CONTENTS

Agenda items 67, 86, 69 and 73:  
Disarmament and the situation with regard to the fulfillment of General Assembly resolution 1378 (XIV) of 20 November 1959 on the question of disarmament (continued)  
Report of the Disarmament Commission (continued)  
Suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (continued)  
Prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons (continued)  
General debate (continued) ...................... 85

Chairman: Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon).

AGENDA ITEMS 67, 86, 69 AND 73


Suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (A/4414, A/C.1/L.252/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.254) (continued)


GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SHANAHAN (New Zealand) said that, while, in the matter of disarmament, the smaller countries had a duty to examine the various proposals and to suggest ways in which progress might be made, the great Powers, especially those with nuclear capabilities, nevertheless bore a burden which they could not transmit to anyone else. When the smaller countries were informed about the negotiations and disagreements among the great Powers, their task was that of conciliation rather than that of arbitration. Therefore it was unprofitable to classify the members of the Committee as Western, Eastern or neutral nations: the "nations" were indeed "united" in their hopes and their fears, and also in their inability to resolve the disarmament problem except through the medium of voluntary agreement among the great Powers. The full membership of the United Nations should use its influence to urge that the two sides maintain their contacts and persevere in the search for a solution. The way to disarm could be found only by extending the areas of agreement between the two parties to the negotiations.

2. The General Assembly should set aside certain tendentious elements, such as the Soviet claim that the Western inspection proposals were designed merely for espionage purposes. Each stage in the disarmament process should allow for adequate verification, both of the steps taken and of the remaining levels of armaments, if the balance of security was to be preserved while the goal of general and complete disarmament was being realized. It was necessary to make some progress even before the final stages of disarmament were agreed. Controls could contribute to the development of confidence. For example, the agreement for the discontinuance of nuclear tests presupposed a system of control; if it was concluded, it would help to create the necessary climate of confidence, although it was not a measure of disarmament. The same was true for measures to limit the possibility of surprise attack. The technical problems of control and inspection were complex and the General Assembly could not solve them by itself. Preliminary technical studies were indispensable and had been undertaken with advantage in other contexts. The United Kingdom draft resolution (A/C.1/L.251) should therefore commend itself to all shades of opinion. The scope and the precise character of such studies would be agreed on in advance by the principals and there was no reason why negotiations on other aspects of the question could not be carried out at the same time. The order in which particular elements of the plan of disarmament would be put into effect also created a problem which only the resumption of negotiations could resolve.

3. Charges had been made about the good faith of the great Powers. They were an outcome of the climate of suspicion and were based in large measure on misunderstanding. It might be concluded that progress would have to be sought step by step, with priority being given to those measures which presented no unambiguous technical problem, and on which it should be relatively easy to reach an agreement. In that connexion, the General Assembly could assist the parties concerned by a critical appreciation of the different plans and by suggestions as to means of progress.

4. He stressed the value of a debate in the Committee when a question such as disarmament was involved. The debate in the Committee leading to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 1378 (XIV) was a case in point. The current debate, undertaken in unpontious circumstances, already gave some promise of developing into a useful discussion, largely on account of the dispassionate attitude adopted by many representatives. The dialogue between representatives of the great Powers was of great value, owing to the catalytic effect of the discussions. The point-by-point commentary on the plans proposed provided an insight into the problem which could never have been gained through mutual recriminations and ceaseless repetition of
the "clichés" about control over armaments or disarmament without control.

5. When propaganda was put aside and the real problem was attacked, the immense difficulties standing in the way of any agreement were revealed. The cost of victory based on a "balance of terror" was constantly increasing, but the United Nations could not upset that equipoise without risk, nor could it dictate to the great Powers. On the other hand, it had to prepare itself for the time when the great Powers would transfer to it the responsibility for guaranteeing a world of peace and security. It would therefore have to give consideration to the questions affecting the organization of an international security force. His delegation felt that the matter might appropriately be entrusted to the Disarmament Commission, a body that was representative of the entire membership of the United Nations and which could, if necessary, entrust certain tasks to a smaller group. The current discussion had shown the advantages of keeping close touch between the negotiators and the rest of the United Nations membership. The Disarmament Commission could maintain the necessary liaison, while also considering questions of substance concerning the application of disarmament measures to the international community as a whole and offering suggestions to the negotiators. It was not too soon to begin thinking about the linkage between the United Nations and the international machinery for preserving the peace. At the same time it was not profitable to prepare the way for an international security force by means of an attack on the existing executive machinery of the United Nations. The United Nations had to preserve the independence of its executive from national pressures, to maintain its moral authority and prepare for a future in which the transfer of military strength from the great Powers to the international community would entail a system of safeguards adequate to satisfy all parties about the manner in which the international security force would be used.

