



## General Assembly

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## Fifteenth special session

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FOURTEENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 9 June 1988, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)

later: Mr. ENGO (Cameroon)  
(Vice-President)

- General debate [8] (continued)

Address by His Excellency Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of the  
Republic of India

Statements were made by:

Mr. Engo (Cameroon)  
Mr. Adodo (Togo)  
Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates)  
Mr. Pibulsonggram (Thailand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. RAJIV GANDHI, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. I invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. GANDHI (India): Mr. President, may I begin by extending to you our warmest felicitations on your election as President of this vitally important special session of the General Assembly. Our deliberations will benefit greatly from the wealth of your experience and your deep understanding of the issues before us.

We are approaching the close of the twentieth century. It has been the most blood-stained century in history. Fifty-eight million people perished in two world wars. Forty million more have died in other conflicts. In the last nine decades the ravenous machines of war have devoured nearly 100 million people. The appetite of these monstrous machines grows on what they feed on. Nuclear war will not mean the death of 100 million people, or even 1,000 million people. It will mean the extinction of 4,000 million, the end of life as we know it on our planet Earth. We come to the United Nations to seek your support. We seek your support to put a stop to this madness.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

Humanity is at a crossroads. One road will take us like lemmings to our own suicide. That is the path indicated by doctrines of nuclear deterrence, deriving from traditional concepts of the balance of power. The other road will give us another chance. That is the path signposted by the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, deriving from the imperative values of non-violence, tolerance and compassion.

In consequence of doctrines of deterrence, international relations have been gravely militarized. Astronomical sums are being invested in ways of dealing death. Ever new means of destruction continue to be invented. The best of our scientific talent and the bulk of our technological resources are devoted to maintaining and upgrading this awesome ability to obliterate ourselves. A culture of armaments and threats and violence has become pervasive.

For a hundred years after the Congress of Vienna, Europe knew an uncertain peace based on a balance of power. When that balance was tilted - or, more accurately, when that balance was perceived to have tilted - Europe was plunged into an orgy of destruction, the like of which had never been known before and which spread to engulf much of the world. The unsettled disputes of the First World War led to the Second.

Humankind survived because, by today's standards, the power to destroy which was then available was a limited power. We now have what we did not then have: the power to ensure the genocide of the human race. Technology has now rendered obsolete the calculations of war and peace on which were constructed the always dubious theories of the balance of power.

It is a dangerous delusion to believe that nuclear weapons have brought us peace. It is true that, in the past four decades, parts of the world have experienced an absence of war. But the mere absence of war is not a durable peace.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

The balance of nuclear terror rests on the retention and augmentation of nuclear armouries. There can be no ironclad guarantee against the use of weapons of mass destruction. They have been used in the past. They could be used in the future. And, in this nuclear age, the insane logic of mutually assured destruction will ensure that nothing survives, that nothing lives to tell the tale, that there is no one left to understand what went wrong and why. Peace which rests on the search for a parity of power is a precarious peace. If we understand what went wrong with such attempts in the past, we may yet be able to escape the catastrophe presaged by doctrines of nuclear deterrence.

There is a further problem with deterrence. The doctrine is based on the assumption that international relations are frozen on a permanently hostile basis. Deterrence needs an enemy, even if one has to be invented. Nuclear deterrence is the ultimate expression of the philosophy of terrorism: holding humanity hostage to the presumed security needs of a few.

There are those who argue that since the consequences of nuclear war are widely known and well understood, nuclear war just cannot happen. Neither experience nor logic can sustain such dangerous complacency. History is full of miscalculations. Perceptions are often totally at variance with reality. A madman's fantasy could unleash the end. An accident could trigger a chain reaction which inexorably leads to doom. Indeed, the advance of technology has so reduced the time for decisions that, once activated, computers programmed for Armageddon, pre-empt human intervention and all hope of survival. There is, therefore, no comfort in the claim of the proponents of nuclear deterrence that everyone can be saved by ensuring that in the event of conflict, everyone will surely die.

The champions of nuclear deterrence argue that nuclear weapons have been invented and, therefore, cannot be eliminated. We do not agree. We have an

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

international convention eliminating biological weapons by prohibiting their use in war. We are working on similarly eliminating chemical weapons. There is no reason in principle why nuclear weapons too cannot be so eliminated. All it requires is the affirmation of certain basic moral values and the assertion of the required political will, underpinned by treaties and institutions which ensure against nuclear delinquency.

The past few years have seen the emergence of a new danger: the extension of the nuclear arms race into outer space. The ambition of creating impenetrable defences against nuclear weapons has merely escalated the arms race and complicated the process of disarmament. This has happened in spite of the grave doubts expressed by leading scientists about its very feasibility. Even the attempt to build a partial shield against nuclear missiles increases the risk of nuclear war. History shows that there is no shield that has not been penetrated by a superior weapon, nor any weapon for which a superior shield has not been found. Societies get caught in a multiple helix of escalation in chasing this chimera, expending vast resources for an illusory security while increasing the risk of certain extinction.

