United Nations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOURTEENTH SESSION
Official Records

CONTENTS

Agenda Item 70
General and complete disarmament (continued)
General debate (continued) 25

Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

AGENDA ITEM 70

General and complete disarmament (A/4218, A/4219, A/
C.1/818, A/C.1/820) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. VAKIL (Iran) observed that the discussions on
   disarmament were being resumed under somewhat
   better auspices than the previous year. In the past,
   debates in the General Assembly had led to no positive
   solution of the problem but had undoubtedly been useful
   in paving the way to a reconciling of views and a
   climate favourable to attaining agreement. The res-
   umption of disarmament negotiations by the great
   Powers, the statement by Mr. Khurshchev, Chairman of
   the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, in the
   Assembly (79th plenary meeting), and the United
   States-Soviet communiqué of 27 September 1959,
   stating that the two Governments would make every
   effort to find a solution to the problem, all bore wit-
   ness to that favourable trend.

2. Numerous delegations had echoed the views ex-
   pressed by Mr. Khurshchev and all were agreed that
   the Soviet proposals (A/4219) deserved careful exami-
   nation. The delegation of Iran unreservedly subscribed
   to that view. Already at the League of Nations the
   promoters of disarmament had pointed out that, if
   civilization did not destroy armaments, armaments
   would destroy civilization. That prospect had latterly
   become a very real and terrifying one. For that
   reason, the Government of Iran would whole-heartedly
   support any move designed to facilitate the conclusion
   of a comprehensive agreement on disarmament. All
   were agreed that a disarmament plan could not yield
   the necessary results unless disarmament were gen-
   eral, complete and global. However, fourteen years of
   unsuccessful efforts had made it clear that more
   modest objectives should be set first if a comprehen-
   sive solution were to be attained ultimately. It was
   thus gratifying to note that the Soviet proposals did
   not rule out the possibility of armaments regulation
   and that progress had been made on the subject of
   control.

3. The ten-Power disarmament committee should
   endeavour to eliminate the mutual distrust which had
   hitherto prevented the United Nations from making de-
   cisive progress towards the common goal. There was
   reason to hope that the efforts of the committee would
   prove successful, provided that it endeavoured to pro-
   mote the necessary climate of confidence and aimed
   at achieving equal security for all rather than seeking
   to create military advantages for some at the expense
   of others. It was also to be hoped that the discussions
   of that committee would pave the way for constructive
   work by the United Nations Disarmament Commission,
   since according to the Charter the United Nations
   should have the ultimate responsibility in disarmament
   matters. Moreover, for disarmament measures to be
   universally observed, they should be accepted by all
   countries. As the Secretary-General had pointed out
   in his memorandum of the previous year (A/3936), the
   operation of an international control system would
   involve the specific interests of a significant number
   of Member States and would therefore require their
   co-operation.

4. Since the achievement of world-wide disarmament
   remained the full responsibility of the United Nations,
   that Organization should promote every effort to facili-
   tate its own action and not be content to remain a
   passive spectator, even in the preliminary phases of
   the deliberations.

5. Mr. DIALLO Alpha (Guinea) said that in a war in
   the atomic age there would be no limit to the area of
   destruction. That man could not be sure of controlling
   the weapons now available was clear from the fact
   that methods had to be devised to guard against sur-
   prise attacks. Moreover, there was no certainty that
   tests of nuclear weapons in any part of the world
   would not have adverse effects on future generations.

6. Disarmament was a matter of equal concern to the
   small States and the great Powers. Guinea had stated
   in the General Assembly (818th plenary meeting) that
   it would support any initiative designed to reduce
   international tension and would unreservedly support
   all measures designed to bring about prompt and ef-
   fective disarmament. Guinea welcomed the present
   signs of a more relaxed atmosphere, which it hoped
   would enable the question of disarmament to be viewed
   with greater objectivity. It was confident that the dis-
   armament proposals made so far held no fundamental
   contradictions since they all reflected the common
   ideal of world peace.

