

PRIME MINISTER

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Second UN Special Session on Disarmament

Please see the attached advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Lord Carrington recommends that you should visit New York to address this session on 15 June. It is a difficult decision. I know that in offering this advice FCO Ministers have had much in mind the fact that the Opposition will try to make capital out of anything they can portray as inadequate UK representation. If other Western leaders attend, and you do not, their task will be much easier. Criticism will come from other quarters as well. We have already received letters arguing that it is wrong to hold the NATO Summit at a time when the Disarmament Session is beginning in New York.

On the other hand, you will wish to have in mind that you are already committed to a very extensive "Foreign Affairs" programme during June:-

4	-	6	June	:	Economic Summit
7	-	9	June	:	President Reagan
		10	June	:	NATO Summit

You will certainly miss Questions on Thursday, 10 June. If our current plans for President Reagan's visit are upset, you may want to consider missing Questions on Tuesday, 8 June. This new proposal would involve you being abroad on Tuesday, 15 June as well.

If you are disposed to go to the Disarmament Session, there is something to be said for taking an early decision to do so. Otherwise any decision might appear to be in response to the criticism which may build up here. On the other hand, if by any chance the German Chancellor and French President decided not to go, you would be less exposed if you also decided to send someone else. Would you like us to try to get more precise information about the intentions of Schmidt and Mitterrand before taking a final decision yourself?

Yes/MS

17 February, 1982

A. J. C.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 February 1982

Dear John,

Second UN Special Session on Disarmament
(UNSSD II)

The Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament (UNSSD II) will be held in New York from 7 June to 9 July this year, four years after the first, where Mr Callaghan spoke.

It is a deliberative body of the whole UN membership and has no negotiating role. It provides a framework in which arms control negotiations, both inside and outside the UN machinery, can be reviewed. The First Special Session adopted by consensus a lengthy Final Document covering all aspects of disarmament. UNSSD II has been tasked to agree a Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament.

There will be widespread interest in this country in the debate at UNSSD II, among bodies interested in disarmament, including churches. A mass lobby of Parliament focussed on the Special Session will take place on April 27. Those concerned are deliberately directing attention to the Special Session, as the similar aid lobby directed attention last year to the Cancun Summit. They will mount quite a head of steam. They have high expectations of what the Session might activate. These hopes are unrealistic. But in the context of the public debate about nuclear weapons and unilateral disarmament we need to be seen to take this multilateral forum seriously. Our statement to UNSSD II is bound to some extent to disappoint the disarmament community in this country, since we will wish to discourage these unrealistic expectations. We will need to defend our reliance on the deterrent and on the patient search for balanced and verifiable disarmament agreements against the majority at the UN of the neutral and non-aligned, who call for nuclear disarmament as a first priority. We plan no major disarmament initiative, but our approach is defensible in any forum.

A number of our friends and allies, some of whom the Prime Minister will be meeting in the previous weeks at the Economic and NATO Summits, plan to be represented at the level of Head of Government or Head of State. Chancellor Schmidt and President Mitterrand seem certain to go, as do the Japanese, Belgian and Irish Prime Ministers. If they go, the Prime Minister's absence

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would be much commented on and criticised in this country. By contrast if she went she would have an opportunity to disarm criticism by a robust but reasoned and constructive account of our policies. Here again there is a close parallel with Cancun, though the Special Session will have quite a different flavour.

Given the importance of the issues in the domestic debate and the trend among our partners towards representation at Head of Government level the Secretary of State believes it would be best for the UK to be represented by the Prime Minister. This would also enable her to rebut personally any attempt by the Soviet Union to claim that the NATO Summit the previous week demonstrated that the Alliance was more interested in building up than in controlling arms.

As to timing, the Belgian Presidency will deliver a statement on behalf of the EC on the first day of the general debate (8 June), followed later in the week by Chancellor Schmidt and the US (possibly Vice-President Bush). Because of this good level of Western representation in the first week, and the timing of the NATO Summit (9-10 June) we have provisionally inscribed the UK to speak early in the second week, on the afternoon of 15 June. I understand that while the Prime Minister's diary is full there are moveable items in that week. If she wished to attend, but was unable to do so on that date, we would try to inscribe the UK on another date.

Yours ever,

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

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16 FEB 1982