The new weapons being developed for defence against nuclear weapons are part of a much wider qualitative arms race. The development of the so-called "third generation nuclear weapons" has opened up ominous prospects of their being used for selective and discriminate military operations. There is nothing more dangerous than the illusion of limited nuclear war. It desensitizes inhibitions about the use of nuclear weapons. That could lead, in next to no time, to the outbreak of full-fledged nuclear war.

There are no technological solutions to the problems of world security. Security can only come from our asserting effective political control over this self-propelled technological arms race.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

We cannot accept the logic that a few nations have the right to pursue their security by threatening the survival of humankind. It is not only those who live by the nuclear sword who, by design or default, shall one day perish by it. All humanity will perish.

Nor is it acceptable that those who possess nuclear weapons are freed of all controls while those without nuclear weapons are policed against their production. History is full of such prejudices paraded as iron laws: that men are superior to women; that white races are superior to the coloured; that colonialism is a civilizing mission; that those who possess nuclear weapons are responsible Powers and those who do not are not.

Alas, nuclear weapons are not the only weapons of mass destruction. New knowledge is being generated in the life sciences. Military applications of these developments could rapidly undermine the existing convention against the military use of biological weapons. The ambit of our concern must extend to all means of mass annihilation.

New technologies have also dramatically expanded the scope and intensity of conventional warfare. The physical destruction which can be carried out by full-scale conventional war would be enormous, far exceeding anything known in the past. Even if humankind is spared the agony of a nuclear winter, civilization and civic life as we know it would be irretrievably disrupted. The range, precision

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

and lethality of conventional weapons are being vastly increased. Some of these weapons are moving from being "smart" to becoming "intelligent". Such diabolical technologies generate their own pressures for early use, thus increasing the risk of the outbreak of war. Most of these technologies are at the command of the military blocs. This immensely increases their capacity for interference, intervention and coercive diplomacy.

Those of us who do not belong to the military blocs would much rather stay out of the race. We do not want to accumulate arms. We do not want to augment our capacity to kill. But the system, like a whirlpool, sucks us into its vortex. We are compelled to divert resources from development to defence to respond to the arsenals which are constructed as a sideshow to great Power rivalries. As the nature and sophistication of threats to our security increase, we are forced to incur huge expenditure on raising the threshold of our defences.

There is another danger that is even worse. Left to ourselves, we would not want to touch nuclear weapons. But when, in the passing play of great Power rivalries, tactical considerations are allowed to take precedence over the imperatives of nuclear non-proliferation, with what leeway are we left?

Even the mightiest military Powers realize that they cannot continue the present arms race without inviting economic calamity. The continuing arms race has imposed a great burden on national economies and the global economy. It is no longer only the developing countries that are urging disarmament to channel resources to development. Even the richest are beginning to realize that they cannot afford the current levels of the military burden they have imposed upon themselves. A genuine process of disarmament, leading to a substantial reduction in military expenditure, is bound to promote the prosperity of all nations of the

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

globe. Disarmament accompanied by coexistence will open up opportunities for all countries, whatever their socio-economic systems, whatever their levels of development.

The technological revolutions of our century have created unparalleled wealth. They have endowed the fortunate with high levels of mass consumption and widespread social welfare. In fact, there is plenty for everyone, provided distribution is made more equitable. Yet, the possibility of fulfilling the basic needs of nutrition and shelter, education and health remains beyond the reach of vast millions of people in the developing world because resources which could give fulfilment in life are pre-empted for death.

The root causes of global insecurity reach far below the calculus of military parity. They are related to the instability spawned by widespread poverty, squalor, hunger, disease and illiteracy. They are connected to the degradation of the environment. They are enmeshed in the inequity and injustice of the present world order. The effort to promote security for all must be underpinned by the effort to promote opportunity for all and equitable access to achievement. Comprehensive global security must rest on a new, more just, more honourable world order.

When the General Assembly met here last in special session to consider questions of disarmament, the outlook was grim. The new cold war had been revived with full force. A new programme of nuclear armament had been set in motion. As a result, during the years that followed, fear and suspicion cast a long shadow over all disarmament negotiations. Humankind was approaching the precipice of nuclear disaster.

