat, levelled by the explosion and completely disorganized by the fire-storm which would be caused and by the destruction of all means of transportation and all medical services. ...

"In summary, the answer to my question whether we could survive a nuclear war with the Soviet Union and vice-versa seems obvious: neither we nor they could survive such a holocaust and, if it did happen, there are very serious doubts regarding what would happen to the potential ability to survive of the rest of the world as a result of such madness."

At the conference, Dr. George Kistiakowsky, professor emeritus at Harvard University, who was scientific and technological adviser to Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, expressed himself in the following terms:

"The superpowers' race is presently entering an especially dangerous phase. A comparatively stable state of mutual deterrence assured by secured retaliatory strategic force is being breached by plans for counterforce tactics and the weapons systems designed to carry them out. ...

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"We must anticipate that when such weapons are deployed our own and Soviet political leaders will be under greater pressure to be the first to press the button to Doomsday when an international crisis appears to be beyond control."

Again at the same 1978 conference, Dr. Jerome Frank, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, expressed the following thoughts:

"A major source of mounting international tension, the nuclear arms race, is sparked by the mutual image of the enemy. In general, enemy images mirror each other. That is, each side attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy. We are trustworthy, peaceloving, honorable and humanitarian. They are treacherous, warlike and cruel.

"Each nuclear Power is faced with the virtually impossible task of trying to make believable an essentially unbelievable threat. The result is a never-ending arms race in which the greatest creator of mutual fears is weapons research and development frantically pursued by each side in the hope of circumventing the other's defences while perfecting its own. As a result, as we all know, the pace of weapons innovation outstrips the negotiating process. So, agreements about one weapons system are made obsolete by the emergence of a new one."

Lord Mountbatten, the most prominent military leader of Great Britain in the twentieth century, speaking in Strasbourg at the ceremony held to present the Louise Weiss Prize to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on 11 May 1979, made the following unequivocal statement:

"As a military man who has given half a century of active service I say in all sincerity that the nuclear arms race has no military purpose. Wars cannot be fought with nuclear weapons. Their existence only adds to our perils because of the illusions which they have generated.

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"There are powerful voices around the world that still give credence to the old Roman precept - if you desire peace, prepare for war. This is absolute nuclear nonsense and I repeat - it is a disastrous misconception to believe that by increasing the total uncertainty one increases one's own certainty. ...

"The world now stands on the brink of the final abyss. Let us all resolve to take all possible practical steps to ensure that we do not, through our own folly, go over the edge."

Admiral Gene R. La Rocque, director of the Centre for Information on Defence, in his statement at the United Nations on 19 June 1980, issued the following warnings:

"The illusion that nuclear war could be controlled and limited and used to achieve some practical objective is fed by intoxicating technological developments. Refinements of superaccurate missiles, computers and satellites lead many technicians and bureaucrats to think in terms of a controlled nuclear war. This illusion of 'controlled nuclear war' has been spawned by war games and the persistent assumption that in every war there is a winner. There will be no winners in a nuclear war. But the growing acceptance of the idea that a nuclear war can be fought and won increases the likelihood that men everywhere will be the losers."

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The thirtieth Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, held in Holland from 20 to 25 August 1980, in which 125 scientists and internationalists from 38 different countries participated, adopted a "Declaration on the danger of a nuclear war", which includes, inter alia, the following statements:

"Never before has mankind been in such grave danger. A major nuclear war would mean the end of civilization and could involve the extinction of the human race. Notwithstanding that, throughout the world militarily powerful nations possessing stocks of nuclear weapons the size of which verges on the obscene seem incapable of settling their disputes by negotiation and compromise. Instead, nuclear weapons increase in number and destructive power and may even become subject to horizontal proliferation; and in some States attempts are being made to confer respectability on the insidious doctrine of a nuclear war which could be confined and even won ...

"Unless prompt and effective action is taken to reduce and eliminate these trends, it can be foreseen that before the end of this century a catastrophic nuclear war will erupt and sow death and destruction and even threaten the survival of the human race."

I think that there is perhaps no more fitting way in which to bring to an end this series of quotations than to quote a few paragraphs from the report entitled "Comprehensive study on nuclear weapons", distributed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations under the symbol A/35/392 and dated 12 September 1980. That study is the fruit of two years' work by a carefully selected group of experts, presided over by Ambassador Anders Thunborg, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. The following judgements can be found in that document:

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"It is a fact that there are today megaton weapons in existence each of which releases an energy greater than that of all conventional explosives ever used since gunpowder was invented. If this enormous power were ever to be used, the consequences in terms of human casualties and physical destruction would be virtually incomprehensible..." (A/35/392, Annex, para. 143)

"A total nuclear war is the highest level of human madness. Perhaps it is, therefore, not surprising that many studies of this have been carried out, analysing the consequences in some detail... The conclusion which may be drawn from the outcome of these studies is, however, that nuclear weapons must never be used." (Ibid., para. 213)

