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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. SHAHA (Nepal) said that the discussion on disarmament at the General Assembly's twelfth session had disappointed the world, for its outcome had been not merely a deadlock in the negotiations on substantive questions, but a break-down of the negotiation machinery itself. His delegation had always considered that the United Nations must be intimately and actively associated with efforts to solve the disarmament problem, for the question was closely related to the purposes for which the United Nations had been established. That view implied no disparagement of the usefulness of the technical approach adopted by the 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; his delegation welcomed the progress made there had hoped that the forthcoming negotiations at Geneva would lead to further progress. However, as the Secretary-General had said in his memorandum (A/3936), such conferences were marginal to the central problem of disarmament and must be followed by political agreement among the great Powers if continued progress was to be made.

2. In the present atmosphere of distrust it was unrealistic to believe that such agreement was possible without prior agreement on an effective international inspection plan. The ultimate aim of the United Nations should be balanced, world-wide disarmament, but the States whose security was involved could not act hastily or take undue risks in achieving that aim. It was therefore important that some United Nations machinery which would make it possible to continue the disarmament negotiations should be in operation, and an effort should be made by the Committee immediately to re-establish such machinery. The Mexican draft resolution (A/C.1/L.208) represented a useful approach to that goal.

3. The dangers of nuclear weapons tests, which had been confirmed by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, had justifiably become the concern of the entire international community. Although it was true that the cessation of tests was not in itself a disarmament measure, his delegation believed that it would bring a real sense of relief to the peoples of the world and that progress in that direction might facilitate progress in other fields of disarmament. The initial step envisaged in the draft resolution co-sponsored by his delegation (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1) might help to increase the confidence of the principal parties involved and create an atmosphere in which progress could be made in disarmament as such.

4. The reduction of the military budgets of the four great Powers was also an important aspect of disarmament. There again, however, a technical approach might be necessary in order to determine the feasibility of examining and regulating the military budgets of States through some international inspection system.

5. His delegation still hoped that the First Committee would be able to work out a draft resolution on disarmament acceptable to all, for any resolution that was not adopted unanimously would be of little use. As the Swedish representative had pointed out (951st meeting), the draft resolutions before the Committee did not seem to differ greatly in purpose. His delegation therefore proposed that the Chairman should appoint a working party, representative of the various views on the question of disarmament and of the broad geographical areas of the world, with a view to working out a compromise draft resolution on the subject in collaboration with the sponsors of the various draft resolutions and amendments, and appealed to the great Powers to demonstrate the goodwill and vision which the circumstances demanded.

6. Mr. ILLUECA (Panama) said that the Soviet representative's most recent statement to the Committee (966th meeting) had greatly altered the situation. In spite of the new difficulties which had arisen, his delegation believed that the United Nations could and
must provide the contending sides with an instrument which would make it possible to achieve agreement on at least some indispensable measures of disarmament, such as the controlled cessation of nuclear weapons tests and the adoption of measures to prevent surprise attack. Furthermore, every effort should be made to avoid prejudicing the success of the forthcoming negotiations at Geneva. It was therefore necessary to study the Soviet representative’s statement very carefully. If it were to be interpreted as an ultimatum, the constructive exchange of views would be interrupted. If, however, it was put forward merely as a basis for negotiation, the Committee should be careful to avoid the creation of irreconcilable differences.

7. The complex problems involved in the question of disarmament could not be solved overnight. In themselves, none of the draft resolutions before the Committee represented a magic formula for the solution of the disarmament problem. In those circumstances, his delegation was more than ever convinced that the Mexican draft resolution (A/C.1/3/L.208), which it would support, should be given favourable consideration. If adopted, it would open the way to further negotiations on disarmament, while in no way hindering the progress of the debate.

8. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Committee’s debate on disarmament had confirmed the correctness of the Soviet Union’s position on the need to give priority to the question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests.

