

THE SETTING AT GENEVA

THE PERIOD OF REFORMATION 1978-1980

In establishing the Committee (since 1984, the Conference) on Disarmament, UNSSOD I hoped to resuscitate the moribund Geneva multilateral forum. The superpowers at this time were meaningfully involved in bilateral arms control dialogues over a comprehensive test ban (CTB) and an anti-satellite (ASAT) accord, and showed no inclination to engage the services of the CD. In consequence, the UN Special Session abolished the Soviet-American co-chairmanship of the CD, which had been a Canadian initiative at the time of the establishment of the Geneva forum in 1962. UNSSOD also allowed for the expansion of the CD from thirty-two to forty members, and provided that both the procedural and substantive decisions would be made by consensus. With these changes UNSSOD hoped to strengthen an "organic" relationship between the United Nations and the Geneva forum.⁹

By strengthening the link between the UN and the CD, the neutral and non-aligned majority at UNSSOD hoped to make its centrepiece, a Comprehensive Programme for Disarmament (CPD), the focal point for CD discussions.¹⁰ In those heady days of idealism, Third World states in

⁹ Avi Beker, *Disarmament Without Order: The Politics of Disarmament at the United Nations*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985, pp. 48-53, 75-93; Michael Sullivan III, "Conference at the Crossroads: Future Prospects for the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament," *International Organization* 29 (Spring 1975). For a bleak assessment of their fate see Inga Thorsson, "Multilateral Forums," in Arthur S. Lall, ed., *Multilateral Negotiations and Mediation*, New York: Pergamon, 1985.

¹⁰ On the history and fate of the CPD, see Homer A. Jack, *Disarm or Die: The Second U.N. Special Session on Disarmament*, New York: World Conference on Religion & Peace, 1983.