



DDA 1999 Update

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS

December 1999

GA 54th Session

FRUSTRATED FIRST COMMITTEE ON MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR ISSUES

Whether you believe our current century ends at the stroke of midnight on 31 December in 1999 or in 2000, the Chairman of the First Committee, Raimundo González Aninat, Head of Disarmament at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chile opted to flow with the mounting euphoria by declaring the 54th session of the Committee the last before the new century—and millenium—are upon us. With the spotlight once again on nuclear issues, the Committee generated a cluster of 17 draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of the 47 draft resolutions and 4 draft decisions it sent to the General Assembly for action.

The actual number of resolutions and decisions transmitted matched previous years and should have been a strong signal of business as usual. The marked restraint in the tone of the debates, however, pointed to another story. Government representatives were in no mood for compromise and consensus-seeking at the session. From the outset, few believed that much could have been accomplished this year.

Political events outside the United Nations were one explanation. Presidential elections will be held in 2000 both in the Russian Federation and the United States. Relations between the two major States have been tense owing to the expansion of NATO, the stalled START process, the conflict in Kosovo, the possible deployment of ballistic missile defences in the United States and fears about the consequences of revising the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). The rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the United States Senate in October, in the course of the Committee's work, deepened skepticism about imminent progress in nuclear disarmament. In 1999, a similar

fate befell other multilateral forums that deal with nuclear issues. The 66-nation Conference on Disarmament failed to agree on a programme of work this year. The three-year preparatory process for the quinquennial review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in April-May 2000 was not able to reach agreement on any recommendations on substantive items. A modest success was achieved in May by the Disarmament Commission with the adoption of guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

At the end of the action period on all draft resolutions and decisions, the Chairman pointed out that the First Committee, like other multilateral forums, was working "at the frustration level" in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Conference on Disarmament and the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT face steep challenges in the year 2000 to advance the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda.

IN THIS ISSUE

2001 Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms	2
Ballistic missile issues	2
The persistence of nuclear doctrines	3
New agenda coalition	4

New Lima Regional Centre inaugurated

The Director of the revitalized UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean,



Mr. Péricles Gasparini Alves (right) was assisted by his colleague, Mr. Björn Holmberg, in hoisting the UN flag at the new premises in Lima, Peru in December. As an inaugural event, the Centre co-sponsored with the Government of Peru and OPANAL, the implementing agency for the regional nuclear-weapon-free zone, a Symposium on a New Regional Agenda for the Next Millennium.

2001 CONFERENCE ON ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

Dates set for Preparatory Committee

There was far less controversy at the 54th General Assembly on resolutions dealing with conventional weapons and regional approaches than on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues, and much constructive activity in the area of small arms. The resolution entitled “Small arms” reconfirms last year’s decision of the Assembly to convene the United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, and narrows the dates to June/July 2001. Switzerland has offered to host the conference in Geneva, but the venue has not yet been agreed upon. The first preparatory committee will take place in New York from 28 February to 3 March 2000 and will examine such basic issues as the objective of the conference and a draft final document, including a programme of action. Organizational issues like draft agenda, draft rules of procedure, the modalities of attendance of NGOs and dates of future preparatory committees will also be considered.

Several reports on the subject contributed to the positive consideration of the item by the Assembly. Pursuant to a 1997 Assembly request, a group of governmental experts appointed by the Secretary-General forwarded a follow-up report on small arms. A first report in 1997 made 24 recommendations on ways to reduce and prevent excessive and destabilizing accumulations and transfers of small arms. The current report served multiple purposes: to take stock of the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the first report; to be a catalyst for further actions; and to review issues relevant to convening the 2001 conference. More than 20 States gave their views in a separate report on these questions.

The 1997 report recommended that the Secretary-General prepare a study on the problem of ammunition and explo-

sives in all its aspects. One of its principal findings was that measures to control small arms and light weapons would not be complete if they did not include ammunition and explosives. It recommended such preventive measures as encouraging adoption of common minimum standards for the marking of ammunition and explosives.

