



# COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## of The World Council of Churches

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### ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFERENCE AND CONSIDERATIONS ON FUTURE STEPS

1. The fact that the Conference was held -- despite <sup>the</sup>~~its~~ objections and opposition on the part of certain powerful nations, is in itself a victory for the global human community of nations and peoples.
2. The Final Document, while it is not exactly what any of the NGO's would have drafted, is a major achievement for the global human community in the following respects:
  - a) political recognition of the close relationship between the three elements -- global disarmament, global development and global common security;
  - b) political recognition of the non-military threats to security, putting under-development as a major factor, along with overarmament and the arms race; (para 6,18)
  - c) common and repeated political recognition of the central role of the United Nations and the community of nations in building tomorrow's world where just and equitable development can take place and poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, and unemployment can be eliminated; (Preamble (f), para 1)
  - d) recognition that no nation should endanger the security of other nations in pursuing its own national security, implying a necessary reaffirmation of the principle of global common security;
  - e) the reaffirmation of a global perspective and the need for a framework of consideration of human problems that takes as its base the given fact of inter-dependence of all nations;
  - f) the recognition that high military spending has ominous consequences for the economies of industrially

developed countries, and that they need to disarm in order to develop;

- g) the emphasis on the need for conversion and for deliberate planning for conversion on the part of all economies from military to civilian production.

Many of these things have been said before by the U.N. Here they are brought together in a new perspective.

#### Comments on the Action Programme

- a) We should be thankful to the participating nations that they did not make the mistake of creating a Disarmament-Development fund as the major solution to the vast and very complex problems of inequitable and unjust global development, of the persistence of poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, and unemployment on the one hand, and of increased insecurity brought about by global militarisation, the arms race, and the arms trade.
- b) The principle, on the other hand, is fully recognized in the document that resources released by disarmament should be deployed for development, with special emphasis on accelerated development in the developing countries.
- c) The principle that "existing regional and international institutions" should be used for reallocation of such resources, is formulated only as a matter for consideration; this does not preclude the possibility of creating new mechanisms and new institutions for such purpose, when such are found necessary by the General Assembly.
- d) The proposed Action Programme is formulated in such a flexible way as to give ample possibility for many positive concrete steps to be developed by the General Assembly and implemented by the U.N. Secretariat, including the creation of a fund if necessary.

1. The Role of NGO's

NGO's have played a significant part in the preparation for the Conference through their two preparatory conferences, one in New York and the other in Stockholm (April 1987). The extent to which these conferences and their reports influenced the preparatory process remains unclear.

There is one major problem that I wish to place on record. The role of the NGO's in international conferences and other meetings of the U.N. needs to be urgently re-examined.

It seems that the U.N. as a body of governments sees the role of the NGO's in a rather limited and one-sided way -- mainly that of being one of the instruments through whom ideas developed by governments are disseminated among the general public. Let me first acknowledge the fact that most of the ideas pronounced by the governments have been first generated by NGO's. This, however, takes place on an informal and unstructured manner. Human Rights, anti-apartheid, and the integral relation between Justice, Peace, and Development were ideas first picked up by NGO's and only then got formal political recognition from the governments.

The structured traffic between U.N. governments and NGO's seems now to be largely one-way. The NGO's get briefed by government representatives in the briefing sessions organized by the NGO task force. NGO's can ask questions. There is no structure for NGO's briefing governments about what they have been thinking. I think this issue should be brought up, both in private discussion with U.N. authorities and in General Assembly and U.N. conference discussions. Some government representatives should be lobbied to raise this question in an effective way in the appropriate U.N. Bodies and a machinery set up for informal briefings by NGO's addressed to governments.

For this we as NGO's have to do more homework, formulate our ideas more clearly and more precisely than we have been able to do in this conference. The NGO co-ordination and preparatory work would have to be improved.

As far as the U.N. machinery and process go, we have to focus on the following:

- a) organize a small NGO Seminar to work out concrete proposals for actions to be taken by the Secretary General based on the document approved here, and by the U.N. General Assembly and related organizations;
- b) see clearly ahead as to where the important decisions are going to be made -- in the General Assembly in general, in the Third Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly, and in various committees;
- c) propose a co-ordination committee to relate the work of the U.N. in development to its work on disarmament.

For better NGO Co-ordination we need a small meeting to assess the main difficulties and to find appropriate solutions. This should be prepared for by a questionnaire addressed to all NGO's.

Presentation at the NGO Briefing Session at the United Nations, September 10, 1987, by Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, President of the World Council of Churches.