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. Krishna MENON (India) proposed that the list of speakers should be closed at midday on 28 October.

It was so decided.

2. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) said he wished to reply to the representative of the Ukrainian SSR, who, at the 1032nd meeting, had accused him of praising all military institutions and of alleging that for many peoples they represented a feature of national life and a long-standing tradition. The Ukrainian representative seemed to have misunderstood the position of the Argentine delegation. To start with, it was incorrect to take the Argentine delegation’s statement (1028th meeting) as evidence of a bellicose attitude, which would have been out of keeping both with his country’s historic position and with the stand it had adopted in the present debate. The Argentine delegation had firmly supported the idea of progressive and controlled disarmament and had categorically denounced the dangers of the armaments race; that was why it had acknowledged the merits of the plan put forward by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom (798th plenary meeting) and had proposed that plan, together with the proposal of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev, (799th plenary meeting) should be examined by the ten-Power disarmament committee.

3. What the Argentine delegation had actually maintained was that military institutions were historic bodies occupying an important position in the traditions of peoples and that, far from having always been instruments of death and destruction, they had also been schools of honour and courage serving the cause of culture and of law and order. Armies had had a negative and destructive influence only when they had been exploited by Governments thirsting for domination. Among peoples devoid of any such aspirations they had always been the mainstay of national liberty.

4. The true responsibility for wars of conquest lay not with the military men but with those who sent them into battle, and the expression of such a view did not reflect a bellicose attitude.

5. Mr. ULLOA (Peru) said that, according to a large section of world opinion, the question of disarmament was a matter for the great Powers alone. However, by its very nature and scope, that question was of concern to the entire international community, including peoples that were not yet in a position to make themselves heard and to take part in decisions, for the policy followed by the great Powers with regard to disarmament was bound to have repercussions on all mankind. It was therefore because they formed part of the human race and were affected by the common danger that the small countries were entitled to express their views; that was what gave their voice—a weak but a sincere one—its special quality of sympathy and understanding. The voice of the weaker countries might perhaps be powerless to protect and defend them, but they would at least have a quiet conscience. Those countries, in Latin America and elsewhere, were peace-loving; they had no atomic weapons; nor, indeed, did they wish to have any. But the fact remained that the problem of disarmament was world-wide in scope.

6. He noted with satisfaction that the statements made at the General Assembly’s present session, ever since Mr. Khrushchev had put forward his plan, had shown a concern for the welfare of mankind. That was in line with the trend which had already become evident in international law to regard man, not as the indirect subject of international law, that was to say, primarily as a national of a particular country, but rather as a human being.

7. Efforts had long been made to prevent or reduce human suffering. To that end, the so-called laws of war had been drawn up. Organizations such as the International Red Cross and, more recently, the ILO, WHO, FAO and UNESCO had been set up for the protection of man. But the threat of war was frustrating the hopes placed in those efforts, since the purpose of the manufacture and use of atomic weapons was clearly the annihilation of mankind. Accordingly, attempts had recently been made to limit or even obviate the threat of annihilation by seeking to ban nuclear weapons tests, prevent surprise attacks and create neutral or “atom-free” zones. General and complete disarmament was now being discussed, and that was a welcome development. It would be unjust not to give the Soviet and United Kingdom plans the attention they deserved, as they were in the spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations, reaffirmed in the Charter of the United Nations, which contained quite explicit provisions on the subject.

