

## **CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF MILITARY OR ANY OTHER HOSTILE USE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES**

The issue of the artificial modification of the environment for military or other hostile purposes began to attract increasing international attention following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm, in 1972. The Declaration adopted by that Conference stated, *inter alia*, that nations had the responsibility of ensuring that their activities did not damage the environment of other nations (A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1, Chapter 1).

Following from this, a decision was taken at the meeting between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) held in Moscow, between 27 June and 3 July 1974, to advocate the most effective measures possible designed to overcome the dangers of the use of environmental modification techniques for military purposes (S/11428). This joint decision, together with an associated USSR-USA statement (Annex IV, A/9698), was raised during the 1974 Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD), which ran from 16 April to 22 August, in association with a discussion on whether the CCD should study the question of prohibiting weather manipulation for military purposes (A/9627).

By a letter of 7 August 1974 to the Secretary-General, the USSR requested the inclusion in the agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled "Prohibition of action to influence the environment and climate for military and other purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health" (A/9702). This item was allocated to the First Committee of the General Assembly (A/9910).

On 24 September 1974 the USSR submitted a draft resolution to the First Committee, with a draft convention on the topic attached as an annex (A/C.1/L.675). On the recommendation of its First Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3264 (XXIX) on 9 December 1974. The Assembly expressed the need, *inter alia*, to adopt, through the conclusion of an international convention, effective measures to prohibit action to influence the environment and climate for military and other hostile purposes which were incompatible with the maintenance of international security, human well-being and health. The Assembly also took note of the draft convention submitted by the USSR, as well as other views and suggestions put forward, and requested the CCD to proceed as soon as possible to achieve agreement on the text of a convention and to submit a report to the Assembly at its thirtieth session.

The CCD held informal meetings on environmental warfare, which took place in Geneva from 4 March to 28 August 1975, with the participation of experts from a number of CCD member States and observers from the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization. On 21 August, the USSR and the USA submitted to the CCD identical draft conventions on the prohibition of military and any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques, expressing the hope that an early agreement could be reached. Due to a lack of time, the CCD did not hold substantive discussions on the drafts (Report of the Conference of Committee on Disarmament to the General Assembly (4 March to 28 August 1975), A/10027).

At the thirtieth session of the General Assembly, in 1975, the First Committee focused its discussions on this topic on the draft conventions submitted to the CCD (Report of the First Committee to the General Assembly, A/10444). On the recommendation of the First Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3475 (XXX) on 11 December 1975, by which it noted the identical draft conventions submitted by USSR and USA, and

requested, *inter alia*, the CCD to continue negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement on a convention text during the CCD's 1976 session, if possible. It also asked the CCD to submit a report to the Assembly on the results achieved for consideration at the Assembly's thirty-first session.

At its 1976 session, held from 17 February to 22 April, the CCD continued to negotiate for an early agreement on the prohibition of environmental warfare. It established an *ad hoc* working group to consider modifications to the identical draft convention texts and to facilitate negotiation of an agreed text. The Working Group on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques held twenty-nine meetings between 2 July and 1 September 1976, attended by all CCD members present at the 1976 session. During the Working Group, several modifications to the text of the convention were agreed upon. However, no agreement could be reached on other proposed modifications and the Working Group reported on the dissenting views of some members. As consensus on the draft convention was not possible, the CCD transmitted to the General Assembly, as an annex to its report, the report of the Working Group containing the text of the draft convention as well as related comments, dissenting views and reservations (A/31/27 [Vols. I and II]).

At the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, in 1976, the item was considered in a working group of the First Committee. During debate of the First Committee, significant differences in viewpoint emerged, as they had in the CCD, which resulted in the submission of a number of differing draft resolutions and revisions. The main point of contention concerned whether the process of negotiation at the CCD should continue or whether sufficient consensus existed for submission of the draft convention to the General Assembly. The First Committee eventually voted to recommend the draft convention to the General Assembly for its adoption (Report of the First Committee to the General Assembly, A/31/382). On the recommendation of its First Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 31/72 on 10 December 1976, with the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques attached as an annex thereto.

The Convention was opened for signature and ratification on 18 May 1977. The Convention entered into force on 5 October 1978, in accordance with its article IX, paragraph 3.