Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael Urquia (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEMS 64, 70 AND 72


The reduction of the military budgets of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France by 10 to 15 per cent and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries (A/3925, A/C.1/L.204, A/C.1/L.205) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. Pazhwak (Afghanistan) said that it was encouraging to note the many suggestions and proposals advanced by many representatives during the debate in order to make the First Committee's work fruitful. As he saw it, the Committee could and should concentrate on two vital and urgent issues during the current session: the termination of the deadlock in disarmament negotiations within the United Nations and the discontinuance of nuclear test explosions. Those two issues were not only of exceptional importance in themselves, but they were basic to the solution of all problems connected with disarmament, and there was reason to hope that conditions which would lead to an agreement would be created.

2. For the time being, he would confine himself to the consideration of the Mexican draft resolution (A/C.1/L.208) and the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1), of which Afghanistan was a sponsor.

3. With regard to the first of those texts, his delegation cordially supported the Mexican delegation's idea and favoured consideration of the text even before the conclusion of the consideration of items 64, 70 and 72 of the General Assembly's agenda, so that the negotiations suggested in the draft resolution could be started immediately after the conclusion of the general debate.

4. With regard to the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, he would like to explain how his delegation interpreted the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and why it had joined twelve other nations in sponsoring it.

5. In the first place, it did not agree with the representative of one small nation who had said at a previous meeting that the small nations were merely bystanders. They could not accept such a role, because they were equally affected by the consequences of the arms race in every respect. Moreover, they were exposed to the resultant dangers without any means of evading them, while the great Powers, which had created those dangers, might be able to discover some means of protection against them. In the second place, the fear of the great Powers emanated from their concern about what might happen in the future and in case of war, while the small nations suffered at present, even in a time of peace. In the third place, whatever happened to the great Powers would be a consequence of their own actions, while the small nations would suffer through no fault of their own. Lastly, the concern of the great Powers was mainly political, based on their own interests, while that of the small nations was humanitarian and based on the interests of mankind.

6. In short, the present danger was universal. In the face of that universal danger, the small nations should not be considered mere bystanders. Their people formed the majority of the world's population, which was threatened by that danger, and it was only in the international democracy represented by the United Nations that they could defend and protect themselves against that universal danger. It was only there that they could play an important role in the search for a solution which would benefit not only themselves, but also the great Powers.

7. The second reason why his delegation had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution was that in its view the small nations should not, at least in the United Nations, content themselves with making appeals to the great Powers as some of them had done during the general debate. The great Powers should be urged to realize their grave responsibilities, and the small nations should take an active part, in a spirit of understanding and co-operation, in the study of questions which were of importance to all. The restoration of confidence between the great Powers was an evident necessity, but that confidence could not be restored by the great Powers themselves without an unceasing effort by the others.
8. Despite the differences of view existing between the great Powers, there were grounds for believing in the possibility of an agreement, because those differences were mainly political. The main difference concerned the cessation or suspension of tests, encouraging statements having been made by both sides on the question of control. He could not think that anyone favouring the suspension of nuclear test explosions could be entirely opposed to the cessation of those explosions, at least in principle. Insistence on either suspension or cessation would therefore not be the proper approach to the question, a point which the sponsors of the thirteen-Power draft resolution hoped would be understood by the great Powers. Accordingly, operative paragraph 1 of the draft called for the immediate discontinuance of the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons until agreement was reached by the States concerned in regard to the technical arrangements and controls considered necessary to ensure the observance of the discontinuance of such tests.

9. At the present stage, the General Assembly should, first, decide on the immediate discontinuance of tests; and, secondly, urge the participants in the Geneva conference scheduled to begin on 31 October 1958 to deal with the matter on an urgent basis and reach a speedy agreement.

10. In the Afghan delegation's view, nothing in the draft resolution should lead anyone to think that its sponsors favoured either the cessation or the suspension of nuclear tests. The draft resolution aimed at the immediate discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests.

11. Whatever course the current debate might take, it must be hoped that the resolution to be finally adopted would achieve no less and that it would command a unanimous vote. A simple majority vote would be disappointing on so important a question, which concerned not only the Members of the United Nations, but the world as a whole.

12. Mr. SASTROAMIDJOJO (Indonesia) thought that the question of discontinuing the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons was one of the most urgent issues facing humanity today. For that reason, the Indonesian delegation was glad that the Geneva Conference of Experts to Study the Possibility of Detecting Violations of a Possible Agreement on the Suspension of Nuclear Tests, held at Geneva in July and August 1958, had considered it feasible to establish an effective control system to detect any violations of an international agreement on the suspension of tests (A/3897, annex VII). It had also noted with satisfaction that the three Powers possessing nuclear weapons had approved the conclusions and recommendations made by the experts in their report, for it was within the power of those States to end the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons. However, the interest and responsibility of the "non-nuclear Powers" in that field were as great as those of the "nuclear Powers", for if the latter had the bombs, the former had the force of moral persuasion to induce the Powers conducting tests to discontinue them.