7. As a newly independent country, an under-de-
   veloped country, and the youngest of the independent
   African States, Guinea was naturally greatly concerned
   with one particular aspect of disarmament, namely the
   possibilities it provided for assistance to the under-
   developed countries. While grateful for the considera-
   tion given to that aspect, his delegation nevertheless
   firmly believed that technical assistance could be of
   value only if it took the form of freely negotiated
   co-operation and if it respected the sovereignty of the
   participating States. Assistance could be of use only
   in so far as it took into account the aspirations and
   interests of the peoples concerned. All States, both
   large and small, provided that they enjoyed full sov-
   ereignty, could always make positive contributions to
international co-operation. Accordingly, the delegation of Guinea believed that any programme for complete disarmament should necessarily provide for the liberation of areas under colonial domination. Such areas included all countries which still experienced poverty. A comparison of the immense potential resources of the African continent with its present small economic output illustrated the exact meaning of colonialism. Examples of the dynamism and prosperity of free nations were provided continually by the United States, Asia and Europe.

6. For a long time, subjugated Africa had provided several continents with soldiers for wars of which it had never approved. It was time for Africa to be freed from its bondage so that it might make a full contribution to the establishment of lasting peace. Meanwhile, Guinea would support any measure that might facilitate the achievement of complete disarmament.

9. Mr. PRIČA (Yugoslavia) attributed the recent progress in disarmament matters to the improved trend of international relations. The Powers principally concerned had been able to adopt a new approach to the problem and the progress achieved in the United Nations could not but strengthen the authority and extend the role of the Organization.

10. By that he did not merely mean that the United Nations—as an organizational framework for disarmament discussions—must not be "by-passed" by the great Powers. He meant primarily that, since the United Nations reflected the wishes and interests of the international community, it would inevitably have to play an increasingly active role in disarmament. The number of far-reaching disarmament proposals that had been submitted by various countries confirmed the vital role of the United Nations in that field.

11. The impending discussions of the ten-Power disarmament committee should not be allowed to impair the efforts of the United Nations to make a constructive contribution to the solution of the problem of disarmament. The Yugoslav Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had stated in the General Assembly (656th plenary meeting) that Yugoslavia accepted the composition of that committee as a practical measure in the belief that it had a temporary function to fulfil and that it would contribute to a gradual elimination of the present division of the world into blocs. No good could come of ignoring countries which were in a position to make a constructive contribution to disarmament precisely because they did not belong to any of the existing alignments. For that reason Yugoslavia had in the past proposed India as a member of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission.

12. Turning to the declaration of the Soviet Government on general and complete disarmament (A/4219) and the declaration of the United Kingdom on comprehensive disarmament (A/C.1/320), he noted that the proposal of the Soviet Union approached the problem of disarmament on a broader basis than hitherto. The President of Yugoslavia, Marshal Tito, had stated that a proposal which made provision for such far-reaching measures should be considered an ideal proposal and that, instead of being dismissed as a manoeuvre, such a proposal should be taken as a basis for discussions and, possibly, agreement. With regard to the allegations that it was unrealistic, President Tito had said that it was realistic to say that mankind was afraid of atomic war and nuclear tests with their attendant dangers to human and other forms of life.

13. At the same time, the Yugoslav Government was giving very careful consideration to the proposals on comprehensive disarmament presented by the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom and the Soviet proposals independently reflected the same fundamental approach, namely the need to achieve disarmament.

14. The United States had also expressed its readiness to do its utmost to achieve the aims of general and complete disarmament and had announced that it might submit new proposals. Furthermore, the Soviet representative, in his statement to the Committee (1026th meeting), had given useful additional explanations of his Government's views on the subject of control. The statements of the representatives of the United Kingdom (1025th meeting) and France (1030th meeting) had shown a similarly constructive approach.

15. The support given by the Yugoslav Government to the new proposals did not necessarily mean that it accepted them in all details. They provided a starting point from which general agreement could be sought. The most important common feature of those proposals might be the fact that progress in disarmament was no longer linked to political conditions or contingent upon the solution of political problems.