8. Each of the Governments of the great Powers wished to obtain recognition of its own efforts to bring about a limitation of armaments, but it was the duty of the United Nations to take a realistic view of the question of disarmament. It was necessary to admit the possibility of partial measures, such as a ban on the testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons and the prevention of surprise attacks. But all such measures presupposed genuine and effective control,
regarded in the light, not of hostile interference, but of collaboration to achieve the common goal. With such a control, it would be possible to consider the liquidation of military bases and the gradual withdrawal of occupation forces, once the system of security which they represented had been replaced by another system, equally effective but more legitimate. The world must be convinced of the impossibly, or at least of the futility, of aggression in the face of preventive measures and international sanctions. Without control measures and an enforcement agency, a multilateral obligation of such wide scope would remain a dead letter. The control measures would therefore have to be defined in a multilateral agreement, which would require, for instance, on the one hand that stockpiles of nuclear weapons should be destroyed and bases, warships and military aircraft dismantled and, on the other hand, that the manufacture of arms and the recruitment of troops should be forbidden. Such obligations presupposed collective measures against possible acts of aggression and collective sanctions. Without such measures and sanctions, it was not possible to avoid aggression, as had been evident after the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy of 1928. Such collective measures should be immediate and obligatory, and that called for an effective standing organization as well as for the international and regional co-operation provided for in the United Nations Charter. However, since an aggression might be prepared in secret and escape international control, it was absolutely necessary to provide for sanctions to contain such aggression. For that purpose, it should be possible to mobilize immediately an international force in the widest and most general sense of the term. That force was expressly provided for in the Charter; it should be organized with the military staff also provided for in the Charter.

9. The time was not yet ripe for a detailed study of the organization of control. But it required the participation not only of the great Powers, which would be responsible for the control, but also of the neutral countries, whose moral contribution was not without importance. The contribution of all those States ought to be purely technical and non-political. Finally, there should be no right of veto in the matter of control, of assistance given to a country under attack or of sanctions against an aggressor.

10. Mr. Khrushchev and other speakers had emphasized the economic repercussions of disarmament. It was indeed true that the armaments race not only failed to reach its goal, but might also entail the economic ruin of many peoples. There was another economic aspect to the matter, namely, economic aid to the underdeveloped countries. That obligation would not be abolished as a result of the savings accomplished through disarmament, nor could assistance to the underdeveloped countries depend upon partial progress in that direction. Such assistance should, on the contrary, serve to promote moral disarmament, since people would become more and more peace-loving as their well-being grew.

11. Police forces and the maintenance of internal law and order presented other problems. It was not merely a matter of the total strength of a police force, though that could in itself constitute an international threat; it was also a question of administrative distribution, since an undue concentration in frontier regions might cause friction. There was, in addition, the question of the conventional weapons required by the police, including aircraft and auxiliary naval units.

12. The question of armaments had its less gloomy side. Many Latin-American armies played a civilizing role and contributed to civic education. They had, in particular, contributed to the establishment of many organizations and institutions. Moreover, most of them threatened no one or created no international problem.

13. Among the great problems involved in disarmament was that of strength, which could not be solved without impeding the progress of the peoples. The factors which arose in that connexion were the conversion of peaceful industries to war industries, the demographic and geographical position of States, their communications, their merchant navies, their civil aviation and their capacity for producing and utilizing atomic energy. The problem could, however, be solved through a system of aid in the event of aggression and sanctions against the aggressor.

14. But the problems raised by disarmament were so vast and so grave that they could be solved only by stages, as opportunity presented. The first step might be to stop tests of nuclear weapons and make surprise attacks impossible. The next step might be to try to eliminate nuclear weapons by prohibiting their manufacture and stockpiling. The reduction of conventional armaments would follow, and then the destruction of stockpiles. All those measures should be carried out under effective international control.

15. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted with satisfaction that most delegations had welcomed the specific programme of general and complete disarmament submitted by the USSR Government (A/4219). It was plain, in particular, from the statements of the representatives of the United States (1027th meeting) and the United Kingdom (1029th meeting) that their Governments endorsed the idea of general and complete disarmament and were prepared to give serious consideration to the USSR proposal. To judge by Mr. Moch's statement (1030th meeting), France took the same attitude. Referring, by way of example, to the speeches made by the representatives of Czechoslovakia (1027th meeting), Romania (1030th meeting), Greece (1030th meeting) and Italy (1031st meeting), he remarked that not one voice had been raised against the programme proposed by his Government; all States, or at any rate an overwhelming majority of States, accepted general and complete disarmament in principle. The USSR declaration did not, of course, provide a solution worked out to the last detail, and much concerted effort would be required to translate the broad principles enunciated in it into the clauses of an agreement.