13. There was no longer any doubt as to the danger of atomic radiation. It threatened all mankind and in the first instance many countries which, like Indonesia, were not participants in the nuclear arms race but were particularly exposed to the dangers of fall-out owing to their geographical position. Moreover, the nuclear arms race was prejudicial to the economic progress of Indonesia, which, as a less developed country, was in need of peace and co-operation. The gravity of the problem was increased by the fact that, if the tests should continue, other countries would join the present so-called "nuclear Club", which would only make the situation worse and diminish the possibilities of agreement on the cessation of tests. The Indonesian delegation agreed with the opinion expressed by the representative of the Soviet Union at the 945th meeting that that consideration alone should induce the United Nations to undertake urgent measures in that field before the situation became even more complicated. It was true that the discontinuance of tests did not in itself constitute a measure of disarmament or a limitation of armaments. However, it would be helpful to the extent that a general agreement on the cessation of tests would prevent the Powers which did not possess nuclear weapons from adding such weapons to their present stockpiles of armaments.

14. It was obvious that the Powers which did not produce nuclear weapons had a part to play in that field. The report of the Conference of Experts showed that the necessary network of control posts would, in practice, extend to all the countries of the world. For that reason, those Powers, and especially the countries without any special political commitments, should use their influence to help the "nuclear Powers" to come to an agreement on the cessation of tests. In that connexion, he recalled the part which countries which were not great Powers had played in the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

15. Before the Geneva conference began on 31 October, the General Assembly should make some positive recommendations to the Powers concerned for the purpose of facilitating the negotiations. However, it would be useless for the Assembly merely to adopt the position of one or two of the participants at the conference; its recommendations should receive the support of all the Member States, or, at least, the majority of them, including the "nuclear Powers". The latter was agreed. In principle, on the discontinuance of tests, if guaranteed by effective international control. A concrete basis for agreement therefore existed. As to whether the discontinuance of tests should be conditional or not, his delegation had always favoured complete and unconditional cessation under international control. In its opinion, that was the least that could be done pending the total prohibition of the use and manufacture of nuclear weapons and the adoption of other measures of disarmament.

16. Some States which favoured the idea of balanced disarmament held that tests should be discontinued by virtue of an agreement that would be renewed from year to year. Balanced disarmament, however, as defined in General Assembly resolution 308 A (IX), did not mean that some sort of equation should be maintained between States as regards military power; it meant that no State should have cause to fear that its security was endangered. Security did not rest only on the accumulation of military "hardware"; it also depended, above all, on winning the hearts and minds of the peoples of the world. Moreover, it did not seem logical that the idea of balanced disarmament should result in perpetuating a situation that
endangered the security and health of every nation. If attempts were still being made to attach conditions to the cessation of tests, that was a reflection of the climate of distrust which still prevailed in the world. That fact must be taken into consideration without paralysing the endeavours to promote peace and stability in the world. It should surely be possible to find an intermediate solution between an immediate, definite cessation of tests and a suspension on a year-to-year basis.

17. It was with those thoughts in mind that the Indonesian delegation had associated itself with the sponsors of the thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1). That draft resolution contained four recommendations which the Indonesian delegation considered of the utmost importance. First, it called upon the States concerned to continue immediately the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons, and thus create the proper atmosphere for achieving agreement. Secondly, it stressed the urgency of concluding an agreement on the discontinuance of tests. Thirdly, it recognized the responsibility of the United Nations in that field by requesting the States concerned to report to the General Assembly on the conclusions reached in their negotiations in order that the Assembly might forthwith take the necessary steps. Lastly, it stated clearly that the discontinuance of tests should be carried out by all the countries of the world. In preparing that draft resolution, its sponsors had been guided by the sole aim of enabling the United Nations to exert its full moral influence to bring about agreement between the "nuclear Powers" at the Geneva negotiations.

18. He did not propose to touch on the other aspects of the question of disarmament which were before the Committee. He was fully aware of their importance; as an under-developed country, Indonesia was especially interested, for example, in the question of the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries. However, the Indonesian delegation considered that the most urgent need today was to take the first step toward disarmament. The discontinuance of tests would constitute such a step; it would be tragic if that opportunity were missed.

19. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) pointed out that all Governments, being animated by the same desire for peace, were in agreement on a number of basic points, namely, the necessity of curbing the arms race, of prohibiting nuclear weapons and of stopping nuclear test explosions. A comparison of the various proposals that were before the Committee showed the differences of opinion which had emerged.