Today, there is new hope for survival and for peace. There is a perceptible movement away from the precipice. Dialogue has been resumed. Trust is in the air.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

How has this transformation occurred? We pay a tribute to the sagacity of the American and Soviet leaderships. They have seen the folly of nuclear escalation. They have started tracing the outlines of a pattern of disarmament. At the same time, we must recognize the role of countless enlightened men and women all over the world, citizens of the non-nuclear-weapon States as much as of the nuclear-weapon States. With courage, dedication and perseverance they have kept the candle burning in the enveloping darkness. The Six-Nation Initiative voiced the hopes and aspirations of these many millions. At a time when relations between the two major nuclear-weapon States dipped to their nadir, the six nations - Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania - refocused world attention on the imperative of nuclear disarmament. The Appeal of May 1984, issued by Indira Gandhi, Olof Palme and their colleagues, struck a responsive chord. Negotiations stalled for years began inching forward. The process begun in Geneva has led to Reykjavik, Washington and Moscow.

We have all welcomed the ratification of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - concluded between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan. It is an important step in the right direction. Its great value lies in its bold departure from nuclear arms limitation to nuclear disarmament. We hope there will be agreement soon to reduce nuclear arsenals by 50 per cent. The process should be carried forward to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Only then will we be able to look back and say that the INF Treaty was a truly historic beginning.

India believes it is possible for the human race to survive the second millenium. India believes it is also possible to ensure peace, security and survival into the third millenium and beyond. The way lies through concerted action. We urge the international community immediately to undertake negotiations with a view to adopting a time-bound Action Plan to usher in a world order free of nuclear weapons and rooted in non-violence.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

We have submitted such an Action Plan to this special session on disarmament of the United Nations General Assembly. Our plan calls upon the international community to negotiate a binding commitment to general and complete disarmament. This commitment must be total. It must be without reservation.

The heart of our Action Plan is the elimination of all nuclear weapons in three stages, over the next 22 years, beginning now. We put this Plan to the United Nations as a programme to be launched at once.

While nuclear disarmament constitutes the centrepiece of each stage of the Plan, this is buttressed by collateral and other measures to further the process of disarmament. We have made proposals for banning other weapons of mass destruction. We have suggested steps for precluding the development of new weapons systems based on emerging technologies. We have addressed ourselves to the task of reducing conventional arms and forces to the minimum levels required for defensive purposes. We have outlined ideas for the conduct of international relations in a world free of nuclear weapons.

The essential features of the Action Plan are:

First, there should be a binding commitment by all nations to eliminating nuclear weapons, in stages, by the year 2010 at the latest.

Secondly, all nuclear-weapon States must participate in the process of nuclear disarmament. All other countries must also be part of the process.

Thirdly, to demonstrate good faith and build the required confidence, there must be tangible progress at each stage towards the common goal.

Fourthly, changes are required in doctrines, policies and institutions to sustain a world free of nuclear weapons. Negotiations should be undertaken to establish a comprehensive global security system under the aegis of the United Nations.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

We propose simultaneous negotiations on a series of integrally related measures. But we do recognize the need for flexibility in the staging of some of these measures.

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

In Stage I, the INF Treaty must be followed by a 50-per-cent cut in Soviet and United States strategic arsenals. All production of nuclear weapons and weapons grade fissionable material must cease immediately. A moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons must be undertaken with immediate effect to set the stage for negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

It is already widely accepted that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. Yet, the right is reserved to resort to nuclear war. This is incompatible with a binding commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Therefore, we propose that all nuclear weapons be leached of legitimacy by negotiating an international convention which outlaws the threat or use of such weapons. Such a convention will reinforce the process of nuclear disarmament.

Corresponding to such a commitment by the nuclear-weapon States, those States which are capable of crossing the nuclear weapons threshold must solemnly undertake to restrain themselves. This must be accompanied by strict measures to end all covert and overt assistance to those seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

We propose that negotiations must commence in the first stage itself for a new treaty to replace the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which expires in 1995. This new treaty should give legal effect to the binding commitment of nuclear-weapon States to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2010, and of all the non-nuclear-weapon States not to cross the nuclear weapons threshold.

International law already bans the use of biological weapons. Similar action must be taken to ban chemical and radiological weapons.

The international community has unanimously recognized outer space as the common heritage of mankind. We must expand international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. The essential prerequisite for this is that outer space be kept free of all weapons. Instead, there are plans for developing,

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testing and deploying space weapons systems. The nuclear-arms race cannot be ended and reversed without a moratorium on such activity. It should be followed by an agreement to forestall the militarization of outer space. This is also an indispensable condition for attaining the goal of comprehensive global security based on a non-violent world order free of nuclear weapons.

