Thirty-sixth session
Agenda item 135

PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE: DECLARATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Report of the First Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Alemayehu MAKONNEN (Ethiopia)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled "Prevention of nuclear catastrophe: Declaration of the General Assembly" was included in the draft agenda of the thirty-sixth session on the basis of a request contained in a letter dated 22 September 1981 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Secretary-General (A/36/241).

2. At its 28th plenary meeting, on 6 October 1981, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 7 October, the First Committee decided to hold a combined general debate on the items allocated to it relating to disarmament, namely, items 39 to 56, 128 and 135. The general debate on these items took place at the 3rd to 26th meetings, from 19 October to 4 November (see A/C.1/36/PV.3-26).

4. In connexion with item 135, the First Committee had before it the following documents:

   (a) Letter dated 22 September 1981 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Secretary-General (A/36/241);

   (b) Letter dated 21 October 1981 from the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/C.1/36/7).
II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.1/36/L.2 and Rev.1 and 2

5. On 3 November, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics submitted a draft resolution (A/C.1/36/L.2), which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Bearing in mind that the foremost task of the United Nations, born in the flames of the Second World War, has been, is and will be to save the present and succeeding generations from the scourge of war,

"Recognizing that all the horrors of past wars and all other calamities that have befallen people would pale in comparison with what is inherent in the use of nuclear weapons capable of destroying civilization on earth,

"ON BEHALF OF THE STATES MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMS:

"1. States and statesmen that resort first to the use of nuclear weapons will be committing the gravest crime against humanity;

"2. There will never be any justification or pardon for statesmen who would take the decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons;

"3. Any doctrines allowing the first use of nuclear weapons and any actions pushing the world towards a catastrophe are incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the United Nations;

"4. It is the supreme duty and direct obligation of the leaders of nuclear-weapon States to act in such a way as to eliminate the risk of the outbreak of a nuclear conflict. The nuclear arms race must be stopped and reversed by joint effort, through negotiations conducted in good faith and on the basis of equality;

"5. Nuclear energy should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and only for the benefit of mankind."

6. At the 35th meeting, on 19 November, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics submitted revisions to draft resolution A/C.1/36/L.2. Under those revisions a third and a fourth preambular paragraph were added, which read as follows:

"Reaffirming that the universally accepted objective is to eliminate completely the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons through the cessation of their production followed by the destruction of their stockpiles and that, to this end, priority in disarmament negotiations should be given to nuclear disarmament,

"Convinced that, as the first step in this direction, the use of nuclear weapons and the waging of nuclear war should be outlawed."

The revised draft resolution (A/C.1/36/L.2/Rev.1) was subsequently sponsored also by Angola.
7. At the 41st meeting, on 24 November, the representative of Mexico proposed, and the sponsors accepted, an oral amendment to operative paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/C.1/36/L.2/Rev.1, which would add at the end of the paragraph the words "having as their ultimate goal the complete elimination of nuclear weapons".

8. The amended draft resolution (A/C.1/36/L.2/Rev.2) was subsequently sponsored also by the [German Democratic Republic] and Mongolia.

9. At its 43rd meeting, on 25 November, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/36/L.2/Rev.2 by a recorded vote of 67 to 18, with 37 abstentions (see para. 10). The voting was as follows:

   **In favour:** Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Benin, Bhutan, Bulgaria, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cape Verde, Chad, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia.

   **Against:** Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

   **Abstaining:** Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Central African Republic, Chile, Democratic Kampuchea, Egypt, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Honduras, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Swaziland, Sweden, Sudan, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Zaire, Zambia.

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

10. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

/...
Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind that the foremost task of the United Nations, born in the flames of the Second World War, has been, is and will be to save present and succeeding generations from the scourge of war,

Recognizing that all the horrors of past wars and all other calamities that have befallen people would pale in comparison with what is inherent in the use of nuclear weapons capable of destroying civilization on earth,

Reaffirming that the universally accepted objective is to eliminate completely the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons through the cessation of their production, followed by the destruction of their stockpiles, and that, to this end, priority in disarmament negotiations should be given to nuclear disarmament,

Convinced that, as the first step in this direction, the use of nuclear weapons and the waging of nuclear war should be outlawed,

SOLEMNLY PROCLAIMS, ON BEHALF OF THE STATES MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS,

1. States and statesmen that resort first to the use of nuclear weapons will be committing the gravest crime against humanity;

2. There will never be any justification or pardon for statesmen who would take the decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons;

3. Any doctrines allowing the first use of nuclear weapons and any actions pushing the world towards a catastrophe are incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the United Nations;

4. It is the supreme duty and direct obligation of the leaders of nuclear-weapon States to act in such a way as to eliminate the risk of the outbreak of a nuclear conflict. The nuclear-arms race must be stopped and reversed by joint effort, through negotiations conducted in good faith and on the basis of equality, having as their ultimate goal the complete elimination of nuclear weapons;

5. Nuclear energy should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and only for the benefit of mankind.