16. A comparison between the Soviet and the United Kingdom proposals should not be confined to a search for formal points of resemblance. The common elements should be viewed in the light of the common purpose, which was general disarmament. In such a broad context, complex questions became easier to solve. A comparison of the two proposals seemed to point particularly to a possible agreement on the limitation of conventional armaments and armed forces. It would, of course, be ill-advised to seek to separate the solutions of the various complex problems such as those of disarmament in the field of conventional weapons and disarmament in the nuclear field. Those problems included a series of elements which were to some extent interdependent.

17. For all the reasons he had given, he thought that the General Assembly at its present session could best contribute to a solution by helping to work out a primarily political approach to the various groups of problems. All progress achieved in disarmament should be viewed, therefore, as progress in overcoming the division of the world into opposing blocs. Moreover, technical disagreements on details should not be allowed to obscure the political prospects of an agreement, as had occurred in the past. A flexible and uninhibited approach was needed to achieve further progress towards the essential aim of general and complete disarmament.

18. It was for that reason that measures that could be carried out separately, concurrently with negotiations on more comprehensive steps, were of such significance. The Soviet Government had listed five such measures, the most important of which were the "thinning out" of forces and armaments through the establishment and control of an inspection zone, the reduction of foreign troops in Europe and the establishment of an "atom-free" zone in Central Europe. The United States had listed three such measures, of which the reduction of all armaments, both nuclear and conventional, seemed to be the most urgent. The first steps of the United Kingdom plan also provided for a number of measures which actually constituted preliminary negotiations and study.
19. The Yugoslav delegation believed that consideration of all such issues should be placed on the broadest possible basis and be undertaken without delay. They might not even have to be included in the comprehensive disarmament schemes but could be studied by the United Nations Disarmament Commission or its subsidiary bodies. It would in fact be very unfortunate if the Disarmament Committee were allowed to remain inactive or if its attention were devoted to secondary matters.

20. Furthermore, since the proposals did not cover all possibilities in the field of disarmament, any discussion of the current item should be viewed in the context of the other four disarmament items.

21. The question of the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons tests could not be overlooked in the debate on general and complete disarmament. It seemed obvious that the conditions had now fully matured for the suspension of such tests, as was clearly demonstrated by the fact that the tests had actually been discontinued during the past year.

22. The controversies raised by the question of control were often divorced from the realities of the situation. The objections of principle voiced following the submission of the USSR proposal appeared to have been adequately answered. However, discussions of "principle" in relation to entrenched positions adopted in advance were extremely dangerous. Measures of control should be the corollary of concrete disarmament measures which would create the desired atmosphere of international confidence. In the absence of confidence, control machinery, even if it could be set in operation before the adoption of disarmament measures, would only add to mutual suspicion and distrust. Moreover, the control machinery could not be endowed with primary responsibility for preserving peace; that responsibility should continue to devolve upon the United Nations and its appropriate organs and to be based on agreement among the great Powers. Consequently, existing United Nations machinery for the maintenance of peace—the Security Council, the General Assembly, the United Nations Disarmament Commission, etc.—should be revived and strengthened.

23. Disarmament, by its very nature, could be only an agreed and planned policy, and the machinery for its implementation should emerge from agreement and not constitute an instrument of coercion. The difference in the approach to the question of control could be settled only by practical and mutually acceptable solutions. To the extent that the desire for effective control of agreed disarmament measures reflected a legitimate striving for security, control measures were inseparable from disarmament measures. On the other hand, rigid positions with respect to specific forms of control might block progress towards genuine disarmament.

24. As initial steps towards that objective, the Yugoslav delegation proposed the reduction of military budgets, the transfer of fissionable materials to peaceful purposes and measures of disengagement.

25. The importance attached by the Yugoslav Government to the reduction of military budgets was shown by the fact that it had included the reduction of military expenditures among the disarmament measures it had proposed during the past few years. Military budgets amounted to approximately $100,000 million annually. That huge sum meant an enormous waste of human labour, intellect and skill. The sum of $9,000 million alone would be sufficient to eliminate most of the deficit in the financing of investments in the under-developed countries. Not only would the continuous growth of military budgets ultimately impoverish nations and jeopardize their future, but it would place a heavy psychological strain in relations between States. The reduction of military expenditure, as a practical measure of disarmament, need not affect the most vital sectors of defence at the outset and could be controlled with relative ease. Since it allowed wide latitude to each country in choosing the area in which the savings were to be realized, it could serve as an effective transition towards the reduction of armaments and armed forces.