16. The talks held in September 1959 between the Heads of Government of the Soviet Union and the United States had done much to improve the international climate, and that was an encouraging development. With the easing of tension, there was hope of breaking the deadlock in the negotiations on disarmament. Hence it was important that all States, especially those which had the largest armed forces, should tackle the disarmament problem with all the energy at their disposal. If they did, a specific plan could certainly be drawn up. The USSR Government would spare no effort in searching for generally acceptable formulas. It was ready to examine any amendments to its plan and to study any other proposal conducive to an agreement on general and complete disarmament. The United Kingdom repre-
sentative's statement, in particular, should be examined in detail.

17. As many delegations had emphasized, the USSR proposal constituted a radically new approach to the disarmament problem. The fact was that, given the present level of development of military technology and the nature of international relations, only by destroying the means of waging war could a holocaust be prevented. So long as land, naval and air forces, foreign military bases and deposits of nuclear weapons were in existence, there could be no real guarantee of peace. In other words, until general and complete disarmament had been successfully completed, the causes of the armaments race would persist.

18. Many States reserved their position with regard to partial disarmament measures, fearing that such measures would apply to the types of armaments in which they excelled and so upset the balance of power. The USSR programme obviated the possibility of any State obtaining a military advantage.

19. Another factor which hampered the solution of the problem and which would disappear if the USSR proposal were accepted was the difficulty concerning control. That point had given rise to countless complications, both real and imaginary. The reason was that previously only partial measures, which could not dissipate the atmosphere of mistrust, had been contemplated; under those conditions, no State could accept general and complete control and thorough inspection of its entire territory. Indeed, running as they did, the risk of attack from without, States would rightly feel that control would endanger their security.

20. If, however, general and complete disarmament took place, total control would become possible and the USSR was ready to accept the strictest form of such control. In that connexion, it felt that control should be in proportion to the specific disarmament measures taken, and Mr. Khrushchev had emphasized that for each stage of disarmament there should be a corresponding stage of control, until the process had been completed, after which the control teams would remain on the spot to make sure that the agreement was fully observed. Consequently, the United States representative's remark that the USSR had failed to make clear what type of control or inspection it would accept was completely without foundation. The United Kingdom representative, for his part, had quoted the USSR representative's remark that control was not an end in itself and that it was inseparable from disarmament. The representative of the Union of South Africa had observed (1032nd meeting) that there seemed to be some agreement in principle that the extent of control should conform to the stage of disarmament, and the Cuban representative had said (1030th meeting) that it was unthinkable that the Soviet Union would reject the idea of control.

21. A number of representatives had expressed some concern as to the way in which the security of States would be ensured after general and complete disarmament had been carried out. They wondered whether, human nature being what it was, war was not an inevitable occurrence. Whether or not they had been in all cases sincerely expressing a genuine concern, their apprehension had been unfounded. It was a mistake to think that man was bellicose by nature and was governed by the instincts of a savage beast. Mankind was living in the twentieth century—the century, as Mr. Khrushchev had said, of the greatest flourishing of human reason and genius and of the harnessing of the forces of nature. If, instead of faith in the mind of civilized man, fear that his dark animal instincts might awaken predominated, it would be impossible to break the deadlock and escape from the vicious circle formed by the armaments race and international tension.

22. War had never been the result of anything in human nature and today all the requisite conditions were present to prevent it forever. In recent years, thanks to the concerted action of peace-loving forces, armed conflicts had been prevented in various parts of the world.

