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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.1-2) (continued)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

1. Mr. THORS (Iceland) noted with regret that, while a number of resolutions adopted since 1946 on the question of disarmament had had practically no effect, the arms race had continued at an increasing pace until no region of the world was now safe from nuclear destruction, and the total military expenditure of all States amounted to more than $100,000 million annually.

2. The problem would not be solved by the passing of more resolutions, but by a change of attitude on the part of world leaders and a gradual return to confidence between the great Powers. But even if international relations were to improve, each step towards the reduction of armaments would have to be accompanied by simultaneous control measures, for no great Power would weaken its military position unless it was assured that the other side was doing the same. The small and medium-sized nations could only welcome any reduction in armaments, which would proportionately reduce the burden of taxation on their citizens. As far as Iceland was concerned, it had no need to disarm, as it possessed no armed forces; nevertheless, it had an interest in disarmament, since, in the event of a conflagration no place in the world would be spared. The choice was between continued mistrust, leading inevitably to war and extinction, and peaceful coexistence and international co-operation under the auspices of the United Nations.

3. The USSR draft resolution (A/C.1/L.249) contained many true and useful observations which would certainly be the object of serious consideration in future negotiations. However, the Icelandic delegation did not think it appropriate to link the question of the structure of the United Nations Secretariat and of the Security Council with the already very complicated problem of disarmament. It wished to express the Icelandic Government's full confidence in the wisdom and leadership of the Secretary-General. As for the changes to be made in the Security Council, his delegation was strongly in favour of increasing the number of non-permanent members of that body, in order to give increased representation to the countries of Africa and Asia.

4. The draft resolution submitted by Italy, the United States and the United Kingdom (A/C.1/L.250) also contained many important and useful suggestions. It was noteworthy that both draft resolutions stressed the need for general and complete disarmament. Since no progress could be made without the approval of the parties most directly concerned, nothing would be gained by voting on those draft resolutions. Accordingly, the most sensible decision which the Committee could take would be to refer both draft resolutions, without putting them to the vote, to the Ten-Nation Committee, which, it was to be hoped, would resume its work in the very near future.

5. The draft resolution submitted by Canada, Norway and Sweden (A/C.1/L.255) expressed many constructive ideas; operative paragraphs 1 and 2, in particular, should obtain unanimous acceptance. The Icelandic delegation whole-heartedly supported the idea of appointing impartial persons to facilitate negotiations on disarmament, and thought that the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission could render most valuable services in that respect. It would be advantageous also to designate a vice-chairman and a rapporteur who together with the chairman, would endeavour to revive the Ten-Nation Committee would then participate, without the right of vote, in the work of that body and would finally report to the Disarmament Commission. If that suggestion had the support of the First Committee, his delegation would submit an amendment to that effect to the joint draft resolution. The amendment would involve the deletion of operative paragraph 3, as the appointment of the three officers in question would make it un-
necessary to establish an ad hoc committee. Such a committee, to satisfy considerations of geographical distribution, among others, would probably comprise about twenty members. It would run into endless debates, and the result would only be further delay in the resumption of contacts between the great Powers which were the only possible source of practical results. The Ten-Nation Committee, which had been established by the great Powers themselves, was the organ that should be set in motion again as soon as possible. The terms of reference proposed for the ad hoc committee in operative paragraphs 4 and 5 of the draft resolution including the submission of a report to the Disarmament Commission not later than 1 April 1961, should be given to the three persons whose appointment he was suggesting. It might be advisable that the vice-chairman and the rapporteur should represent Africa and Asia.

6. As for the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests and the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, the Icelandic delegation was strongly in favour of those two measures.

7. Mr. GREEN (Canada) said that it had been to allow time for their efforts to succeed that the three sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/L.255 had not pressed for an immediate vote on it. They had not put forward the proposal in order to arouse controversy, and they were happy that it might lead to further suggestions being made. They saw no objection to the proposal by the representative of Iceland with regard to the officers of the Ten-Nation Committee, especially the appointment of Mr. Padilla Nervo, Chairman of the Disarmament Commission, as Chairman of that Committee. It was essential to prepare the ground, without further delay, for the resumption of negotiations. All Powers, whether they possessed nuclear weapons or not, shared the concern at the deadlock in negotiations, and all bore a certain responsibility in consequence. Those were the considerations underlying the preamble to the draft resolution.

8. With regard to the operative part of the draft resolution, the representative of Iceland considered that negotiations should be continued in the Ten-Nation Committee. The sponsors of the draft resolution, for their part, thought that the greatest latitude should be left to the Powers in that respect; that was why they had used the expression "in such a body as may be agreed". However, it was the establishment of an ad hoc committee, in particular, which aroused the scepticism of the Icelandic delegation. But there was no reason why work for disarmament should remain in abeyance, or international interest in the problem be relaxed, merely because negotiations could not be resumed at once on account of the American presidential elections. It was important that the small and medium-sized Powers should have a body in which they could study ways of bringing about a resumption of negotiations and of helping the great Powers towards their goal, by bringing to the full weight of their responsibilities and their interests as non-nuclear Powers.

9. The success of efforts to reach agreement on principles would ease the responsibility of the ad hoc committee, but the latter could still do useful work in studying the various suggestions advanced in the course of the debate in the First Committee and performing such other tasks as the Disarmament Commission might assign to it. The sponsors of the draft resolution were seeking to ensure the earliest possible resumption of negotiations and to avoid a repetition of the situation which had obtained in August 1960 when, in spite of unanimous requests by the Disarmament Commission, no negotiations had taken place.

10. There were some promising signs: the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Khrushchev, and the next President of the United States, Mr. Kennedy had both affirmed the necessity of solving the problem. Pending the fulfilment of the hope expressed in operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/C.1/L.255, the necessary preparatory work must be done. Otherwise, the non-nuclear Powers would have abdicated their share of responsibility and their right to complain of the dangers of the situation or to participate in the search for a solution. On the other hand, that draft resolution offered the great Powers a means of approaching a settlement of the problem. In a very short time, at least fifteen more Powers would be capable of joining the "nuclear club", and others would follow close behind them. The dangers and the difficulties would be increased accordingly. In those circumstances, it would be intolerable that the United Nations should remain passive while the disarmament deadlock continued.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.