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Agenda item 8

GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS:

SECOND REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF REGIONAL  
PREPARATORY CONFERENCES

NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

Note verbale dated 14 September 1995 from the delegation of  
France to the Fourth World Conference on Women addressed to  
the secretariat of the Conference

The delegation of the French Republic to the Fourth World Conference on Women would be most grateful if the secretariat of the Conference would have the attached right of reply circulated as an official document of the Conference.

Annex

RIGHT OF REPLY OF THE DELEGATION OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC  
TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The French delegation regrets that certain delegations have commented in this forum on the resumption by France of nuclear tests, since this question does not specifically relate to women.

France's objective in conducting a final round of nuclear tests is twofold: to conclude a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty in 1996 and to maintain the credibility of its deterrence capability. The final tests which France will conduct are intended not to test a new type of weapon or to alter the country's strategy but, rather, to enable France to guarantee the credibility of its deterrence capability once a nuclear-test-ban treaty has been concluded.

It has been established that the French tests will prove harmless to the environment and to health. The French test site is the one among those used by the nuclear Powers that has been the subject of the most extensive scientific research. The Tazieff, Atkinson and Cousteau missions concluded that French underground tests have had neither any radiological or geological impact nor any effect on fauna or flora. The same results were observed in comparative radioactivity measurements conducted under the authority of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This finding was confirmed by the report submitted by a group of Australian scientists at the meeting of ministers of the environment of the South Pacific Forum on 10 August 1995.

France has requested the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to organize an independent international scientific mission to verify the harmlessness of the French tests once this final round has been completed.

France's attitude in this matter is one of unprecedented openness and transparency.

For example, the President of the French Republic announced the schedule and objectives of this last round of tests more than two months in advance. Many explanations were provided in public statements or in messages to foreign Governments. The national and international press was invited to the site at Mururoa.

France believes that its policy with respect to nuclear testing is appropriate in the new international context, in which nuclear deterrence remains indispensable for stability.

The effort to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons has assumed renewed importance in this context. The characteristics of France's final round of tests meet the obligation to exercise "utmost restraint" assumed by France and the other States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 11 May 1995 when the Treaty was renewed indefinitely.

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Moreover, on 10 August France helped to give new impetus to the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty when it proposed the prohibition of all nuclear-weapon tests or any other nuclear explosion, whatever the magnitude. This choice of the "zero option" for the future nuclear-test-ban treaty clearly demonstrates the desire of France to achieve a complete and definitive halt to nuclear tests. France can achieve this goal only by conducting one final round of tests.

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