

The General Assembly established a committee four years ago to study both terrorism itself and its underlying causes. The committee came to no conclusions, and the Assembly has not even studied its report. We believe the Assembly should now concentrate on a single aspect of the problem in an effort to achieve concrete results.

I therefore support the proposal of my colleague from the Federal Republic of Germany that priority should be given to action against taking hostages, and that international agreement be reached to ensure the punishment of those who engage in such acts wherever they seek refuge. But we must not forget that conventions against aerial hijacking already exist. If all states were to ratify them we could be more confident that such hijackings would stop.

Mr. President, my predecessor spoke last year of the "totally unsatisfactory rate of progress in achieving disarmament measures" and said that the General Assembly must continue "as a spur to action in the field of disarmament". A year later the record is little better. In the words of our distinguished Secretary General "the problem of armaments continues to present the most serious threat to a peaceful and orderly future for the world community". We should be ready to explore new avenues, and in this spirit my Government is prepared to consider sympathetically a proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly on disarmament in 1978.

We must not delude ourselves however that the principal obstacles to progress on disarmament will be removed by discussion in this Assembly. These obstacles are the differences of view among states as to the best ways of ensuring their security. Our examination of ways of improving the role of the United Nations in the field of arms control and disarmament will have achieved little unless member countries redouble their efforts to overcome these differences.

At this mid-point in the Disarmament Decade the responsibility to address the real obstacles to progress is shared by all members of this organisation. But this responsibility falls most heavily on the nuclear weapon states and other states of military significance. Progress will be meagre unless we re-examine traditional assumptions, take adequate account of the security concerns of others, and seize all opportunities for concrete action.