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CONTENTS

Agenda items 67, 86, 69 and 73:
Disarmament and the situation with regard to
the fulfilment 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) ................................ 117

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 and Add.1) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Kurka (Czechoslovakia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

1. Mr. SULAIMAN (Iraq) said that although his country did not possess modern means of destruction, it would nevertheless share in the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear war since in the modern world all wars tended to become general. There was, as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom had pointed out in the General Assembly (677th plenary meeting), a strange contrast between the dramatic achievements of modern science and the failures of modern statesmanship. If modern man did not adjust the balance, he might doom himself to extermination. In discussing disarmament, the Committee was in reality discussing the problem of war and peace.

2. History had proved that the theory that peace could be maintained through armaments was without foundation. Under present conditions, in which the United States and the Soviet Union would employ their entire resources in the event of a war, the Assembly should decide whether it was prepared to bear the responsibility of inaction or whether it would at least take an initial step towards the achievement of peace through general and complete disarmament. The time element was of primary importance, as the Prime Minister of India had rightly pointed out in the General Assembly (882nd plenary meeting). Although it was true that the fate of mankind lay mainly in the hands of two great Powers, the small and uncommitted countries could contribute to a solution of the problem by expressing the requirements of the millions who aspired to peace and prosperity and by supporting all endeavours to strengthen peace.

3. Iraq believed that military alliances and the alignment of the countries of the world with one side or another would only aggravate the already dangerous international situation. His delegation therefore strongly urged that the neutrality of Asian and African countries should be respected and shared the views on that subject expressed by a number of speakers.

4. As the President of Yugoslavia had pointed out at the 868th plenary meeting of the Assembly, the creation of the necessary international atmosphere for the initiation of disarmament was also hampered by certain unsolved international problems. Among those unsolved problems Mr. Sulaiman mentioned the war of liberation in Algeria and the outstanding problem of Palestine. Unfortunately the main obstacle to an agreement on disarmament was the crisis of confidence between East and West. Any forms of verification, control and inspection eventually adopted might prove useless so long as suspicion and fear prevailed between the two blocs. If the two sides whole-heartedly accepted the principle of peaceful coexistence it might be possible to establish the necessary confidence.

5. General Assembly resolution 1378 (XIV) was an important first step in the direction of disarmament. Unfortunately the favourable situation existing at the fourteenth session had not continued. The Conference of the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament had been broken off and the question had once again come before the General Assembly in an atmosphere of crisis which, it was to be hoped, would not persist.

6. In principle his delegation supported the Soviet draft resolution (A/C.1/L.249), which offered a more comprehensive and complete plan for total disarmament than the draft resolution submitted by Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/C.1/L.250); however, it did not believe that the mere adoption of a resolution would provide a practical solution to the
problem. In his delegation’s opinion the representa-
tives of the uncommitted nations could and should
play a useful part in bringing about a basic agreement
between the parties concerned. He fully associated
himself with the suggestions made by the representa-
tive of India (1984th meeting) and the representative
of the United Arab Republic (1985th meeting) that the
Assembly should give precise directives and enunciat-
ate principles which would enable negotiations to be
resumed. By submitting a draft resolution to that
effect which would be acceptable to the two groups,
the uncommitted countries could offer a means of
breaking the present deadlock, which could only lead
to an intensification of the cold war and the acceler-
ation of the arms race.

7. It should be possible for the Assembly to bring
about the resumption of negotiations since the two
parties both desired disarmament and their positions
seemed to be similar on many points. The major
difference related to the question of international
control and inspection but in view of the statement
by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the
USSR, Mr. Khrushchev, that the Soviet Union was
ready to accept any system of control proposed by
the United States as part of a treaty on disarmament,
his delegation sincerely hoped that the two parties
would reach an understanding on that question.

8. The problem of disarmament should be referred
back to the Ten-Nation Committee or to some other
body acceptable to both sides, which would operate
in accordance with certain directives to be given by
the Assembly. With regard to the suggestions that had
recently been made in that connexion, Iraq strongly
supported the idea of active participation by the
representatives of uncommitted countries in any
future negotiating body and believed that they would
assist the parties in reaching an agreement. Such a
body should, however, work within the framework of
the United Nations and submit its report to the Dis-
armament Commission and to the General Assembly.

9. His delegation believed that the proposals on the
appointment of experts embodied in the United King-
dom draft resolution (A/C.1/L.251) should be con-
sidered by the negotiating body. However, as the
representative of Yugoslavia had pointed out (1085th
meeting), disarmament was primarily a political
problem, and in the absence of agreement at the
political level between the parties concerned, techni-
ical advice would be of little help.

10. If it should prove impossible to reach agreement
on the conduct of negotiations, his delegation would
support any proposal for a resumed session of the
General Assembly early in 1961. In view of the im-
dense destructive power accumulated in stockpiles of
atomic and hydrogen weapons, members of the
Committee should forget their ideological differences
and join together in a genuine effort to save mankind
and establish lasting peace through general and com-
plete disarmament. Furthermore, without the partici-
pation of China, no disarmament negotiations
could be successful.

