

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records

FIRST COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 25 October 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TAYLHARDAT (Venezuela)

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Observance of ~~Disarmament~~ Week

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.1/44/PV.15
27 October 1989
ENGLISH

89-63087 4174V (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OBSERVANCE OF DISARMAMENT WEEK

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): The First Committee is holding **this** special meeting in commemoration of Disarmament Week, which began on 24 **October** 1989. We are hereby continuing a tradition established by the General **Assembly** at its first special session devoted to disarmament.

It is a **pleasure** and an honour for me to welcome to the First Committee His Excellency Major-General Joseph **N. Garba**, President of the General Assembly for the forty-fourth session. May **I**, on **behalf** of the First Committee and on my own behalf, congratulate you, Sir, not only on your election to the presidency of the General **Assembly**, but also on your diplomatic skills and the great efficiency with which you have been discharging the important responsibilities entrusted to you.

It is also a **special** honour and a pleasure to **welcome to** the First Committee the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar. I am confident that his vast knowledge, his great experience and his tireless dedication to the promotion of the cause of peace and the noble objectives of the United Nations will contribute to enhancing the role played by the United Nations in resolving the vital problems confronting mankind at the present **time**.

As you know, and as I said at the outset, it was decided, in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, that the week beginning on 24 **October**, the date of the founding of the United Nations, would be devoted, every **year**, to promoting disarmament objectives and to mobilizing international public opinion in order to create a **climate** conducive to the promotion of practical measures with a view to the cessation of the arms race and disarmament. This year, the **commemoration** of Disarmament Week is of **especial** significance because of the particularly favourable circumstances in

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the international political environment. **The new** climate of the relations between the major Powers and between **the two** major military alliances has created a momentum that prompts us to believe that prospects for concrete and effective disarmament measures are more tangible **today** than **they** have been in the past. This fact has been present in **the** minds of the **majority**, if not all, of the delegations that have spoken in the general debate on disarmament **items**, which is now under way in the First Committee. There prevails an attitude of **cautious optimism as a result** of the qualitative changes that we have witnessed on the international political scene.

These new circumstances, it must be recognised, have not yet had an impact on the activities of **multilateral forums** that deal with disarmament **questions**. With the exception of work being done in respect of chemical weapons, little progress has been made on other **subjects** related to disarmament. **In** my opinion, the best contribution that the celebration of Disarmament **Week** can **make**, at the **present** time, to the efforts of the United Nations in the field of disarmament would be to promote the mobilization of international public **opinion, through Governments,** non-governmental organizations and the social communications media, in support of the **work** of the multilateral bodies **dealing with disarmament, and in particular,** the Conference on **Disarmament**.

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Here I would like to stress the idea that the United Nations has the primary role to play in the field of disarmament. As was stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the message he addressed to the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its work this year,

"While issues of arms limitation and disarmament can and should be addressed also at the bilateral, regional and subregional levels, there is no substitute for global measures of disarmament. A number of critical disarmament issues can find durable solutions only in a global framework. This, and the fact that no such solutions have been achieved during the past decade, continue to lend further stress to the necessity of making full use of the machinery to negotiate multilateral disarmament measures." (CD/PV. 484, p. 5)

It is therefore necessary to revitalise and strengthen the role of multilateral forums that have activities in the field of disarmament and, more specifically, as I have said, the Conference on Disarmament, which is the single multilateral forum for negotiations in this field. For this purpose, it is essential to give full effectiveness to the relationship of strict interdependence and **complementarity** between these forums and the smaller bilateral or regional machinery used by the two military alliances. As has been said on many occasions, disarmament is of concern to all countries, large and Small, powerful and weak, because the arms race poses dangers to all. It affects the security of all, and **its** cessation will therefore be of benefit to all.

In the present economic conditions, the relationship ~~between~~ disarmament and development is becoming increasingly evident. The close interrelation of these two objectives requires that the international community make increasing efforts to advance simultaneously towards the attainment of those two objectives, taking into account the fact that the process of economic development will benefit from any progress, from any positive results, achieved in disarmament. The reduction of

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military expenditure, in allowing for the release of **sizeable** human and material resources, will contribute to the reactivation of the economies of the large developed countries and at the same **time** will give new impetus to the **process** of development in general and to a renewed and greater recovery in the developing countries.