9. In spite of the attempts of the United States and its allies to submerge that question in the general debate on disarmament and to minimize its significance, an overwhelming majority of speakers in the debate had stressed the urgent character of the question. A majority of the speakers had also favoured the definitive and complete cessation of nuclear tests. Moreover, even some of the speakers who, for reasons easy to understand, had refrained from direct support of the demand for the complete cessation of tests had, in one way or another, expressed their approval of the idea.

10. At the same time, the discussion had shown that the United States and the United Kingdom opposed an affirmative solution of the question and that the prime concern of their representatives in the Committee was to find pretexts for evading such a solution.

11. One of those pretexts was the extensively publieized argument that the USSR was hindering the establishment of control over the cessation of tests. The representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom had repeatedly endeavoured to distort the Soviet Union’s position on the matter, while, at the 956th meeting, the Italian representative had even asserted that the Soviet Union had, throughout the past twelve years, consistently evaded any commitments with respect to international control of disarmament. Yet the Soviet Union had submitted a detailed proposal on control as early as 1947 and since then had invariably supported such control. It had submitted a detailed and exhaustive proposal for a whole system of control to the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission on 27 March 1956 (DC/83, annex 5). With regard to control over an agreement on the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, the Soviet Government had clearly and unequivocally announced its agreement to all the conclusions and recommendations concerning a system of international control reached by the Geneva Conference of Experts. It had, however, always objected, and continued to object, to the substitution of talks about control for practical measures of disarmament.

12. The representatives of the Western Powers had also said that they could not accept the complete cessation of nuclear weapons tests because such a decision would undermine the security of their countries. But the cessation of tests by the “nuclear Powers” would affect them all in equal measure and would give no advantage to the USSR. It might be argued, indeed, that the cessation of tests would benefit the Western Powers since they had carried out a substantially larger number of test explosions than the Soviet Union. His Government’s view of the problem was, however, based on the premise that the cessation of tests would be an important step towards the discontinuance of the race in atomic armaments and the cessation of the further development of atomic weapons and that it would eliminate the dangers of atomic radiation resulting from the continued testing of nuclear weapons. It also took into account the fact that the achievement of agreement on the question would have a calming effect on the international situation and thus pave the way for further disarmament measures. In advocating the immediate cessation of nuclear tests it had in mind, not narrow, egotistical aims, but the peace and well-being of all mankind. The fact that a cessation of tests would in no way impair the rights of, or alter the relationship of military strength between, the main Powers had been confirmed by so prominent a Western spokesman in the field of disarmament as Mr. Moch, the representative of France who, while opposing even a suspension of tests, had nevertheless emphasized that the status quo with regard to atomic armaments would in no way be altered by the discontinuance of the tests.

13. It was thus apparent that the Western Powers were concerned, not with safeguarding their security, but with continuing the atomic arms race; they wanted to go on perfecting their weapons of mass destruction and using them to intimidate the peoples of the world. According to The New York Times, General Nathan F. Twining, the Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, had stated on 21 October 1958 that it was United States policy to use nuclear weapons whenever such use was advantageous. That was the real national policy of the United States in the field of disarmament.

14. Reverting to the question of the effect of the cessation of nuclear tests on the balance of military power in the world, he rejected the argument advanced by the representatives of Canada (954th meeting), the Netherlands (955th meeting), Argentina (955th meeting), Cuba (956th meeting) and other countries that the cessation of such tests would alter that balance.

15. When the Soviet Union had tried to allay the Western Powers’ profound fear of Soviet superiority in conventional armaments and armed forces by agreeing that nuclear weapons should not be banned until con-
conventional armaments and armed forces had been reduced by 75 per cent of the amount proposed by the Western Powers, those Powers had promptly withdrawn their own proposal. On 27 March 1956, when the Soviet Union had submitted in the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission a proposal for a substantial reduction in the conventional armaments and armed forces of the great Powers (DC/63, annex 5), leaving temporarily aside the question of a ban on nuclear weapons, the Western Powers had rejected that proposal.