Sir Claude Corea (Ceylon) took the Chair.

11. Mr. SHAHA (Nepal) said that the prospects for
success had been very bright at the previous session.
The establishment of the Ten-Nation Committee, the
fruitful negotiations under way in the Conference on
the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests at
Geneva, and the prospect of a summit conference had
aroused high hopes. Now there was once again a
deadlock. The Disarmament Commission had referred
the problem to the General Assembly, and it was the
First Committee’s duty to help the East and the West
to resume negotiations.

12. One of the main difficulties appeared to be the
question of priority in dealing with the various dis-
armament measures. It was recognized that disarma-
ment must be carried out in stages, but, while it was
agreed that time was pressing, there was a difference
of opinion as to whether a rigid time-limit should be
set for the completion of disarmament. At the same
time, the two sides agreed in principle that an inter-
national control organization should be set up within
the framework of the United Nations. The differences
between East and West did not seem irreconcil-
able; the present deadlock was therefore surprising,
especially in view of the fact that the two sides had
repeatedly expressed their desire to disarm. The
suspension of negotiations was particularly unfortu-
nate because the resumption of negotiations after a
break tended to create new difficulties.

13. The question whether there should be control
without disarmament or disarmament without control
was not a new one, and it had, in a sense, already
been settled. In the prevailing atmosphere of tension
and distrust between East and West, an effective sys-
tem of international control and verification was
clearly essential. Furthermore, while no phase of
disarmament should give either side a military ad-
vantage, appropriate controls should be applied in
each phase.

14. Nevertheless, since no system of control could
be foolproof, every effort must be made to improve
the state of international relations and create at least
a modicum of that feeling of confidence which was so
essential.

15. The settlement of certain political questions,
such as the representation of China in the United
Nations, prior to the achievement of agreement on
disarmament would be a step in the right direction.
Agreements on partial disarmament would also be
useful. The proposals to set up denuclearized zones
in Eastern Europe, the Western Pacific and South-
East Asia, and to divert increasing quantities of
enriched uranium to peaceful uses, would certainly
contribute to the success of negotiations.

16. Noting the threat which technological and scien-
tific advances posed to collective security and world
peace, he emphasized the danger of an accidental out-
break of war, which would exist until the stockpiles of
weapons of mass destruction were destroyed and the
testing of such weapons was prohibited. Only a
determined effort on the part of all nations to trans-
late into reality the concept of a world without war
could ensure the survival of mankind.

17. It had repeatedly been pointed out that there
would be no victors in a nuclear war; yet the arms
race was continuing, even though experience had
shown that arms races invariably led to war. In the
face of that danger, the small nations, which through-
no fault of their own would suffer perhaps even more
than the major Powers in the event of war, could not
stand idly by. It was their duty, as members of the
international community, to bring moral pressure to bear on the great Powers to settle their differences. The Committee should therefore seek to provide general directives to guide the great Powers in their future negotiations, although it must be recognized that such directives would be useful only if they were acceptable to the two parties principally concerned. The discussions in the Disarmament Commission and at the fifteenth session of the General Assembly would have served no purpose if they did not bring about at least the resumption of disarmament negotiations. His delegation welcomed the suggestions made in that regard by the chairman of the Indian delegation and earnestly hoped that they would be followed.

18. With regard to the machinery for conducting the negotiations, it would be helpful if non-nuclear Powers broadly representing the various areas of the world, and uncommitted countries in particular, were given an opportunity to make a contribution; his delegation would support any suggestion along those lines which was acceptable to the parties principally concerned.

19. Progress had been made in the negotiations on the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests; the main differences now related to the number of on-site inspections to be permitted and the composition of the control commission. It was to be hoped that the two sides would be able to reach an agreement through patient negotiation. The question of the feasibility of detecting underground tests should not be used as a pretext for the resumption of nuclear tests, which would spoil the atmosphere for future negotiations. Prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, while not actually a disarmament measure, would reduce the risk of an accidental outbreak of war and prevent nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of countries or Governments which lacked a proper sense of responsibility. His delegation would therefore support the draft resolution submitted by Ireland (A/C.1/L.253/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1).

20. The adoption of resolutions by an overwhelming majority would accomplish nothing unless they were acceptable to the two parties principally concerned. The results of a vote sometimes proved illusory and hindered rather than helped negotiations. His delegation agreed with the Mexican delegation that resolutions which were not acceptable to the two sides should not even be put to the vote in the Committee but should be referred to the Disarmament Commission.

21. A suspension of negotiations could sometimes have a salutary effect by enabling the parties concerned to re-examine their positions. However, it could also prove catastrophic, as in the case of the suspension of disarmament negotiations in 1934. In the present-day world, time was a vital factor, for the speed of scientific and technological progress, which was constantly outpacing the development of social and sociological thinking, was such that if disarmament was not achieved within the foreseeable future it might never be achieved at all.

The meeting rose at 4.5 p.m.