It is my pleasure now to invite the distinguished President of **the** General Assembly, His **Excellency Major-General Joseph N. Garba**, to address **the** First **Committee**.

Mr. GARBA (President of the General **Assembly**): As President of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, I have the honour and privilege Of Once again discharging the pleasant duty of speaking on behalf of this unique multilateral forum, the largest and most representative gathering of sovereign States that ever existed, representing the hopes and dreams of billions of human beings and, indeed, of mankind as a whole, **as we commence** the observance of Disarmament Week.

There is no greater honour than to defend peace, the **basic** principle upon which all other human aspirations are built. And to speak of world peace without disarmament, especially in our nuclear age, is, I daresay, like attempting to build a **house** from **the roof** downwards, or indeed, attempting to build a house without a foundation. Not only is disarmament a vital, indeed **an** essential, factor for the fulfilment of the primary and fundamental objective of the United Nations, which is **to** maintain international peace and security, it is above all, and quite simply stated, important for mankind's very survival - the survival of every one of us.

Nearly five decades ago, 50 million human beings perished in the **most** destructive armed conflict in history, That war, the Second World War, was perhaps the **last** major global conflict in which battlefields, **numbers** of casualties and the

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quantity and cruelty of destruction could be **localized**. It was certainly the last world war to be fought and to be won.

In an age of rapid technological advances in almost every field, the seemingly endless quantitative and qualitative arms race has heightened the horrors and cost of war and rendered traditional notions of national security obsolete. As the **Palme** Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues has observed,

"In **the** nuclear age, **nations** can no longer hope to protect their citizens through unilateral military measures. All States, even the most powerful, are dependent in the end upon the good sense and restraint of other nations. Even ideological and political opponents have a shared interest in **survival**. In the long run, no nation can base its security on the insecurity of others. True security **requires** a co-operative effort, a partnership in the struggle against war which can only be established through dialogue and reconciliation."

As the quest for security, including disarmament, is clearly a universal concern of interest to all countries, it is increasingly recognised that the multilateral forum of the United Nations, committed as it is to universality in its **membership**, provides the best framework for intergovernmental dialogue and **co-operation** in this field. The complex and difficult task, of halting the arms race and moving in the direction of significant disarmament progress will not be easy. A continuous and sustained process that aims at pooling the efforts of the entire international community on the basis of equality and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter will help advance prospects for progress. As progress continues to be made towards disarmament, the international community should also pay attention to global and regional security concerns. In this connection, we have the pleasure to commend the

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Secretary-General for arranging this year the first United Nations regional disarmament workshop for Africa, which examined regional security requirements and perceptions, including related regional issues. My Government was pleased to host this workshop in Lagos in April of this year in co-operation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

The forty-fourth session of the General **Assembly** and the observance this year of Disarmament Week are taking place against a background of truly remarkable changes in our world. These changes result, as I said at the opening of the forty-fourth session, from the gradual improvement in super-Power relations. While this improvement in super-Power relations has raised much hope world wide, especially in the field of disarmament, there is no cause for undue optimism, as the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries recently cautioned us. As long as the arms race - in particular, the nuclear-arms race - continues, there can be no room for complacency. Indeed, much work **remains** to be done to rid mankind of **nuclear** weapons and, for that matter, of all other weapons, as the means of settling international disputes.

Each year, during **Disarmament** Week, the United Nations seeks **to** focus particular attention on the urgent need **to promote the objectives** of disarmament. This important event provides a valuable opportunity to increase public awareness of the many, multifaceted dangers of **the arms race** and to **encourage an atmosphere** conducive to progress in disarmament efforts.

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In this connection, I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to launch an urgent appeal to the nuclear-weapon Powers to **take** substantial steps towards **nuclear** disarmament and, as a first step in this direction, to stop the further development, testing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. **Such** measures would have a **major** restraining impact on the arms race as a whole and allow the international community to prepare to enter **the** new century with rekindled **hope** and optimism for a new world order based on security at the lowest level of armaments and armed forces, more peaceful, just and equal, free from war and want, and hence, more stable.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): I now invite His Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de **Cuellar**, to address the First Committee.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: A spirit of positive change in international relations is spreading throughout the world. Despite current difficulties - and there are many - the present situation offers opportunities that must be seized for the resolution of problems that were, until recently, considered intractable. This applies **not** least to questions relating to arms limitation and **disarmament**. Metier States have always considered these **issues** in the broad context of their national security. Their willingness to support the disarmament process has thus **been** inextricably linked to the prevailing political climate ~~and~~ their perceptions of the threats facing them.

