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**THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
IN THE FIELD OF ARMS CONTROL
AND DISARMAMENT:
NEW DIRECTIONS**

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1. It is, indeed, fitting that the problem of the "Role of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament" is being addressed at a time when, as a result of the far-reaching changes that have recently taken place in the world's political arena, the United Nations is being called upon to play an increasingly important role in all major areas of international relations.

2. Before embarking on a more in-depth look at the role of the United Nations today in this area, I would like to briefly recall that the most profound ideal that inspired the founders of the United Nations was "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". In signing the Charter, member States proclaimed the maintenance of international peace and security as one of the major objectives of the Organization. Accordingly, the Charter prohibits the use, or threat of use, of force in international relations (Article 2, paragraph 4), provides for the peaceful settlement of international disputes (Chapter VI) and elaborates a mechanism for action by the Organization with regard to threats to peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression (Chapter VII).

3. These provisions established the necessary general, legal and political framework for the promotion of the cause of disarmament and, through the years, have determined the special role of the United Nations in pursuing that goal. Specific responsibilities were then conferred on the Security Council and the General Assembly in connection with disarmament and the regulation of armaments. The General Assembly is empowered to consider "principles governing disarmament and regulation of armaments" and to make "recommendations with regard to such principles to the members or to the Security Council, or to both" (Article 11). The Security Council, "in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources", is responsible for formulating, with the assistance of the Military

Staff Committee (Article 47), "plans to be submitted to the members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the reduction of armaments" (Article 26).

4. The Cold war which followed the birth of the United Nations, was a trial for the World Organization and its Charter. Despite the tension that characterized relations between East and West, the pressure for the continuation of the disarmament efforts was rather strong. At that period the key word of the Charter - security - was mainly associated with disarmament. One of the most commonly used expressions was "security through disarmament". The efforts of the international community within the United Nations have resulted in the conclusion of a series of major agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament. I should like to mention in this regard:

- the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water (the Partial Test Ban Treaty);
- the 1968 Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the Non-proliferation Treaty);
- the 1971 Convention on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (the Sea-Bed Treaty);
- the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and

Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (the Biological Weapons Convention); and

- the 1979 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (the ENMOD Convention).

However, it should also be borne in mind that all these arms control and disarmament agreements did not prevent the arms race from going on, both in its horizontal and vertical aspects.

5. The General Assembly of the United Nations devoted three Special Sessions to disarmament - in 1978, 1982 and 1988. The Final Document of the First Special Session set out a broad and comprehensive framework for priorities and programmes in arms limitation and disarmament on the basis of the concept of security through disarmament. It constituted the foundation on which to build an agenda for the future, a consensus on the main direction of the efforts of the international community, that is, the reduction of nuclear weapons, of armed forces and conventional weapons, the conclusion of a chemical weapons convention, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the cessation of nuclear tests. Peace and security were recognized as basic to human existence, but special emphasis was placed on nuclear issues which go far beyond national security and impinge directly on human survival. Although the Second and Third Special Sessions were less successful, they were, nevertheless, important events in that they constituted yet another chapter in the long and difficult process of the search by the international community, in the framework of the United Nations, for a more secure world free from weapons of mass destruction and the threat of annihilation.

6. No doubt that the world today is at a crucial turning point. Almost half a century of stifling Cold-War and management of Super Power confrontation is behind us. One can already see the contours of a more complex multipolar world emerging: the end of the East-West conflict, the emergence of new and competing political entities and the proliferation of global problems which threaten to jeopardise the future of mankind. However, although the old order has gone, a coherently structured new order, offering a predictable framework for international relations, is not yet in place. Conflict management and international cooperation are vital in this period of transition.

7. It should be borne in mind that the Cold War order was based on the preeminent concept of balance of power within a relatively stable group of States and blocks and the preservation of national sovereignty. That Cold War order was inherently predictable, but it has now been superseded by the disintegration of the two-power world and the fragmentation of power centres into smaller political entities, while interests are moving again into focus. Ethnic conflicts and border disputes are on the rise and, as a consequence, the arms race continues to be fuelled. While the Cold-War period has expired, its instruments are still with us. Weapons of mass destruction, which were in the hands of a few countries, are now within the reach of a larger number of countries, thus threatening to induce new types of conflicts. In short, while the world has become a little safer, it is also becoming increasingly more complicated. The changed international environment has created new opportunities for the pursuit of arms limitation and disarmament while, at the same time, giving rise to new challenges.

8. In the new emerging world the notion of security has also undergone substantial transformation. Now security is a comprehensive term covering

military as well as political, social, economic and environmental issues. Nevertheless, disarmament, though not predominant, is still the major factor of international security. It would not be an exaggeration to say that a new paradigm in the of relations among States is being formed. The pattern which put major emphasis on the development and accumulation of arms is being replaced by another one - that of disarmament.