26. The transfer of agreed quantities of fissionable materials to peaceful uses might be another effective transitional measure towards more far-reaching steps in the field of disarmament in nuclear weapons. It would reduce the potential stocks of nuclear weapons, open new avenues for the peaceful use of atomic energy and accelerate economic progress in all countries.

27. In connexion with disengagement proposals it was sufficient to recall the plan proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Mr. Rapacki, the place assigned to those problems in the communiqué of 3 March 1959 on the talks held between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Khrushchev, and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr. Macmillan, the peace plan submitted by the Western Powers at the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference, and various proposals of an unofficial character. The political significance of disengagement was clear: it would ease tensions in the most sensitive areas, that is, in areas where the main forces of the two military-political groups confronted each other, and it would not necessarily upset the balance of power in the world. Indeed, it should consolidate and stabilize that balance.

28. Yugoslavia had consistently held and continued to hold that the final objective of disarmament negotiations should be to achieve general agreement, including agreement on the total prohibition of the production and use of nuclear weapons and the elimination of stockpiles of such weapons. Its various proposals on the subject had been directed towards setting in motion, wherever possible, a simultaneous process of disarmament in the various fields, accompanied by the necessary control measures. The initiation of such a process should lead to the strengthening of international confidence, the creation of a climate favourable to further disarmament measures and to the settlement of outstanding international problems. Yugoslavia's policy reflected the following objectives: it was one of peaceful and active coexistence, broad international co-operation, and the avoidance of any type of political or military alliances. As a result of that policy, Yugoslavia was one of the zones of peace in the world. Those zones of peace, established through the efforts of countries bent on easing international tensions, on consolidating peace and on expanding international co-operation, were not, of course, an artificial political and military alternative in the form of a "third power". The existence and expansion of those zones reflected the positive development of the policies of a growing number of countries, whose positions in the world were extremely varied. The existence of such zones of peace and their extension to other parts of the world would, it was hoped, help to overcome the division of the world into blocs of States.
29. Through its efforts, its constructive proposals and the conciliatory and optimistic spirit of its debates, the Assembly could contribute actively to the further development of the current favourable trend in the field of disarmament.

30. Mr. ORTONA (Italy), noting that the debate reflected a real desire to achieve practical solutions in the field of disarmament and positive hopes that they could be achieved, said that his Government would co-operate fully in exploiting the favourable atmosphere thus created. In approaching the problem of general and complete disarmament, the Committee should not lose sight of its complexity, and should recognize that the military goal could not be attained unless there was at the same time a complete and general relaxation of tension. Reviewing past attempts to deal with the disarmament problem, he noted that nations had always yearned for complete and general disarmament and expressed regret that the Baruch plan, which had affirmed the principle of such disarmament, had not been accepted. Had it been applied, world politics would have taken an entirely different course. Past failures to progress towards disarmament must be explained by the absence of a political understanding on the question of disarmament. Italy therefore favoured a solution of outstanding political problems and, as they mainly concerned Europe, any agreement on disarmament that would imply discrimination against Europe or any European country should be avoided.

31. Disarmament should be progressive, balanced and effectively controlled by international means. There appeared to be no argument against carrying out disarmament in stages. Italy was prepared to support that principle, but hoped that the required period would be as short as possible. It attached great importance to the practical implementation of the principle of balanced disarmament, which would guarantee the security of States as the reduction in armaments progressed. Simultaneous and proportionate measures should be envisaged, both to reduce and conventional weapons irrespective of the final level of armaments agreed upon. Moreover, disarmament was inseparable from control and, while the need for control was universally accepted, there were major differences regarding the concept of "effectiveness" and the "time" when controls should become operative. Control should run parallel with disarmament; it should not go into effect only after disarmament had been achieved. "Effective" control meant a comprehensive system of inspection. In view of the complexity of the production cycle and the characteristics of weapons at present in use in relation to the territorial extension of the various countries, the institution of such a system was likely to prove most difficult. Italy was prepared to accept the boldest proposals on that aspect of disarmament.

32. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy had stated in the general debate in the Assembly (50th plenary meeting), military disarmament would be more readily attainable if it were preceded and strengthened by an agreement with respect to propaganda. Psychological and political disarmament was a necessary concomitant to military disarmament. As the threat of military conflict diminished, it became vitally important to control propaganda and increase understanding among peoples. Consequently the barriers which divided them should be progressively broken down through an intense and unlimited exchange of information and ideas.

33. Various problems of a technical nature relating to defence should be thoroughly investigated by experts working on a permanent basis. The value of preliminary, technical studies of specific problems in the fields of disarmament and security had been borne out by the Conference of Experts to Study the Possibility of Detecting Violations of a Possible Agreement on the Suspension of Nuclear Tests and the Conference of Experts for the study of possible measures which might be helpful in preventing surprise attack. However, such studies should always be carried out within the larger framework of general disarmament; disarmament was essentially a problem which could not be divided into separate parts. Italy hoped that the experts' work on nuclear tests would bear fruit and favoured resumption of the talks on the prevention of surprise attacks.

34. In establishing a relationship between the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the ten-Power disarmament committee, precautions should be taken to reaffirm that the United Nations retained primary responsibility in matters of disarmament under its Charter. Italy strongly favoured the appointment of a representative of the Secretary-General to attend the meetings of the ten-Power committee. The United Kingdom delegation's suggestion to that effect (1029th meeting) was indeed useful and timely.

35. Reviewing the various specific proposals before the Committee, he said that the Italian Government regarded the United Kingdom plan as a reasonable and practical basis for immediate progress towards an agreement on the reduction of armaments. It was directed towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and provided a satisfactory balance between nuclear and conventional disarmament. Italy also viewed with favour the USSR proposal put forward by Mr. Khrouchtchev in the General Assembly and introduced in the Committee by Mr. Kuznetsoy (1026th meeting). It would welcome any resolution which would refer to all those proposals and to any other suggestions relating to general and complete disarmament and would stress that progress towards that goal was a means of strengthening peace and security.

36. The various aspects of the question of control should be studied from a technical point of view. First, the different types of control should be scrutinized with a view to determining their effectiveness and to providing commensurate means of implementing them. Secondly, there should be a thorough study of the measures to be adopted to cope with possible violations of international agreements on total disarmament. In that connexion, the provisions of the United Nations Charter should be revised in order to provide the Security Council and the General Assembly with an international military instrument to guarantee peace effectively. When the necessary amendments to the Charter had been adopted, the principle of unanimity of the great Powers would also have to be revised, for it was based on a concept of pre-eminent military power which would have ceased to exist. Another area of study had to be borne in mind, namely that as soon as real progress in disarmament was made, procedures would have to be worked out to enable the less developed countries to benefit from the reductions in military expenditure.
37. Implementation of the proposals for complete and general disarmament would undoubtedly necessitate structural adjustments in the relations between nations and within the United Nations. The proposals should be considered seriously, with the determination to achieve results, and generalizations should be avoided. It was prepared to make the fullest contribution to the attainment of the common goal.

38. Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands) noted that, while some progress had been made in the discussions on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, the situation had not changed as far as disarmament was concerned. Yet, the possibility of some progress had been brought nearer by the talks between the President of the United States and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, who had formally recognized that the question of general disarmament was the most important one facing the world today.

39. Previously, it had been held that disarmament could be achieved only in the context of a settlement of outstanding political problems; more recently, the view had gained ground that disarmament could itself contribute to the creation of a better political climate. However, the new tendency must not be permitted to result in the abandonment of the search for political solutions, for progress in disarmament without accompanying progress on political questions might give rise to a false feeling of security; it was essential to continue to strive for agreement on such issues as Germany, Berlin, and Korea.