23. The idea of peaceful coexistence had gained recognition in international law. Many countries based their foreign policy on it and it had received unanimous support at the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the General Assembly (resolutions 1235 (XII) and 1301 (XIII)). General and complete disarmament would obviously constitute a still greater safeguard for peaceful coexistence. Disputes would no doubt continue to arise, but they would be settled by negotiation and other peaceful means. The moral factor would thus come to play an increasingly important part in international relations.

24. The role of the United Nations would also be a more significant one. In that connexion it should be noted that, as Mr. Khrushchev had said in the General Assembly, a feature of a properly functioning international body was that questions should be resolved not by the formal counting of votes, but by way of reasonable and patient searching for fair solutions acceptable for all sides.

25. Almost all delegations agreed that the threat of nuclear war must be removed, but some of them perceived the main danger not in the nuclear weapons themselves but in the means of delivering them, such as rockets, long-range aircraft and submarines. The means used, however, mattered little; the consequences of any nuclear attack would be equally terrible. It was nuclear weapons that must be banned, and not rockets and aircraft, which could serve peaceful and scientific purposes. Ever since 1946, the USSR Government had been asking for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, the destruction of the stockpiles and the cessation of the manufacture of such weapons. It was ready to take all the necessary steps to that effect without further delay.

26. The question of partial measures of disarmament had been raised during the debate. While advocating general and complete disarmament, the Soviet Union was in no way opposed to the adoption of partial measures. The proposals it had submitted on 10 May 1955/ and reintroduced in its declaration of 19 September 1959 could be used as the basis for an agreement in the matter.

27. Consideration of the problem of general and complete disarmament would not delay the solution of the question of the cessation of nuclear tests for all time. The USSR Government had demonstrated by deeds its desire to bring about a complete cessation of those tests. Only recently, it had decided that it would not resume test explosions, provided that the Western Powers similarly refrained. That measure cleared the way for an agreement on the cessation of tests. At Geneva, the Soviet Union had submitted proposals on

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questions which were still unresolved. Furthermore, it had supported the United Kingdom proposal with regard to on-site inspections, which provided a simple solution to the problem of the number of journeys to be made by inspection teams to the spot where it was suspected that an explosion had taken place. The USSR position had been brought closer to that of the Western Powers with regard to the composition of control posts. The Soviet Union's proposals provided a possibility for reaching immediate agreement on the cessation of tests for all time. The USSR Government was ready to sign an agreement to that effect. If the Western Powers made similar efforts to achieve progress in the negotiations, the agreement would soon become a fact.

29. Turning to a related question, he recalled that at their Conference of Experts for the study of possible measures which might be helpful in preventing surprise attack, held at Geneva in 1955, the socialist countries had submitted specific proposals offering a satisfactory basis for agreement. Unfortunately, the Western Powers had refused to consider the proposals. The United States representative's statement indicated that today his country was prepared to study not only technical questions but also practical measures whereby surprise attacks could be prevented. Consequently, in that respect too, there was hope of progress.

29. Generally speaking, the Soviet Union had always been in favour of disarmament negotiations based on the principles of equality and of respect for the interests of the different States. The United Kingdom representative had held the Soviet Union responsible for the interruption in the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. In actual fact, it had been recognized in 1957 that the Commission and its Sub-Committee had outlived their usefulness because of their composition. Since the Western Powers had at the General Assembly's twelfth session rejected the Albanian proposal (A/1,226) which would have enabled States to work on an equal footing, the Disarmament Commission had been prevented by its faulty composition from taking effective action. Its failure could not be laid at the door of the Soviet Union. Moreover, at the thirteenth session the General Assembly had changed the composition of the Disarmament Commission to include all Member States (resolution 1252 D (XIII)). Recently, a ten-Power disarmament committee had been set up, the establishment of which had been welcomed by the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

30. In conclusion, he emphasized that the USSR proposal on disarmament had been acclaimed enthusiastically by the people in all countries. An agreement in that field would be interpreted throughout the world as a convincing proof of the sincere desire of States to conduct international relations on the basis of friendship and co-operation. By approving the USSR proposal, the General Assembly would go a long way towards setting mankind free forever from the threat of war.