9. In response to this new situation, the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report "New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era" has proposed a new approach aimed at:

- (a) the practical integration of disarmament and arms limitation issues into a broader structure of the international peace and security agenda;
- (b) a globalisation of the process of arms control and disarmament involving all States and requiring the enhancement of the multilateral approach to disarmament: and
- (c) the revitalisation of the disarmament process and machinery in order to consolidate past achievements and build upon them.

10. Under this approach, disarmament would no longer be perceived as a relatively distinct subject requiring its own separate organizational framework but instead would rather be seen as part and parcel of international efforts to strengthen international peace and security. Disarmament, as well as the structuring of a new system of international relationships and the improvement of economic conditions need to be regarded as complementary measures and, as far as possible, be implemented in a coordinated manner.

11. The integration of disarmament measures with the efforts of the international community in the field of conflict prevention and resolution is of particular importance. In some cases the extensive supply of armaments and ammunition makes conflicts more prolonged and violent. Application of some of the instruments used in the disarmament process can help significantly in prevention of disputes. For instance, confidence-building measures could reduce tension and the likelihood of confrontation between States. One of the new important features of preventive diplomacy and conflict settlement is disarmament of the parties to the conflict. The UN made efforts to disarm warring factions in Cambodia, Somalia, Croatian Kraina, Angola, Namibia, El Salvador and Nicaragua. However, this is a very complicated problem and in most cases the attempts to disarm combatants either failed or were only partially successful.

12. The effective maintenance of international peace and security through the tools of preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building would undoubtedly allow for significant reductions in weapons and military expenditures and pave the way for genuine arms limitation and disarmament measures. In short, the disarmament process must take due account of its increasingly close and mutually supportive relationship with other United Nations activities in the comprehensive security-building domain. Moreover, the concept of arms control and disarmament should be freed from their Cold War preoccupation with numbers of weapons: it should now embrace the far broader process of confidence-building, of transparency, of accountability, of verification and, most importantly, of promoting less reliance on weapons and more reliance on genuinely cooperative mechanisms for enhancing international peace and security. Some new issues such as the disarmament of the warring factions should also come into the focus of the efforts in this field.

13. The need to enhance the multilateral approach to arms control and disarmament is now commonly shared. It is now recognised that disarmament efforts should include not only bilateral agreements but also multilateral arrangements in a process involving all States, and that regional approaches to arms limitation should also be encouraged. The importance of the multilateral approach to arms limitation and disarmament cannot be over-emphasised. Whereas the bilateral approach, as a rule, carries with it the inherent tendency to lead more to a kind of new balance of power, acceptable first of all to a very limited number of powers in search of accommodation of their own security interests, the multilateral approach constitutes a sort of law-making process based on larger international interests and aims at establishing a new code of rules and behaviour to be applied to the whole of the international community and, therefore, at creating an international law on disarmament. Moreover, it strives towards achieving common security as a model for a peaceful and stable world order.

14. Multilateralism is needed to enhance the bilateral dialogue and promote the acceptance of disarmament agreements on a wider scale. It cannot, of course, be a panacea and cannot either substitute or preclude bilateral or regional approaches which, in many fields, are indispensable. Therefore, multilateralism can, and should, complement bilateral and regional negotiations, thus making any multilateral agreement acceptable to all and susceptible to being implemented on a global scale. In short, such vital issues as peace, stability and disarmament are of a global character and thus need to be addressed in a global framework which can provide for the necessary accommodation and harmonisation of different concerns. This was the approach which led recently to the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Conference on

Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum of the international community in Geneva. The record number of States (146) that have already signed this Convention is a vivid testimony to the validity of the multilateral approach to disarmament.

15. Following the presentation by the Secretary-General of his Report "New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era", the General Assembly sought the views of governments on this new conceptual approach and devoted a resumed session of the First Committee last March to the consideration of its contents. The Secretary-General's Report was well received by delegations which also stressed the need to enhance the effective functioning of the present multilateral disarmament machinery by deciding that the First Committee of the General Assembly should continue to deal with questions of disarmament and related international security issues, reaffirming the role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission as the specialised deliberative body within United Nations disarmament machinery and confirming the special role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, encouraging it to reach early agreement on the expansion of its membership and intensify the review of its agenda and methods of work. The Secretary-General was also urged to take concrete steps to strengthen the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in order to enable it to carry out its mandated tasks.

16. The deliberations at the First Committee as well as other developments lead us to a conclusion that perhaps the whole international disarmament machinery should be reviewed and adapted to the new environment. Most important is to improve cooperation and coordination between its different components in a flexible and action-oriented manner. There is a need to

strengthen vertical management of disarmament within the UN.