With the recent improvement in relations at the global level, new horizons are at last opening for the pursuit of real disarmament and arms limitation measures. The two major Powers and their respective allies must be given credit for the significant **steps** that they have taken in this regard. The conclusion of the

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Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, and more important, its implementation, have already **been** hailed as **the** first truly tangible **measure** for **nuclear** disarmament. The recent indications of progress in bilateral negotiations between the United States and **the Soviet Union on a** 50 per cent **cut** in their strategic nuclear forces and on other related matters represent a most welcome reassurance to the international community.

And yet, despite these developments, unless the present **positive momentum** in bilateral negotiations on various nuclear questions, including the urgent need for the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests, is soon translated into concrete undertakings, the risks of both vertical and horizontal proliferation will **become** more acute. The threat of further proliferation of nuclear weapons is a very real one. If not fully addressed, it may well jeopardize **the** constructive atmosphere that has recently emerged in various international forums and reverse the positive **Processes taking** place in international relations **generally**. Only expeditious and decisive measures of nuclear disarmament can effectively discourage **such a** possibility from occurring. I therefore urge the **two** major Powers to intensify their efforts towards an early conclusion of a START agreement. This could be an important step in assuring the continued adherence of the international community to the principle of non-proliferation, the preservation of which remains one of the essential elements in our efforts to contain the nuclear danger.

I **am** heartened and encouraged **by** the breadth of vision and readiness **for mutual** accommodation displayed **by** the parties involved in the negotiations on conventional arms reduction in **Europe, the most** heavily armed region of the **world**. The **outcome** of these negotiations will have serious **implications for the role of** regional disarmament in the pursuit of global security. **Each** region has its own characteristics, and they **must be taken fully into account**, **Genuine security for** all, however, can only **be** attained if **each** region is ready to work actively towards

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the global goal. I therefore appeal for renewed vigour and determination on the part of Governments in all regions of the world to join in the search for security at lower levels of armed forces and armaments. In this connection, States must devise and **demonstrate** a resolve to overcome existing differences by peaceful means in order to create the most conducive conditions for significant disarmament measures.

While the role of bilateral and regional negotiations is self-evident, it is also no substitute for **the** pursuit of disarmament at **the** global level. The strengthening and reinvigoration of the multilateral disarmament process is vital, given **the** global nature of many of the issues involved and their implications for international peace and security. In fact, these processes must be seen as two sides of the same coin and should reinforce each other.

Among the many measures of extraordinary importance that can be taken at the **global** level, I believe that one stands out as both urgent and immediately requiring a multilateral solution: the complete ban on chemical weapons. The Paris Conference earlier this year served a most useful purpose in raising public awareness of the appalling nature of these weapons of mass destruction. Subsequent negotiations in the Conference on **Disarmament** and the recent Conference held in Canberra have helped in identifying the problems and charting the course of action for the successful conclusion of a convention. There cannot be any ambiguity concerning our objectives in this regard. The negotiations must be completed expeditiously **and** be comprehensive in scope. A partial solution is simply not acceptable. Delays, or anything short of a comprehensive ban **on** chemical weapons, would adversely affect the momentum created world-wide for the prohibition of these deadly weapons and increase the risk of proliferation.

As we are all aware, the problems **on** the agenda of disarmament negotiations cannot be resolved overnight. However, **I** strongly believe that recent steps taken

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by the international community are in the right direction, hut the **process** must be sustained and, more important, strengthened. I am confident that the annual observance of Disarmament Week will reinforce our commitment to the **pursuit** of arms limitation and disarmament as an indispensable means of creating a just and peaceful world.

The CHAIRMAN (interpretation from Spanish): This brings to a close the observance of Disarmament Week.

Before adjourning the meeting I wish to inform the metiers of the Committee that **immediately** following this meeting there will be a pledging conference **for** the World Disarmament Campaign.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.