40. The Government of the Netherlands welcomed the establishment of the ten-Power disarmament committee and attached great importance to its forthcoming discussions, but it favoured a further strengthening of the ties between the committee and the United Nations along the lines of the relationship worked out with the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests; it also wished to see a clearly defined relationship between the United Nations and the international control organ which would be set up under an agreement on the discontinuance of tests.

41. A comparison of the Soviet and the United Kingdom disarmament proposals, which, together with the plans advanced by other States, would provide the basis for the ten-Power committee's discussions, showed how many obstacles still barred the way to even limited agreement. He would suggest that the delegates at the forthcoming talks should bear in mind the following points:

1) In order to avoid repeating past failures, the committee should search for common elements rather than points of disagreement in the various proposals submitted.

2) Measures of disarmament in both conventional and nuclear weapons must be interwoven at every stage in the disarmament process so as to maintain the balance of power between the major blocs and avoid endangering world security.

3) While comprehensive disarmament remained the goal, the experience of recent years had shown that it must be achieved in stages and that too ambitious a programme of disarmament should not be attempted at any single stage.

4) Measures of disarmament and corresponding measures for effective international control must be undertaken simultaneously in order to remove any possible suspicion that one was being pressed at the expense of the other.

(5) Recent negotiations had shown the value of detailed study of the technical aspects of disarmament; however, technical studies did not automatically lead to disarmament and must therefore be coupled with discussion of the political aspects of the problem.

42. The Soviet Union was not alone in calling for general and complete disarmament. The United Kingdom plan also provided for the ultimate reduction of armed forces and armaments to levels required for internal security only, and earlier Western proposals had pursued the same broad goal. The question was whether the Soviet plan did not underestimate the complexity of the problem and seek to accomplish too much in too short a time. He wondered whether, in providing that the first and second stages should be limited to conventional disarmament and that nuclear disarmament should be deferred until the third stage, the Soviet plan struck the proper balance between the two types of disarmament. The United Kingdom proposal was better balanced and more realistic in that respect, although it, too, took a cautious approach in calling for only study and research measures in the first stage.

43. Nevertheless, he wished to stress the need for measures of conventional disarmament, for such measures would allay the concern felt by the countries of Western Europe over the close proximity of the Soviet Union's vast armed forces equipped with conventional weapons. Conventional disarmament would also, of course, have to be accompanied by control and inspection, and the reference to "appropriate control" made in that connexion in the Soviet plan was not entirely clear. The Soviet plan stated unequivocally that "upon the completion of general and complete disarmament... the international control organ shall have free access to all objects of control". However, his delegation considered it more important that there should be free access to the objects subject to control at each stage in the disarmament process; the Soviet plan appeared to defer genuine control until that process was complete.

44. Experience had shown that, while it was relatively easy to reach agreement in broad terms on the international control of disarmament, wide differences of opinion invariably emerged as soon as the discussion turned to questions of detail. While insistence on an absolutely perfect system of control would not lead to a satisfactory solution of the technical problems involved, neither would the attitude that control was less important than disarmament itself and that, since it largely served the interests of espionage, it should be held to a minimum. If the current Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests, which seemed to be entering a decisive stage, resulted in the conclusion of an agreement on control, it would augur well for the possibility of establishing effective control in the field of general disarmament. The course of the Conference showed that agreement on questions of control could be achieved only through negotiations conducted by a limited number of participants and on the basis of concrete proposals that were limited in scope.

45. Even if general and complete disarmament was achieved, the problem of maintaining peace in the world would remain. Although the Soviet proposal
recognized that fact, it did not go beyond the statement that any differences which arose should be settled by the peaceful means prescribed by the Charter. The United Kingdom proposal went further, pointing out that in a disarmed world it would remain the common task of all Governments to keep the peace. He agreed with the United States representative that further study should be given to that problem, particularly with reference to providing guarantees that the small States would not be left defenceless against the large ones. Since, moreover, power politics assumed forms other than the military, he wished to propose that, in addition to the questions suggested by the United States representative, the disarmament committee should examine the question of the rules which should guide political and economic relations between States in a world in which disarmament had been given a dominant place.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.