17. There is also a need to reinforce horizontal links between various organs, such as the Conference on Disarmament, other United Nations bodies dealing with arms control and disarmament, the IAEA and the future Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, especially in view of the fact that the Secretary-General of the United Nations is the Depositary of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

18. Consensus is emerging that the substantial achievements in nuclear disarmament between the two major powers should be consolidated and serve as encouragement for further endeavours. Non-proliferation, especially of weapons of mass destruction, has long been a major concern of the international community. There are real proliferation risks which call for rigorous implementation of existing international instruments. With the Chemical Weapons Convention in place, the legal basis for preventing the spread of all weapons of mass destruction is almost complete. The Non-proliferation Treaty, which is approaching universality, constitutes a solid basis for curbing nuclear proliferation, and preparations are under way for its review in 1995 with a view to its indefinite extension. Recent developments have certainly raised new expectations for the achievement of a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which is one of the four priority areas of negotiation at the Conference on Disarmament.

19. There are also good opportunities for achieving progress on such important issues as the prevention of an arms race in outer space and effective international arrangements to ensure that non-nuclear weapon States are protected against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It should be stressed that non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is closely linked

to the non-proliferation of the means of its delivery. In this field the progress is still limited and further concerted efforts are required to develop equitable and comprehensive approaches to the non-proliferation of not only weapons of mass destruction but also of their delivery systems and dual-use technologies. However, in developing such a system of export controls in this field, every effort should be made to ensure that they are balanced and fair and that they do not unduly hamper the peaceful uses of science and technology for the purposes of economic and social development of all States.

20. The prohibition of biological weapons and the prevention of their proliferation is another area of particular importance. It is heartening to note that States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, at their Third Review Conference in 1991, stressed again their determination to strengthen the authority of the Convention and to enhance confidence in the implementation of its provisions by agreeing on a number of confidence-building measures aimed at a greater degree of transparency in their activities in this field. Another major step in this regard was the decision to set up an Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts, open to all States Parties, to identify and examine potential verification measures to enhance the effectiveness of the Convention. The conclusions and findings of the Ad Hoc Group will be presented to the States Parties at the current session of the General Assembly for any further action.

21. The implementation of arms limitation and disarmament agreements have already created an entirely new set of problems which are coming to be known as "post-disarmament agreement issues". These pertain to: the safe storage of weapons and their subsequent destruction as a consequence of disarmament agreements; the conversion of military capacities to peaceful uses; and the

need to ensure that the adverse effects of the conversion process are limited and that international co-operation is mobilized to mitigate the inevitable consequences of the economic and social disruptions resulting from it. To this end, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has decided to establish an interdepartmental task force at the United Nations to provide Member States with political, technical and economic advice on the various aspects involved in the transition to a post-disarmament world.

22. In the contemporary international environment a matter of considerable concern is the transfer of conventional weapons which is one of the major factors impeding the settlement of many regional conflicts. Though in the 1990s the overall amount of such transfer is lower than in the 1980s, this happened primarily due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union which used to be the second large exporter of armament. However, in some other countries the volume of arms trade tends to increase. Similar situation could be observed in the production of armament. While in the former Soviet Union, in Western Europe and in the USA measures are taken aimed at conversion and reduction of military production, in some other regions there is an evident trend to its expansion.

23. Transparency in armaments is acquiring a new dimension, since the acquisition and destabilising accumulation of conventional weapons in areas of regional conflict constitute a real threat to international peace and security. The benefits in increased transparency and openness are obvious. Although confidence-building measures cannot in themselves replace reductions in numbers of weapons, they still have a positive impact by preventing undue suspicion and misunderstandings between nations, thus paving the way for disarmament measures. As part of universal measures to promote transparency

and openness, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which about 70 governments have already volunteered data, opens up new prospects which all States should utilise. However, the Register will only be really effective if all States members of the United Nations provide the required information.

24. As was stressed in the report of the Secretary-General, global disarmament efforts should be supplemented by action at the regional level. There is a considerable variety of disarmament measures which could be implemented within the regions, for example, the disarmament and arms limitation agreements, establishment of zones of peace and zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, creation of the regional consultative fora on security and disarmament matters, etc. One also should not overlook the potential of the confidence- and security-building measures. The UN can more vigorously cooperate with regional organizations in this field, in particular through its three regional Centres for Peace, Disarmament and Development - in Katmandu, Lima and Lome.

25. The new opportunities created by the positive changes on the international scene have opened the way for genuine progress in the field of arms control and disarmament at the global level. The great challenge facing the United Nations at this point in time is to be able to seize these opportunities and muster the common will of member States to work towards a safer world where the energies of mankind are directed towards its own well-being. The urgency and magnitude of the tasks facing the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament are daunting, but I am sure that they can be fulfilled with the commitment and cooperation of all member States.