6. Mr. ALEMEAYEHOU (Ethiopia) observed that the question of disarmament was the concern of all nations, great and small, for if the great Powers failed to reach an agreement, the security of all nations was endangered. The great Powers assumed a particularly grave responsibility, since the situation created by their differences and by their armaments race was now endangering the peace and security of the world. They should, therefore, exert every effort to reach an agreement on disarmament.

7. Of course, general and complete disarmament, as envisaged in the plans submitted to the Committee, raised fundamental questions of a political, economic, social and cultural nature. But in view of the rapid evolution taking place in the world, the revolutionary changes introduced by technical progress, and the enormous danger of modern weapons, the only sensible course was to accept general and complete disarmament, not only to save the human race from annihilation, but also to make possible further economic, social and cultural advancement and to bring about better international co-operation in those fields.

8. The major difference between the Soviet Union's plan and the Western Powers' plan lay in the fact that the USSR wished to conclude an agreement on general and complete disarmament under effective international control which would be put into effect in three stages over a four-year period, each stage being an organic part of the over-all plan, whereas the Western Powers wanted to conclude, in certain selected fields, disarmament agreements independent of, but leading towards, general and complete disarmament. In order to avoid the grave consequences of failure, those two proposals had to be reconciled. Thus, the Soviet proposal could be modified in such a way as to extend somewhat the time-limit set for general and complete disarmament—in order to take due account of the complexity of the problem and of the time required for economic, social and psychological reorientation of the peoples of the world—and the proposal thus modified might be taken in principle, not as a goal towards which other individual disarmament agreements should lead, but as the subject of a specific disarmament agreement. The measures provided for in the first stage of the Soviet proposal (A/4565) could then be replaced by the measures listed in sub-paragraphs (a) to (f) of operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution submitted by Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/C.1/L.250), provided that they were considered as an integral part of the over-all plan of general and complete disarmament.

9. Once agreement in principle was reached on the basis of that suggestion, measures relating to the remaining fields of disarmament, and their order of priority, should be the subject of negotiations, to be carried through as quickly as possible.

10. It went without saying that an effective system of control, suited to the various stages, would have to be worked out; it should form an integral part of any disarmament agreement or agreements corresponding to each stage. The group of experts proposed in the United Kingdom draft resolution (A/C.1/L.251) would be useful in so far as it expedited the conclusion of an agreement, or of agreements, on disarmament and control. But it should be understood that the report of the proposed group of experts should in no way serve as a pretext for delaying or obstructing the conclusion of such agreements.

11. The Ethiopian delegation had always considered that the negotiating committee on disarmament should be composed not only of countries belonging to the two military groups, but also of countries not belonging to those groups. For compromises proposed by neutral members would have more chance of being accepted by the two sides. His delegation would therefore support any proposal for enlarging the membership of the negotiating committee on disarmament so that it included a certain number of uncommitted countries.

12. It was the existence of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons which made the disarmament question such an urgent one. In a nuclear war, there would be no distinction between combatants and the civilian population, between arms factories and museums, or between belligerents and neutrals. Any nuclear war would be against everybody and against everything. Accordingly the Ethiopian delegation, with a view to creating a better international atmosphere, formally proposed that the General Assembly should make a declaration stating that nuclear and thermo-nuclear energy and materials used in its production, and weapons made from such materials, should not be employed for war purposes; that such use was
contrary to the spirit and letter of the Charter and to the aims of the United Nations; and that any country employing such weapons for war purposes would be regarded as using them not merely against a particular enemy but against mankind as a whole, and would therefore be responsible for the effects of its acts upon mankind and civilization. Such a declaration would be a follow-up to the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868,\(^1\) the Brussels Declaration of 1874,\(^2\) the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907,\(^3\) the Geneva Protocol of 1925,\(^4\) the General Assembly's declaration on the crime of genocide (resolution 96 (I)) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

13. It should moreover be noted that such outlawing of nuclear weapons was being urged by all peoples and their representatives. He would cite as evidence the statement which Mr. Baruch had made on 14 June 1946 when presenting the United States plan for the international control of atomic energy,\(^5\) and a draft convention proposed by the Soviet Union on 19 June 1946.\(^6\) The numerous official declarations of Governments and the appeals by peoples of all countries should now, therefore, be co-ordinated. To that end, the Ethiopian delegation had drawn up a draft declaration (A/C.1/L.254). It must point out, however, that the adoption of such a declaration would constitute merely one step, to be taken pending the achievement of an agreement on general and complete disarmament, and that the declaration was not designed as a substitute for the guiding principles with which the Assembly should furnish the disarmament negotiating committee. Its adoption would be but a modest step, yet it would help to relax international tension and facilitate the solving of the more general problem. The Ethiopian delegation therefore hoped that all Member States, and especially the under-developed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America which had no means of protecting themselves against nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, would give their support to the draft declaration.