16. Attempts had been made to distort his statement of the previous day (964th meeting) and to represent the Soviet Union as being unwilling to halt its nuclear tests on 31 October 1958 or to conclude an agreement on thecessation of testing. He pointed out that he had rejected only the one-year suspension of testing proposed by the Western Powers. If the United States and United Kingdom were prepared to conclude an agreement for the immediate, unconditional cessation of testing for all time, the Soviet Union would halt its tests forthwith.

17. The United States Government's note of 20 October 1958 to the Soviet Government had stated that the United States would be prepared to refrain from nuclear weapons tests for further successive periods of one year after the initial suspension of one year, provided that the Soviet Union would do the same, that the agreed inspection system was installed and working effectively, and that satisfactory progress was being made "in reaching agreement on and implementing major and substantive arms control measures" (A/3956). Thus, the United States was making the conclusion of an agreement on the cessation of testing conditional on progress towards the establishment of controls over armaments, not over disarmament; it was asking the Soviet Union to assist it in continuing the arms race. In its note of 20 October 1958 to the USSR, the United Kingdom had made the prolongation of a one-year suspension of testing conditional on satisfactory progress towards the installation of an effective system of international control over such suspension and towards "the adoption and execution of measures of real disarmament" (A/3955). He requested clarification of the apparent divergence in the positions set forth in the two notes. Although the United Kingdom note referred to disarmament measures whereas the United States note spoke of arms control measures, he wondered whether the latter document might not give a more accurate reflection of the United Kingdom's real intentions, namely to establish control of the armaments of States without any disarmament. Thus the present attitude of the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom constituted the real obstacle to the solution of the problem.

18. The representative of Japan, in his statement at the 965th meeting, had repeated the United States position in its entirety and had appealed for a compromise on that basis at the forthcoming Geneva talks. That was somewhat surprising, in view of the Independent Japanese attitude on the question of the cessation of nuclear tests.

19. The General Assembly could best contribute to the success of the conference scheduled to begin at Geneva on 31 October 1958 by adopting the Soviet draft resolution (A/C.1/L.203 and Corr.1), which called for the immediate cessation of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests with no conditions attached. The representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and France had criticized the Soviet draft resolution on various minor points because they opposed the unconditional cessation of testing and wanted a temporary suspension which would leave them free to resume testing whenever they saw fit. However, most of the representatives had thus far spoken on the subject, including those of India (952nd meeting), Ceylon (950th meeting), Sweden (946th meeting) and Indonesia (957th meeting), had made it clear that they favoured the complete cessation of testing. The Soviet draft resolution reflected the views of most of the countries of the world, and its adoption would represent the first important step towards the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons and the elimination of the threat of atomic war.

20. The Soviet delegation also endorsed the proposal by the Ethiopian representative that a declaration should be adopted renouncing the use of nuclear weapons (955th meeting).

21. The United States representative had remained completely silent on the question of the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers. That was to be expected inasmuch as Mr. Donald A. Quarles, the United States Deputy Secretary of Defense, had stated recently that the United States planned to increase its military budget by $2,000 million in the next fiscal year. The other Western representatives, with the obvious intention of permanently shelving the matter, had suggested that the question should be referred to experts for study. The argument that it was impossible to establish controls for the reduction of military budgets was unfounded; the Soviet Union had proposed on previous occasions that a control organ should be established and given unhampered access to all materials relating to military budget appropriations, including the decisions of legislative and executive organs of government. The problem of controls could be readily solved provided that the will to achieve agreement in the matter existed. The reduction of military budgets would not only make it possible to lighten the peoples' economic burden and provide assistance to the under-developed countries; it would also constitute the first step towards halting the arms race.