"Even if the arms race is not a new phenomenon, mankind's present predicament is certainly unique... Never before have States been in a position to destroy the very basis of the continued existence of other States or regions; never before has the destructive capacity of weapons been so immediate, complete and universal; never before has mankind been faced, as today, with the real danger of self-extinction." (Ibid., para. 491)

"The development of nuclear-weapon technology has created an important dimension in the arms race. It is clear that in many cases technology dictates policy instead of serving it and that new weapon systems frequently emerge not because of any military or security requirement but because of the sheer momentum of the technological process..." (Ibid., para. 493)

"... In order to claim that it is possible to continue, for ever, to live with nuclear weapons, the balance must be maintained at all times irrespective of any technological challenges that may present themselves as a result of the arms race. In addition, there must be no accidents of a human or technical nature, which is an impossible requirement as shown by the various incidents of false alarms and computer malfunctioning that are reported from time to time. Sooner or later one of these incidents may give rise to a real accident with untold consequences. For these and other reasons it is not possible to

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offer a blanket guarantee of eternal stability of the deterrence balance and no one should be permitted to issue calming declarations to this effect..." (Ibid., para. 496)

"Even if the balance of deterrence was an entirely stable phenomenon, there are strong moral and political arguments against a continued reliance on this balance. It is inadmissible that the prospect of the annihilation of human civilization is used by some States to promote their security. The future of mankind is then made hostage to the perceived security of a few nuclear-weapon States and most notably that of the two super-Powers..." (Ibid., para. 497)

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As is clear, the report of the experts, like the many highly-qualified opinions proffered by the most diverse sources, to which I have referred in this statement and with which the study is in agreement, tend to confirm with many irrefutable arguments the conclusions of the first special session of the General Assembly to be devoted to disarmament. After giving top priority to nuclear disarmament, the Assembly declared:

"Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization. It is essential to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race in all its aspects in order to avert the danger of war involving nuclear weapons. The ultimate goal in this context is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons." (resolution S-10/2, para.47)

In the light of the summary of the situation as I have presented it thus far, it is obvious that only by means of the complete elimination of those terrifying instruments of mass destruction can we avert the danger of self-destruction which their existence poses for mankind.

If the accelerated development of nuclear weapons is almost always the blind result of the mere momentum of the technological process, which will inevitably be subject to human or technical failure, with unpredictable consequences; if it is absurd to claim that it is possible to achieve national security by increasing universal insecurity; if the nuclear arsenals which have been stockpiled are more than sufficient to cause, not once but many times over, death and destruction throughout our planet, either instantaneously or by slow and painful disintegration; if nuclear weapons have no military purpose whatsoever - for only a madman would consider using them and thus bringing about universal suicide it is a matter of great urgency to adopt as a norm of conduct the sombre warning of the General Assembly to which I referred at the beginning.

I should like once again to refer to that warning. I feel that this would serve to emphasize the accuracy of the statement by this body, which has with reason been characterized as the most representative body of the international community.

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After stressing that "the most acute and urgent task of the present day" is to remove the threat of a nuclear war, that body said, in 1978:

"Mankind is confronted with a choice: we must halt the arms race and proceed to disarmament or face annihilation." (resolution S-10/2, para. 18)

If, as any sane human being would inevitably do, we choose the first path in this dilemma, we must then with the utmost urgency take those actions deemed most worthy among those

"... 'effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament' ..." (ibid., para. 4) to which the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty - and, in particular, the three nuclear Powers who act as depositories of this treaty - committed themselves. This treaty, as is known, has been in effect for 10 years, and in Geneva a second review conference has taken place in which emphasis was placed upon the disappointment and impatience of all those States which do not possess nuclear weapons or belong to the two major military alliances which have been built around the two nuclear super-Powers.

Not wishing to imply that the many resolutions of the General Assembly on other disarmament topics which still need to be implemented should be ignored, we believe that our deliberations this year must give priority attention to the following objectives.

First, the ratification and implementation should be achieved of the treaty for the limitation of strategic weapons, known as SALT II, which was the result of six years of bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union and which was signed in Vienna more than one year ago on 18 June 1979, by the heads of State of both countries. Ratification and implementation of that treaty must take place before the thirty-fifth session comes to an end, in order to avoid an undermining of the confidence in it which the Assembly expressed in resolution 34/87 F, adopted by consensus on 11 December 1979.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Secondly, we must begin a series of negotiations aimed at the conclusion of a new agreement, SALT III, which would replace the earlier one and, in conformity with the General Assembly resolution which I have just mentioned, should constitute

"... an important step towards the final goal ... of achieving the complete and total destruction of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons ..." (resolution 34/87 F, para. 5)

One of the first of these steps should be a limitation on the emplacement of medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe. Of course, here the two super-Powers would have to act in consultation with the NATO and Warsaw Pact members, respectively.