14. Mr. BISBE (Cuba) said that the balance-sheet of the previous year had been particularly negative so far as disarmament was concerned. The Cuban delegation had already supported the Soviet view that general and complete disarmament, effected progressively within fixed time-limits, was essential. It had always held, too, that the elimination of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons—which presupposed the destruction of stocks, the prohibition of the manufacture, and the elimination of all means of delivery, of nuclear weapons—must take place in the first stage. In addition, it was indispensable to provide for sanctions against any country manufacturing nuclear weapons, either in time of peace or during a conflict begun with conventional arms. Naturally, the creation of a moral atmosphere would also help to prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war.

15. Admittedly nuclear war could be unleashed only by the nuclear Powers; but all nations, great and small, would suffer its disastrous consequences. It was therefore strange to try to limit the smaller countries' participation in the disarmament negotiations. The Cuban delegation considered, especially after the set-back in the Conference of the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament, that the main lines of a plan for general and complete disarmament should be evolved and adopted, either by the General Assembly at a special session, or by the Disarmament Commission, on which all Member States were represented. Meanwhile, the Ten-Nation Committee could modify the principle of parity in its composition, with a view to more adequate representation of the various geographical regions or the different ideological groups throughout the world. The negotiating committee, in this remodelled form, would submit its decisions for approval by the General Assembly or the Disarmament Commission. At the fourteenth session, the Cuban delegation had taken the view that the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission should preside over the Ten-Nation Committee. It continued to support that proposal. A change in the structure of the negotiating body was all the more necessary in that the disarmament discussions were producing an endless series of statements and replies from which it seemed that the only form of disarmament unhesitatingly approved was the disarmament of "the man next door", while thousands of millions of dollars were wasted on armaments which would soon be obsolete, and the under-developed peoples continued to lack the barest necessities.

16. Although a war might break out by accident or miscalculation, the chances of general and complete disarmament were lessening, because neither of the two sides wished to remain at the mercy of a better-armed adversary and neither was, therefore, capable of breaking the vicious circle of the arms race.

17. It was untrue to say that the Soviet Union was opposed to control and inspection of disarmament. It had criticized control without disarmament, which would obviously be merely a form of espionage. Moreover, General Assembly resolution 1378 (XIV) stated that disarmament must be brought about under effective international control. There was therefore no reason to make control an obstacle to disarmament. The Cuban delegation had accordingly emphasized that it was not possible to dissociate disarmament from control, and that disarmament measures must precede control measures. But what the Western Powers wanted was not control of disarmament but a controlled arms race. They regarded general and complete disarmament as Utopian, and were not prepared to discuss it seriously. As for the Soviet Union, although it possessed modern weapons of the most fearful power, it was the first to favour genuine disarmament. Evidence thereof was supplied by the considerable concessions which it had made in order to take account, for example, of the view held by many delegations, including the Cuban delegation, that measures of nuclear disarmament should be taken in the first stage, and of the suggestion made

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\(^1\) Declaration renouncing the Use, in Time of War, of Explosive Projectiles under 400 grammes weight, signed at St. Petersburg on 29 November (11 December) 1868.
\(^2\) Declaration on the Rules of Military Warfare, adopted at Brussels on 27 August 1874.
\(^3\) Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, signed at The Hague on 29 July 1899, and Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, signed at The Hague on 18 October 1907.
\(^5\) See Official Records of the Atomic Energy Commission, First Year, No. 1, 1st meeting, pp. 4-14.
\(^6\) Ibid., Third Year, Special Supplement, annex 3, A.
by the French delegation at the fourteenth session (1030th meeting) regarding the destruction of the means of delivering nuclear weapons. The Western Powers, on the other hand, proposed that intercontinental ballistic missiles, which constituted the principal means of Soviet defence, be placed under control, while reserving the right to maintain the bases encircling the USSR and the other socialist States, and to use the delivery vehicles which they themselves possessed.

18. The United Kingdom, in its draft resolution (A/C.1/L.251), recommended that preparatory work should be entrusted to experts. On the other hand, the draft resolution submitted by Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/C.1/L.250), provided for various disarmament measures and enunciated several general principles, but it did not propose any plan for general and complete disarmament in conformity with resolution 1378 (XIV). The proposal concerning preparatory work by experts was simply a further delaying tactic. While the work of experts could not, of course, be underestimated in an age of technology and science, it was odd that such a proposal had not been put forward until one year after the adoption of resolution 1378 (XIV). There was reason to fear that the same stratagem would be resorted to in 1961 to postpone again the general and complete disarmament expressly contemplated in that resolution.