31. Mr. UMAÑA BERNAL (Colombia) observed that the small, unarmed countries, the countries which suffered the consequences of economic under-development, were participating in the discussion, which might well be termed historic, as observers. Nevertheless, they had a voice and a vote in the discussion and their attitude could contribute, for better or for worse, to the solution of the problem.

32. After recalling, in connexion with the new United Kingdom Plan, the proposal submitted to the Sub-

Committee of the Disarmament Commission by France and the United Kingdom in 1956, 2 the plan submitted by France and the United Kingdom in 1954, 3 which had been supported in the Sub-Committee by the United States and Canada, and resolution 914 (X), approved by the General Assembly in 1955, he observed the view that all the questions relating to disarmament, except perhaps the question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara, could have been embodied in a single agenda item. It was difficult to discuss the USSR and United Kingdom proposals without referring to the other questions.

33. The United Kingdom plan seemed the more likely to produce positive and lasting results. Moreover, it sought to bring about a simultaneous reduction of nuclear and conventional armaments, which were in fact becoming increasingly difficult to separate, in order to prevent a dangerous imbalance in the defensive capacity of the great Powers during the disarmament process. The progressive measures envisaged in the plan would also make it possible to establish by stages the essential machinery for inspection, supervision and control, which obviously could not be set up overnight.

34. With regard to the USSR plan, his delegation agreed that it was necessary to accept the sincerity of its sponsors. There were several indications of a certain relaxation of tension between the East and the West which might help to bring about agreement. The idea of general and complete disarmament in principle was attractive, because it showed a desire for peaceful coexistence and would allow the scientific, technical and economic effort which was now absorbed by the armaments race to be devoted to the improvement of mankind's conditions of life. It might seem unrealistic to envisage the possibility of general and complete disarmament within four years, but the Soviet Union appeared to realize that fact, since it did not rule out the possibility of a gradual process of disarmament. In that connexion the subsidiary formula contained in the proposal deserved attention. As Mr. Moch had said, the wise traveller took care of his horse. Perfectionism, as Mr. Lodge had pointed out and as Ortega y Gasset had said, was a redoubtable obstacle.

35. His delegation was not persuaded that the mere abolition of armaments could change man’s nature and destroy his thirst for domination and the aggressiveness of homo homini lupus. The national militias and police forces which the Soviet Union proposed to maintain to preserve internal security could easily be transformed into para-military formations and might eventually become actual armies used for defensive or aggressive purposes. The small countries would then be at the mercy of nations possessing larger and better equipped police forces than their own.

36. Those misgivings touched upon the fundamental problem of security, which had been discussed concurrently with disarmament since the days of the League of Nations, and the question of confidence. In order to create a climate in which agreement on disarmament was possible, public opinion would have to be convinced that there was a firm intention to settle existing and future differences by peaceful means with-

2 ibid., Supplement for January to December 1956, document DC/83, annex 2.
out resort to force. Such an intention could only be demonstrated by deeds. It was true that after the discussions between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and the President of the United States a reassuring statement had been made on 27 September 1959 on the question of Berlin. But, since that statement, certain countries had shown that they did not exclude the use of their military forces in settling disputes with other countries. Frontier incidents had occurred, which seemed to indicate an intention to settle territorial differences by force. It had been said, with disconcerting frankness, that so-called "wars of liberation" would have to continue. But history showed that all great military conflicts had had as their aim or pretext the liberation of some territory or ethnic group. There existed, too, the danger of disturbances within a country directed and encouraged from outside, which was a means of bringing about imperialist domination under the cloak of ideological principles. The use of diplomatic and consular services for spreading subversive propaganda was another method which had been employed in several Latin-American countries. The Argentine representative had spoken of an ideology of universal redemption, and such an ideology was an obstacle to spiritual disarmament, which was more necessary than physical disarmament if the goal of peaceful co-existence was to be achieved.

