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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

AGENDA ITEM 68

Question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara (A/4183) (concluded)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (concluded)

1. Mr. KESTLER (Guatemala) explained that his delegation, which was anxious to remain objective and impartial but was also mindful of its friendship for the two parties concerned, had been unable to support either of the two extreme draft resolutions before the Committee at its 1053rd meeting: the one submitted by the twenty-two Powers (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1) had contained statements incompatible with the explanations had reassurances given by the French representative and had not been drafted in the most suitable terms; while the draft resolution submitted by Italy, Peru and the United Kingdom (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1) had contained no positive formula for the General Assembly's attitude in face of the grave concern felt by the peoples of Africa but had, on the other hand, envisaged French participation in arrangements which might be worked out for the suspension of tests, and had thus prejudged a question that was outside the scope of the debate. The Guatemalan delegation had therefore welcomed the amendments submitted by the five Latin-American countries (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1), which were more in keeping with the discussion that had taken place and contained a new element—the reference to the negotiations at Geneva—which also figured in the sub-amendments submitted by Ghana and Indonesia (A/C.1/L.241). When the latter had been put to the vote, Guatemala had voted for the three paragraphs which referred to the Geneva negotiations and at the same time had stressed the contradiction between France's decision and the continuation of those negotiations. It had either cast a negative vote or abstained, however, on those paragraphs which reflected the original twenty-two-Power draft. Once the amendments were incorporated the twenty-two-Power text, the Guatemalan delegation, in order to maintain its position, had had no logical alternative but to cast a negative vote, though its objec-

tion to the remaining paragraphs was confined to their wording. His vote could not therefore be interpreted as meaning that his country ignored the grave misgivings of the African peoples.

2. In view of his delegation's position, he had been equally unable to vote for the three-Power draft resolution. Guatemala's position in the General Assembly would be determined by whether or not the Assembly had before it a draft resolution similar to the amendments submitted by the five Latin-American countries. Thus Guatemala's negative attitude towards two extreme draft resolutions sprang from a desire to see a conciliatory position prevail, and from a feeling of sympathy for both parties.

AGENDA ITEM 67

Prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons (A/4125, A/C.1/L.235/Rev.2)

GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/C.1/L.235/Rev.2)

3. Mr. AILEN (Ireland) said that the draft resolution put forward by his delegation on the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/L.235/Rev.2) in no way conflicted with the objective of general disarmament, on which the First Committee had (1042nd meeting) unanimously adopted a draft resolution. But it had been rightly pointed out that progress in the latter direction was likely to be slow. The new draft resolution was accordingly intended to prevent further deterioration in the armaments situation, which, if it occurred, might render general disarmament unattainable and bring about world war.

4. The first paragraph of the preamble of the present draft resolution had been the second preambular paragraph of the draft resolution on that subject submitted by the Irish delegation at the thirteenth session (A/C.1/L.208). At that time the First Committee had adopted that paragraph by 37 votes to none (970th meeting). But certain delegations, while supporting the idea of restricting nuclear weapons, had not favoured the establishment of an ad hoc committee to study the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons, as called for in the operative part of that draft resolution; and he had accordingly withdrawn the latter, expressing the hope that the danger recognized by the First Committee would be studied by the newly enlarged Disarmament Commission.

5. The enlarged Disarmament Commission had met only once and had dealt solely with the resolution welcoming the agreement to establish the ten-Power disarmament committee (A/4209). In the hope that the ten-nation committee would deal with the most urgent aspects of the arms race, the present draft requested it to study the feasibility of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons during the years in which the question of disarmament and related political problems were being discussed; the aim would be to arrive at agree-
ments, containing the necessary safeguards, whereby the
Powers producing nuclear weapons would refrain
from transferring them to any nation not possessing
its own nuclear weapons, and whereby the States not
possessing their own nuclear weapons would refrain
from manufacturing or accepting them.

6. The nuclear Powers alluded to in the present draft
resolution would be all the Powers producing nuclear
weapons at the time of signature of the suggested
agreements: the longer the agreements were delayed,
the greater was the danger of an increase in the number
of nuclear Powers, and thus of a threat to the precarious
balance of destructive weapons and forces which had
given the world the uneasy peace of the past few years.

7. The situation of two ideological blocs confronting
each other, each backed by the military capacity to
annihilate civilization, was fraught with danger; but
techniques, which were slowly increasing in effective-
ness, had been evolved to deal with it. On the other
hand, the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons was
likely to create new dangers against which no tech-
niques existed, and the magnitude of which could hardly
be assessed. According to a recent survey made on
behalf of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,
more than a score of countries now appeared, in vary-
ing degrees, capable of entering the nuclear race. It
was estimated that twelve countries were technically
able to embark on a successful nuclear weapons pro-
gramme in the near future, and that the production of a
few atomic bombs similar to the one dropped on
Hiroshima was well within the reach of ten or more
countries.

8. Plutonium, which was the fissile core of cer-
tain nuclear weapons, had for several years been a by-
product of one type of nuclear electric power station.
Nuclear reactors of that type were in the course of
erection in a number of countries; those countries
would thus find themselves in possession of the basic
material for nuclear weapons, which they might finally
decide to produce in response to economic pressure or
from considerations of security or prestige.