Also last year, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to hold broad-based consultations on the magnitude and scope of the phenomenon of illegal trade in small arms, possible measures to combat it, and the role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information on the subject. A consultative group of experts convened by the Secretary-General in May of this year found that a study for restricting the manufacture and trade of small arms to manufacturers and dealers authorized by States was feasible and indeed desirable in promoting national and international efforts to address the small arms issue. Consultations and regional workshops in Africa and Latin America gave Member States, regional and subregional organizations, international agencies and experts an opportunity to make their views known on illicit trafficking.

The successful conclusion by the Disarmament Commission in May this year and subsequent welcome by the Assembly of “Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace”, not only augured well for further multilateral cooperation in the field, but also represented a rich source of agreed concepts and language for future collaboration.

BALLISTIC MISSILE ISSUES RECEIVE FIRST HEARING

The recent testing of ballistic missile defences by the United States and the possibility in the summer of 2000 that their deployment might be recommended is a burning issue between the two major nuclear Powers, with serious implications for the future of the 1972 bilateral ABM Treaty. That Treaty limits

the number of anti-ballistic missile systems of the United States and the former Soviet Union to one each. A 1997 “demarcation” agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation distinguishes between “strategic” or long-range ABMs, which are still prohibited, and “non-strategic” or shorter-range ABMs, which are not. Theatre missile defences are playing a prominent role in exchanges on security matters between China and the United States as well.

Two new drafts were adopted by the General Assembly this year. The first resolution, co-sponsored by the Russian Federation, China and Belarus, was aimed at the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty. France introduced an amendment urging all Member States to support efforts “aiming at stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery”. The resolution as a whole passed with 80 votes in favour, 4 against and 68 abstaining.

The second resolution was introduced by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its initial suggestion for a full-fledged UN study on the issue did not receive wide support. The actual resolution calls on the Secretary-General to ask Member States for their views on the subject of missiles in all its aspects and to report to the next Assembly on them. The adoption of both resolutions will keep missile issues on the Assembly’s agenda in 2000.

CTBT—GETTING TO ZERO TESTS/FULL MEMBERSHIP

A Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty took place in Vienna, 6-8 October 1999. The 51 current Parties undertook “*to use all avenues open to [them] in conformity with international law, to encourage further signature and ratification of the Treaty; and urge all States to ... remain seized of the issue at the highest political level.*”

FINAL DECLARATION
(A/54/514 - S/1999/1102)

Miguel Marín Bosch, Consul General of Mexico in Barcelona, has been an outspoken and well-known promoter of nuclear disarmament for decades. He cited the 1998 Durban Summit statement by the Non-Aligned Movement, reiterating that “there is no justification for the maintenance of nuclear arsenals, or concepts of international security based on promoting and developing military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence.” The NAM’s fundamental goal has always been the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and it has consistently supported calls for measures towards that end. Nuclear tests by India and Pakistan were shocking but bound to happen, he said, adding that India’s desire to be recognized as a nuclear-weapon State has complicated the NAM position vis-à-vis the nuclear-weapon States.

Nikolai Sokov is a senior researcher at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, California. He examined Russia’s new nuclear doctrine, published in draft form in October. The doctrine focuses on the immediate military utility of nuclear weapons. Russia, like NATO, is continuing to reduce its nuclear weapons, though at a slower clip than foreseen by the START agreements. Its doctrine, however, reasserts its policy of first use of nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack. Also like NATO, its policy is to use nuclear weapons in response to an attack in which other weapons of mass destruction (chemical or biological) are used.