20. The seventeen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.205), of which Argentina was a sponsor, was based on the principle that disarmament constituted a single question whose different aspects should be dealt with simultaneously. It therefore noted the various problems posed by disarmament and offered an appropriate solution for each specific situation. It also referred to the conference which was to begin at Geneva on 31 October 1958 and requested the Secretary-General to lend his assistance.

21. Although the two other proposals were notable for the importance they attached to the immediate cessation of nuclear weapons testing, there was a basic difference between them. The Soviet Union's draft resolution (A/C.1/L.203) called for an immediate and final cessation of tests, whereas the thirteen-Power resolution (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1) urged that the tests be discontinued until the States concerned had reached agreement in regard to the technical arrangements and controls considered necessary to ensure the observance of the discontinuance of the tests. The discontinuance of nuclear testing was unquestionably of fundamental importance. The issue there was not one of rejecting any proposal which recommended such action but rather of determining whether it was more advisable to adopt a special resolution on the discontinuance of tests or to attempt to obtain a suspension of tests pending the conclusion of a general agreement on disarmament.

22. If the seventeen Powers had attached less importance to the question of nuclear test explosions, they would have confined themselves to recommending appropriate measures to halt them, but they would not have suggested that the parties concerned should be urged to refrain from undertaking further testing while the Geneva negotiations were in progress.

23. Important though it was, however, the question of nuclear weapons tests could not be completely dissociated from the disarmament problem as a whole. It was essential that no plan put forward by the United Nations should alter the present distribution of military strength. The balance of power in the world was the result of a process of historical development, and it was not for the United Nations to change it. Yet, that was precisely what would result from the immediate and unconditional cessation of testing, for it was nuclear weapons which were currently maintaining the world balance of power. A balanced disarmament was essential.

24. The seventeen-Power draft resolution aimed at the complete discontinuance of testing and at the limitation of armaments. However, it recommended that those goals should be reached by progressive stages—a method which, while less spectacular, would surely be more effective in the long run than the adoption of partial measures to the accomplishment of great fanfare. Though the USSR representative was critical of the use of the word "suspension" in the seventeen-Power draft resolution, a debate on the meaning of the terms employed would serve no purpose. The practical effect of adopting the seventeen-Power draft resolution would be to halt the tests. That was what mattered.

25. There was, of course, the possibility that the negotiations would prove unsuccessful and that the nuclear test explosions would be resumed. That would mean that one of the parties did not really want to arrive at a solution, and it was reasonable to assume that in that case a more strongly worded resolution would never be implemented.

26. The Argentine delegation did not intend to dwell on that gloomy prospect. It felt that discussion was possible only if one proceeded on the assumption that the opinions expressed by others reflected their true intentions. To make a practice of systematically casting doubt on the sincerity of others would be contrary to the rules on which coexistence was based. It had therefore been most distressing to hear the Soviet representative declare at the 953rd meeting
that the sole aim of the United States in offering to suspend nuclear weapons tests had been to gain time to prepare a new series of tests. There was no concrete evidence to support that charge. Moreover, it involved a passing of judgement on the intentions of others, which was unacceptable to the Assembly. If that precedent was allowed, one might, for example, contend that the Soviet Union was trying to take advantage of the collective emotion aroused by the danger inherent in nuclear test explosions in order to tip the balance of power in its favour.

27. Turning to the amendments submitted by Ireland (A/C.1/L.207), he said that their adoption would mean giving legal sanction to the unequal situation resulting from the fact that only a few Powers possessed nuclear weapons. The effect would be to create a gulf between the small Powers and the great Powers. Similarly, a restriction on the use of nuclear weapons which did not apply to all States would permanently limit the potential of those States to which it was forbidden to supply such weapons. In view of the laudable motives which had inspired the amendments, the Argentine delegation would abstain if they were put to the vote.

28. Despite the importance of the technical problems involved, disarmament was primarily a political problem. The need, therefore, was to strike directly at the cause of the arms race. It was not a question of reducing armaments in order to ease world tension, but rather of easing tension in order to reduce armaments effectively. In order to achieve that lessening of tension, it would be necessary to work out a political formula that permitted the coexistence of opposing spiritual and ideological forces. The formula would prove viable only if it recognized the territorial and political status quo prevailing between the great blocs. The status quo sanctioned inequitable situations which, it was to be hoped, could be altered through negotiation. To admit, however, that it could be breached by acts of aggression or by recourse to the policy of the fait accompli would inevitably lead to war.

29. The Argentine delegation placed high hopes in the conference which was scheduled to open at Geneva on 31 October 1958. The fate of mankind rested, in large measure, in the hands of the men who were to meet there.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.