The very momentum of developments in military technology is dragging the arms race out of political control. The race cannot be restrained without restraining the development of such technology. We need a system which fosters technological development but interdicts its application to military purposes. The arms-control approach has focussed on the quantitative growth of arsenals. The disarmament approach must devise arrangements for controlling the continuous qualitative upgradation of nuclear and conventional weapons. To achieve this purpose, the essential requirement is increased transparency in research and development in frontier technologies with potential military applications. This requires a systematic monitoring of such developments, an assessment of their implications for international security, and widespread dissemination of the information obtained. There is also need for greater international co-operation in research into new and emerging technologies for these technologies to open on new vistas of human achievement. Here let us recall the vision of an open world voiced by one of the most remarkable scientists of our time, Niels Bohr. In his Open Letter to the United Nations on 9 June 1950, 38 years ago today, he said:

"The very fact that knowledge itself is a basis for civilization points directly to openness as the way to overcome the present crisis."

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

By the closing years of the century there must be a single integrated multilateral verification system to ensure that no new nuclear weapons are produced anywhere in the world. Such a system would also help in verifying compliance with the collateral and other disarmament measures envisaged in the action plan. It would serve as an early warning system to guard against violations of solemn international treaties and conventions.

Beyond a point, nuclear disarmament itself would depend upon progress in the reduction of conventional arms and forces. Therefore, a key task before the international community is to ensure security at lower levels of conventional defence. Reductions must, of course, begin in areas where the bulk of the world's conventional arms and forces are concentrated. However, other countries should also join the process without much delay. This requires a basic restructuring of armed forces to serve defensive purposes only. Our objective should be nothing less than a general reduction of conventional arms across the globe to levels dictated by minimum needs of defence. The process would require a substantial reduction in offensive military capability, as well as confidence-building measures to preclude surprise attacks. The United Nations needs to evolve by consensus a new strategy doctrine of non-provocative defence.

The plan for radical and comprehensive disarmament must be pursued along with efforts to create a new system of comprehensive global security. The components of such a system must be mutually supportive. The participation in it must be universal.

The structure of such a system should be firmly based on non-violence. When we eliminate nuclear weapons and reduce conventional forces to minimum defensive levels, the establishment of a non-violent world order is the only way of not relapsing into the irrationalities of the past. It is the only way of precluding

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

the recommencement of an armaments spiral. Non-violence in international relations cannot be considered a Utopian goal. It is the only available basis for civilized survival, for the maintenance of peace through peaceful coexistence and for a new, just, equitable and democratic world order. As Mahatma Gandhi said in the aftermath of the first use of nuclear weapons:

"The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs, even as violence cannot be destroyed by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence."

The new structure of international relations must be based on respect for various ideologies, on the right to pursue different socio-economic systems, and the celebration of diversity. Happily, this is already beginning to happen. Post-war bipolarity is giving way to a growing realization of the need for coexistence. The high rhetoric of the system of military alliances is gradually yielding to the viewpoint of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Non-alignment is founded on the desire of nations for freedom of action. It stands for national independence and self-reliance. Non-alignment is a refusal to be drawn into the barren rivalries and dangerous confrontations of others. It is an affirmation of the need for self-confident co-operation among all countries, irrespective of differences in social and economic systems. Non-alignment is synonymous with peaceful coexistence. As Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"The alternative to co-existence is co-destruction."

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

Therefore, the new structure of international relations to sustain a world beyond nuclear weapons will have to be based on the principles of coexistence, the non-use of force, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, and the right of every State to pursue its own path of development. These principles are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, but they have frequently been violated. We must apply our minds to bringing about the institutional changes required to ensure their observance. The strengthening of the United Nations system is essential for comprehensive global security. We must resurrect the original vision of the United Nations. We must bring the United Nations in line with the requirements of the new world order.

The battle for peace, disarmament and development must be waged both within this Assembly and outside by the peoples of the world. This battle should be waged in co-operation with scientists, strategic thinkers and leaders of peace movements who have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to these ideals. We therefore seek their co-operation in securing the commitment of all nations and all peoples to the goal of a non-violent world order free of nuclear weapons.

The ultimate power to bring about changes rests with the people. It is not the power of weapons or economic strength which will determine the shape of the world beyond nuclear weapons. That will be determined in the minds and the hearts of thinking men and women around the world. For, as the Dhammapada of the Buddha teaches us:

(Mr. Gandhi, India)

"Our life is shaped by our mind;  
We become what we think.  
Suffering follows an evil thought  
As the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it.  
Joy follows a pure thought  
Like a shadow that never leaves.  
For hatred can never put an end to hatred;  
Love alone can.  
This is the unalterable law."

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of India for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. ENGO (Cameroon): The Cameroon delegation would like, first of all, to join in the felicitations addressed to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifteenth special session, the third devoted to disarmament. We renew our pledge to support your efforts, especially in our capacity as a Vice-President of this session.

The presence of our dedicated Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, always inspires feelings of hope. Permit us to welcome the quiet and effective diplomacy with which he pursues the cause of peaceful coexistence among peoples as well as the enhancement of the construction of the rudiments of international peace and security through this universal Organization.