Thirdly, a treaty must be concluded which would ban all nuclear test explosions. The draft for such a treaty must be submitted to the General Assembly by the Committee on Disarmament before the opening of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly so that it may be considered during that session.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

In our opinion, that would make it necessary (a) for the three nuclear Powers - the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States - which for more than three years have been holding tripartite talks on the subject, to submit to the Committee on Disarmament a preliminary draft treaty, as complete as possible, at the beginning of the session of that Committee in 1981, and (b) for The United States and the United Kingdom to consent - as the Soviet Union has already done, and as has been requested by the member States of the Group of 77 with special insistence at the recent Geneva Conference to which I have referred - to the creation by the Committee on Disarmament when it begins its next session of an ad hoc working group, without prejudice to the continuation of the tripartite negotiations. If it seems that those negotiations should continue, the ad hoc working group should begin in parallel form the multilateral negotiations on the subject which are indispensable for the conclusion of the treaty being worked on.

Fourth, as a provisional measure until such time as the treaty suspending all nuclear weapons tests becomes a reality, there must be proclaimed immediately a moratorium on those tests, signed at least by the three nuclear-weapon States that are acting as depositaries of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Section IV of the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union under the title "Urgent measures to reduce the danger of war" could be interpreted, we believe, as a positive step in this direction.

Our fifth and last objective should be to establish at the beginning of the next session of the Committee on Disarmament an ad hoc working group which would be entrusted with the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament referred to in paragraph 50 of the Final Document of 1978. If nuclear disarmament has been given top priority, if negotiations on this subject are of vital interest for all countries, and if, in accordance with the Final Document itself, the Committee is "the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament", it would seem inconceivable - and of course it would be incompatible with the commitments accepted by consensus in the first special session of the General

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Assembly devoted to disarmament - that any Member State of the United Nations should find that it could still oppose the creation of such a working group.

I am about to conclude my statement. Perhaps I have taken too much time. I hope to deal with some of the many other subjects on our agenda on subsequent occasions, but if I have devoted my initial intervention wholly to the nuclear-arms race and nuclear disarmament, I have done so because of what I consider to be an overriding need. That need is that the General Assembly must bear in mind at all times what the Committee of Experts has called, in the words of Niels Bohr, "a perpetual threat to human society".

The emergence once again among the super-Powers of certain acute international tensions which we had hoped had been buried for ever and which involve the threat of dragging us once again into the cold war, makes it doubly necessary for the General Assembly - and increases the duty of the General Assembly - to act as the spokesman of the conscience of mankind. The General Assembly must urge as vigorously as it can the adoption of tangible, effective measures in the area of nuclear disarmament. It must prove with deeds that the commitments entered into in the Programme of Action, solemnly adopted by consensus in 1978, are not mere words.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank Ambassador Garcia Robles for initiating our general debate with his lucid and comprehensive statement. I thank him also for the kind words that he addressed to me personally, especially when he recalled our association in Geneva. In fact, I am gratified to observe that we have with us today a large number of representatives with whom I have had the privilege and honour of working on disarmament issues both in Geneva and in New York. In this context, I hope the Committee will permit me to welcome the presence among us of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Agha Shahi. His personal commitment and his contribution to the task of disarmament are well known to all the members of the First Committee.

No other delegation wishes to take part in the general debate this morning, and I therefore call now upon the representative of Algeria, who has asked to be allowed to make a statement before we adjourn.

Mr. BENYAMINA (Algeria) (interpretation from French): I should like briefly to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your expression of sympathy with the Algerian delegation with regard to the terrible catastrophe - the second of its kind in the last 26 years - that struck El-Asnam on Friday last.

As I am a native of that town, it is in the name of those afflicted by the earthquake that I wish to convey the Algerian delegation's heartfelt appreciation to you and to the delegations which, officially or in personal contacts, have demonstrated their solidarity with us.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I adjourn the meeting I would once again urge the members of the Committee to add their names to the list of speakers for the general debate as soon as possible in order to enable the Committee to utilize adequately the time and resources which have been made available to us.

I should like to make it clear that very few speakers are inscribed for the afternoons, and if members of the Committee continue to hesitate to add their names to the list I may be obliged to cancel many of the afternoon meetings. For instance, for this afternoon we have no speakers inscribed, and therefore I must cancel the meeting scheduled for 3 p.m.

I very much hope that we shall be able to hold our fifth meeting tomorrow morning at 10.30, although I must state that so far we have not the required number of speakers. As will be recalled, we had agreed that unless there were at least four speakers for a particular meeting that meeting would be cancelled. I would therefore express the hope that during the course of this afternoon two more names may be added to the list of speakers for tomorrow morning, and I suggest that in the circumstances representatives should consult the Journal in order to confirm the date and time of our next meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.