37. With regard to the perennial question of inspection and control, it seemed that the Eastern and the Western positions were no longer so irretrievably opposed. Both sides recognized the need for control and inspection, the only point of disagreement being the methods to be adopted and the stage at which control and inspection should be introduced. The progressive reduction of armaments had the advantage of facilitating the progressive establishment of control, but the question was a highly complicated one, and the technical aspects would have to be considered by experts.

38. Consolidation of the international security agencies would make them more effective instruments for prompt settlement of disputes. There was a whole series of proposals concerning the revision of the Charter or the application of its provisions to that end. In agreement with the views expressed by the United States representative, various representatives had stressed the need for study of the political aspect of disarmament simultaneously with the military aspect. The suggestion made by the Greek representative in that connexion would be generally welcomed.

39. In order to increase the effectiveness of the means for maintaining security, it seemed essential to establish a real United Nations emergency force, as suggested by the representative of Ireland (605th plenary meeting).

40. The Committee had also before it the report of the Disarmament Commission (A/4209), which had unanimously approved the creation of the ten-Power disarmament committee. Unlike some delegations, his delegation believed that the countries most directly concerned, in particular the representatives of the two great blocs into which the world was divided, were best qualified to examine the differing points of view and to try to find a solution acceptable to all. It was logical that the United Kingdom and USSR proposals should be referred to the ten-Power committee, which would take into account the suggestions made in the course of the discussion, especially with regard to the necessity of studying the political aspect of disarmament.

41. His country was by tradition peace-loving and, having no desire to dominate other countries, had never thought it necessary to maintain a large army. The Colombian Army, which two years earlier had helped in the re-establishment of democracy, was responsible for keeping order inside the country and was taking part in the work of national reconstruction. If general disarmament became a reality, the Colombian armed forces could easily be integrated into civilian activities.

42. His delegation was not pessimistic; it was moderately optimistic. If, as had been announced, the debate resulted in a joint draft resolution by the great Powers of the Western world and those of the Soviet bloc, his delegation would be satisfied and its confidence in the final outcome would be strengthened.

43. Mr. MOCH (France) said that the Soviet representative had probably been right in saying in the statement he had just made that it was necessary to prohibit nuclear warheads rather than the means of delivery. But it was some years since the world had passed the point of no return, beyond which control of the destruction of stocks of fissionable material was practically impossible. Beyond that point no nation could ever be sure that other countries had not hidden away enough to destroy at least a part of the world.

44. After devoting a large part of his statement to the idea of progressive control, the Soviet representative had finally given priority to measures where no control was possible. Therein lay the weakness of his statement: it was possible at the present time to control the means for delivering fissionable material but it was impossible to control existing stocks of such material. It might be possible to find a combination of the two approaches which would superimpose upon the necessary prohibition of stockpiling fissionable material, (a prohibition which would have only a moral value because it was uncontrollable) a prohibition which could still be controlled at the present stage, of the use of rockets, satellites and other vehicles for the delivery of fissionable material for military purposes. Before the meeting of the ten-Power disarmament committee it was important that that question, on which the success of its work might depend, should receive careful consideration.

45. Mr. LODGE (United States of America), referring to the Soviet representative's comments concerning his statement at the Committee's 1027th meeting, said that his remark concerning the control and inspection which the Soviet Union would be prepared to accept on its own proposal for general and complete disarmament was fully justified.

46. The essential element of inspection and control was that it should be established under conditions that assured its effectiveness. It was inspection and control that counted, not statements of general policy on the matter. That was illustrated by the fact that at the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests the three main issues still outstanding—the composition of the staffs of the control posts, voting procedure in the control commissions, and the number and nature of inspections—were all concerned with the control mechanism. The position of the Soviet Union, therefore, was not crystal clear—far from it. It was not known exactly what controls the Soviet Union had in mind for its new proposal, and all members of the Committee were anxious to find out what they were.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.