22. With regard to other general disarmament problems, the Soviet Union had outlined in its memorandum (A/3929) a programme of practical measures, including a minimum of initial steps, namely, the cessation of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, and the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers and the use of the savings so effected for assistance to under-developed countries. Those proposals should satisfy the interests not only of smaller countries, but of the great Powers themselves. On the other hand, the debate had shown a tendency among the Western Powers and other States members of the military blocs organized by them to refuse to elaborate any concrete measures on the cessation of the armaments race and the reduction of the danger of an atomic war and merely to deal with the technical study of all those subjects. Unfortunately the Secretary-General, too, was trying to push the United Nations along that path, though by virtue of his position, he should be helping in the search for genuine and prac-
tical solutions of disarmament problems, instead of diverting the Organization from making such attempts, in accordance with the wishes of the opponents of disarmament. The technical approach meant that, instead of working out concrete measures, the participants would waste time in fruitless discussion of techniques of control. Yet it was obviously pointless to speak of control before there was political agreement, if only in principle, on what was to be controlled. The Soviet Union continued to urge the United Nations to concentrate on practical measures of disarmament and to begin with the cessation of nuclear weapons tests and the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers. Agreement on those steps would clear the way for solution of the problem as a whole.

23. Mr. MATSUDAIRA (Japan), exercising his right of reply, took issue with the Soviet representative's statement that, in appealing for a compromise between the USSR and the United States on the question of the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, Japan was not maintaining its independent position on the issue. A careful reading of the verbatim record would soon prove to Mr. Zorin that Japan's independent position on the issue was quite clear: any disarmament measures, including cessation of nuclear tests, if they were to be enforced and yield concrete results, must have the unity of views of all the Powers concerned. With regard to a temporary suspension of tests, the Japanese delegation had felt that since the Soviet Union had been prepared in 1957 to agree to a two- or three-year suspension, some compromise formula might be arrived at in the present circumstances.

24. Mr. NOBLE (United Kingdom), exercising his right of reply, said that Mr. Zorin had misrepresented much of what the United Kingdom representative had said, as the verbatim record would show.

25. Mr. BARCO (United States of America), exercising his right of reply, felt sure that the Committee had neither the desire nor the need for clarification of what Mr. Zorin had referred to as the "dilemmas" between the United States and the United Kingdom. Mr. Zorin's statement was another in a series of misrepresentations of the United States position.

26. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to the replies made by various representatives to his statement, said that he had criticized Japan, not because it had called for a compromise, but because it had urged compromise on the basis of the United States proposal, which was an unsound basis for compromise. The United States reply was unsatisfactory: the issue at stake was the substantive question of the conditions on which the United States would be prepared to cease nuclear weapons tests. No reply had been forthcoming on that issue.

27. He had not criticized France on its position with regard to the cessation of tests because that position was so manifestly wrong and so harmful to the cause of peace that it could not fail to dismay all States.

28. Mr. DE LA COLINA (Mexico) said that the views expressed in the course of the debate had strengthened the conviction of the Mexican delegation that no effort should be spared to activate the informal conversations called for in the Mexican draft resolution (A/C.1/ L.200) with a view to bringing about the resumption of negotiations on disarmament within the framework of the United Nations. The Mexican proposal was purely procedural; it in no way affected the substance of the problem; it established no time limits; it prescribed no methods of work; it merely left it to the parties directly concerned, with the assistance of the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the First Committee, to seek means of resuming negotiations. It would not interfere with the various actions proposed in the draft resolutions and amendments before the Committee or with the voting. It could not prejudice the success of the Geneva talks. On the contrary, if those talks should fail, it would be of primary importance that there should be some organ within the United Nations, supported by the great Powers, to continue to seek agreement on those aspects of disarmament which offered the best prospects for such agreement. The Chairman of the Committee, with the consent of all the parties, would determine the appropriate moment to report to the Committee on the results of the conversations. Pending receipt of his report, the item entitled "Question of disarmament" would be left open.

29. In view of the nature and scope of the Mexican draft resolution, he requested that it be put to the vote last.

30. Mr. LALL (India) suggested that the Committee should pause before proceeding to the consideration of the various draft resolutions and amendments before it in order to allow time to achieve a result which all delegations evidently sought, namely, agreement on a single text which might obtain the unanimous approval of the General Assembly. Accordingly, he proposed that the Committee should cancel the meeting scheduled for the following morning and reconvene in the afternoon.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.