DDA OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Though cold-war-free for a decade, there is still a great deal of concern in the world about the continued reliance by the most powerful military States on nuclear weapons of unimaginable mass destructive capacity. NATO adopted its new Strategic Concept at the Washington Summit in April this year, at the heart of which is still nuclear deterrence. The United States Senate rejected ratification of the CTBT in October this year, with some arguing that the Treaty would undermine American nuclear capability. The Russian Federation is increasing reliance on nuclear weapons in part because of the parlous state of its conventional forces. The nuclear tests in South Asia in May 1998 challenged the viability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Earlier this year, India floated a nuclear doctrine in draft version that includes reliance on a minimum nuclear deterrent.

At the final meeting of the First Committee in 1998, the representative of the Solomon Islands asked the Department for Disarmament Affairs to organize a symposium that might shed light on why nuclear deterrence persisted. The Department took advantage of this year’s First Committee to bring experts to Headquarters on 18 October to speak on nuclear doctrines from four different perspectives.

Stephen Szabo is Associate Dean at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. At its April 1999 Summit in Washington, NATO acknowledged, he said, that “the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated by the Allies are...extremely remote”. But NATO nuclear doctrine continues to rely on nuclear deterrence, maintains the first-use option, and envisages a possible nuclear response to an attack by non-

nuclear weapons of mass destruction. NATO is committed to nuclear reductions and is trimming down its nuclear forces in accordance with the terms of the START agreements.

Ashok Kapur is Chair of the Political Science Department at the University of Waterloo, Canada. He stressed that India’s nuclear doctrine and its nuclear and missile testing were not ad hoc, reversible events, but the culmination of an evolving response to a series of international, regional and domestic developments, including the indefinite extension of the NPT, the Indian belief that the Non-Aligned

Movement had lost its limited leverage on the issue of nuclear disarmament and that nuclear weapons were here to stay at least for the duration of the United States Stockpile Stewardship programme. Indian public dissemination of the draft doctrine was a step towards transparency and formalization of existing capabilities. Nuclear deterrence is at its centre, and “no first use” is emphasized. The nuclear-test moratorium is maintained and India’s position in respect of the CTBT must await internal consensus among India’s political parties.

The statements made by the panelists will be published in English and French as *Disarmament Occasional Papers No. 3* early in 2000.



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PROGRESS MADE BY NEW AGENDA COALITION

A broad and inclusive approach aimed at a nuclear-weapon free world calls for a new agenda for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. A resolution incorporating this approach was first put forward in the Assembly in 1998 and adopted by a large majority, including most members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Introduced again in 1999, it was adopted with a similar pattern of vote as in 1998. It succeeded in broadening its base of sponsors to 61 States and in convincing several States to change their negative votes to abstentions.

The initiative calls for a variety of measures to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, such as urging the nuclear-weapon States to speed up their negotiations towards the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals; and the nuclear-capable States not party to the NPT to reverse the pursuit of nuclear-weapons development.

The 1999 resolution takes on several new measures, too. It recommends that nuclear-weapon States reduce tactical nuclear weapons with a view to their elimination as an integral part of nuclear arms reductions; that they demonstrate transparency about nuclear arsenals and fissile material stocks, and that they place excess nuclear materials under IAEA safeguards. The resolution also notes that the General Assembly's Millennium Summit in 2000 will consider peace, security and disarmament. By adopting the resolution, the Assembly also decided to include the item "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda" in the agenda for the 55th session in 2000 and to review its implementation at that time.

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and MORE ON CTBT...

"Both as Secretary-General of the United Nations and in [my] capacity as Depositary of the Treaty, [I have] consistently appealed to Member States who have not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty in order that this important norm against nuclear proliferation and the further development of nuclear weapons should enter into force and become part of international law."

*The Secretary-General, upon learning of the negative vote of the United States Senate on the ratification of the CTBT
New York, 14 October 1999*

"We [the Provisional Technical Secretariat] have noted...that President Clinton announced that the United States will maintain the moratorium on nuclear tests and continue to press for ratification of the CTBT.

We will continue to build up the global verification regime, which will take several more years. We hope that during this time the United States will see its way to ratifying the CTBT."

*Wolfgang Hoffmann, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Committee
Vienna, 14 October 1999*

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