19. General and complete disarmament would undoubtedly have to be progressive and must be carried out equitably so as not to upset the balance of power and thus risk the outbreak of a conflict. That was why the plan of disarmament was not opposed to the idea of simultaneous progress, as from the first stage, in the reduction of both nuclear and conventional weapons. The understanding shown by the Soviet Union in that regard had not, however, been reciprocated by the West with anything except conciliatory words that were not backed up by action. The United States programme of 27 June 1960 (DC/154) was far from being a programme of general and complete disarmament. It made no provision for time-limits and did not mention foreign bases. For the first stage it did not contemplate anything beyond armaments control. For the second stage it provided in very vague terms that the stocks of weapons of mass destruction would be reduced to the quantities agreed upon. Only in the third stage, the duration of which was not specified, was provision made for eliminating the remaining stocks and the delivery systems. Although the three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.250) differed somewhat from the plan of 27 June by affirming that disarmament should be carried out progressively, it did not make any reference to stages, the disarmament measures to be adopted in each stage or the duration of the disarmament programme, and it was completely silent on the subject of eliminating foreign bases.

20. His delegation recognized that the programme of the Western Powers and that of the Soviet Union had some points in common. The Western Powers, however, were sparing no efforts in casting doubt on the Soviet proposals. There was also the fact that the number of countries capable of making atomic weapons was steadily increasing and that France had already become a member of the "nuclear club". Those various considerations made it imperative to avoid further delay in carrying out a disarmament programme. If the Western Powers were unwilling to accept that fact, the best course would be to discontinue what was merely a futile discussion and let the guilty parties take full responsibility before the bar of history.

21. Diplomacy must use a new language if it wished to avoid alienating the people. The truth, hard as it might be, must be told in international gatherings, and the truth was that in a future war there would be neither victor nor vanquished but merely victims.

22. Mr. GREEN (Canada) announced that his delegation and those of Norway and Sweden intended to submit a draft resolution.1/ The sponsors were not seeking to endorse the position of any one side but to ensure the re-starting of negotiations as soon as possible and to facilitate the attainment of the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. They did not limit themselves to a mere exhortation, but sought to strengthen the influence of the United Nations on the course of negotiations by bringing the opinions of the middle and small Powers to bear. Those Powers were particularly interested in the success of such negotiations, since, in the event of a war, most of them would be unable to escape nuclear bomb attack. The draft resolution also provided that preparatory steps should be taken at once. The drift away from serious talks and in the direction of sterile propaganda debates must be checked. The basic motives of the sponsors were summed up in the fourth paragraph of the preamble, in which they expressed their deep anxiety about the interruption of the negotiations.

23. Because the sponsors viewed their proposals as expressing a universal need, they had referred in the preamble to resolutions which had been adopted unanimously. In the operative part, they reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament but took no particular stand on what forum should be used for negotiation, since that was a matter on which the negotiators themselves must agree. The negotiators were also asked to consider the appointment of one or more impartial persons to assist them. That might be the chairman or, as had also been suggested, the vice-chairman or the rapporteur. Operative paragraph 2 took the form of an expression of hope because, in the final analysis, serious negotiations could take place only if the great Powers so desired. The remaining operative paragraphs sought to give that hope some promise of fulfilment and also to turn to good account whatever interval might elapse up to the time when the negotiations were resumed. The sponsors of the draft resolution accordingly contemplated the establishment, with the least possible delay, of an ad hoc committee of the Disarmament Commission that would be composed of a limited number of States which did not possess nuclear weapons and which would be selected with due regard for the principle of equitable geographical representation. The composition of the ad hoc committee would be decided by the Disarmament Commission, which could meet for that purpose in the course of the current session. While the terms of reference of the ad hoc committee had purposely been stated in rather general language, the intention was that it would deal at once with the problem of getting negotiations re-started.

1/ Subsequently circulated as document A/C.1/L.255.
24. There were many ways in which the proposed ad hoc committee could contribute to the success of the negotiations. The Disarmament Commission would analyse the progress achieved when the ad hoc committee had submitted its report. If that committee was established, the role which it could play would depend on the energy and earnestness of the representatives and on the co-operation of the negotiators. There was no question of expecting miracles but rather of enabling the United Nations to focus attention on the future of negotiations. The statements made thus far seemed to indicate that the non-nuclear Powers were no longer content to sit by passively while the nuclear Powers did nothing to end the deadlock. In accordance with operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the ad hoc committee would report back to the Disarmament Commission not later than 1 April 1961 so that time would be afforded to explore the possibilities for renewed negotiations.

25. The draft resolution was in no way incompatible with the other proposals before the First Committee. For example, whether or not some agreement on principles was reached in the First Committee, the ad hoc committee would still have a part to play, and it would be free to call on the services of experts if, at any stage of its work, it felt such a step to be necessary. The Canadian delegation believed that if that proposal was accepted, the chances of success would be greatly enhanced.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.