9. Nor was the possibility of wider dissemination even
confined to States. Revolutionary organizations and
groups could come into possession of such weapons.
Moreover, an increase in the number of States equipped
with nuclear weapons would be bound to intensify the
danger of an accident, of insane decisions or of nuclear
blackmail, and render the prospect of international
agreement more remote. If agreement on limitations
could not now be attained, States would be impelled to
reconsider their atomic policies and seek individual
safety through nuclear arms, a process which could
lead to panic and to collective disaster.

10. Contrary to the opinion expressed by some dele-
gations, it did not appear that an agreement on the
cessation of tests, even though it would represent a
major advance towards disarmament, would suffice to
prevent the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons.
The latter could still be manufactured by one country
and transferred to another without any infringement
of international law. The objection had also been raised
that inspection and control might prove to be impos-
sible. There were two aspects to the problem: the
secret production of nuclear weapons by States not
considered nuclear Powers, and the secret transfer of
nuclear weapons by the nuclear Powers.

11. With regard to the first point, it was apparently a
relatively simple and inexpensive matter to set up a
system of accounting to ensure that the entire produc-
tion of a given reactor was used for peaceful purposes.
Speed was the essential factor. However, that advance
was unlikely to be achieved unless there was also
agreement on the second point, the transfer of weapons.
If the nuclear Powers agreed not to transfer nuclear
weapons to non-nuclear States, the latter must agree
to produce or acquire such weapons and must accept
inspection of their reactors and their territory. Even
if such inspection could not be completely effective, it
would represent progress, since at present there was
no inspection or control whatever in that sphere. No
agreement could be completely effective. However,
when one considered how dangerous it would be if a few
weapons were secretly retained while all the others
were destroyed under the terms of an agreement on
complete disarmament, the risk of a secret transfer of
weapons seemed relatively minor and well worth taking
in order to prevent a nuclear war caused by the dis-
semination of nuclear weapons; moreover, an inspec-
tion and control system would make it easy to identify
the danger in the secrete that those weapons were
secretly transferred by a nuclear Power to an allied
country, since, in order to derive an advantage from
the weapons in a local dispute, the country in question
would have to show that it possessed them.

12. Unquestionably, the nuclear States would not
voluntarily yield the power conferred on them by their
monopoly of nuclear weapons until such time as their
security was fully assured by an international force.
What they would be called upon to do was to set
themselves to stand guard over their arsenals until all production had
been halted and existing stocks had been used for
peaceful purposes or delivered to the United Nations.
The danger involved in the dissemination of nuclear
weapons outweighed the minor diplomatic and military
problems that might result from refusing to transfer
them.

13. The First Committee was being invited, not to
draw any formal conclusions, but to request the ten-
Power disarmament committee to undertake a specific
study, which might lead to firm agreements and to
report thereon to the United Nations Disarmament
Commission.

14. His delegation earnestly hoped that the First
Committee would adopt the Irish draft resolution by a vote
which would emphasize both the danger inherent in the
wider dissemination of nuclear weapons and the ur-
genency of the problem.

15. Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands) recalled that, at
the thirteenth session, his delegation had been unable to
express an opinion on the suggestions put forward by
Ireland because his Government had not had time to
study them. While his Government had not yet reached
any final conclusions, its thinking on the matter had
now taken clearer shape.

16. It was becoming ever more probable that ad-
ditional countries would attain to the status of nuclear
Powers, whether by purchasing nuclear weapons, re-
cieving technical assistance, or acquiring the financial
and technological means of manufacturing such
weapons. That situation might make the conclusion of
disarmament agreements more difficult, and compli-
cate the problem of effective control. Preventive action
might therefore be desirable. Although the conclusion
of an agreement on the cessation of tests would probably encourage countries which did not possess nuclear weapons to forgo their manufacture, it would offer no certainty that they would not attempt to acquire them. General and complete disarmament would, of course, remove that possibility; but it would be several years before that could be achieved, and in the meantime the temptation to join the "nuclear club" would remain. The problem should therefore receive the most serious attention, even though the General Assembly could not yet take a decision on the substance of the matter. It was essential, inter alia, not to weaken the relative positions of the various defence establishments, but to provide for a reliable system of international control that could prevent, in particular, the export and import of nuclear weapons—a matter more difficult to control than their manufacture.

17. The Irish draft resolution (A/C.1/L.235/Rev.2) recommended no immediate and final measures, but ensured that the problem would be studied within the more general framework of the negotiations on disarmament and that no precipitate decision would be taken. The Netherlands delegation would therefore give the draft its full support.

18. Sir Claude COREA (Caylon) said that he would support the Irish draft resolution for three reasons. First, he fully endorsed the first paragraph of the preamble, since he believed that world peace would always be threatened so long as nuclear weapons were prohibited and the nuclear Powers were able to transfer them to their friends. Secondly, the draft resolution proposed no specific solution and in no way committed the Assembly to a particular course of action; the complexity of the problem made that approach preferable. It was reasonable to ask the ten-Power committee to consider the problem, since it was in fact a matter relating to disarmament and the conclusions submitted by the committee would enable the General Assembly to take a decision based on full knowledge of the facts. Thirdly, he would support the draft resolution in order to ensure the security of States. It was true that nuclear weapons would probably be used for defensive proposes only; however, if their free dissemination between allied States were permitted, those countries which did not have powerful allies to provide them with such weapons would be compelled to try to manufacture the weapons themselves, and the result would be a competitive effort among States, the perils of which had been brought out during the previous day's discussion. His delegation therefore hoped that the Irish draft resolution would be adopted by a large majority.

19. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the list of speakers should be closed at 6 p.m.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.