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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM  
IN THE AGENDA OF THE THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION

THE DISCONTINUANCE OF ATOMIC AND HYDROGEN WEAPONS TESTS

Letter dated 15 September 1958 from the Chairman of the Delegation of the  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations, addressed to  
the Secretary-General

New York, 15 September 1958

Sir,

The USSR delegation, on the instructions of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, submits the following question for inclusion in the agenda of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly as an item of an important and urgent character:

"The discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, I attach an explanatory memorandum on this question.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) A. GROMYKO  
Chairman of the Delegation of the  
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The Soviet delegation, on the instructions of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, proposes that the General Assembly should consider, as an item of an important and urgent character, the question of "The discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests".

The following factors make it urgently necessary to solve this problem:

Firstly, the continuation of atomic and hydrogen bomb tests intensifies the atomic arms race and contributes to the creation of even more destructive types of nuclear weapons, thereby increasing the danger of an outbreak of atomic war.

Secondly, each new nuclear explosion results in the formation of a large quantity of radioactive products, which poison the atmosphere, the soil, and the seas and oceans. If atomic and hydrogen weapons tests are not brought to an end, the danger of atomic radiation, which already threatens the life and health of many millions of people today, will become even more serious in the future. As everyone knows, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation recently drew attention to this danger. The members of this Committee, prominent scientists appointed by the Governments of fifteen countries, came to the conclusion that the continuation of nuclear tests "involves new and largely unknown hazards to present and future populations". It is the duty of the General Assembly to take this warning by the scientists most seriously.

Thirdly, now that the conference of experts at Geneva has arrived at the unanimous opinion that it is possible to establish an effective system for controlling the observance of an agreement on general discontinuance of nuclear tests, no further delay in the solution of this important problem can be tolerated.

Since 1955, the Soviet Government has been proposing that an agreement should be reached on the immediate discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests.

Desiring to make a practical start towards a general discontinuance of nuclear tests, the Soviet Government decided upon a unilateral discontinuance by the Soviet Union of the testing of all types of atomic and hydrogen weapons and called upon the United States of America and the United Kingdom to follow that example.

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This step by the Soviet Union created favourable conditions for the immediate discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests by all States. However, the United States and United Kingdom Governments, far from following the example of the Soviet Union, replied to this Soviet initiative with an unprecedentedly intensive series of test explosions of nuclear weapons which they have continued to conduct up to the present time. These actions demonstrate that the United States and United Kingdom Governments are trying to make use of the Soviet Union's discontinuance of nuclear tests in order to obtain military advantages for themselves - a fact which the Soviet Government, prompted by considerations of USSR security, naturally cannot disregard.

The Soviet Government considers that it is the duty of the United Nations to take all necessary steps to achieve a positive solution for all time of the problem of a general discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. This is especially necessary as it is evident from the statements of the United States and United Kingdom Governments of 22 August that those Governments are continuing to delay the solution of the problem of a discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests by attaching to that problem a series of conditions which are impossible of fulfilment because of the position taken by the Western Powers themselves. The United States and United Kingdom Governments, by their unwillingness to take into account the unanimous demand of the peoples for an end to nuclear weapons tests, assume full responsibility for the continuation of tests and for the baleful consequences which those tests may have for mankind.

The consideration and positive solution of this problem by the General Assembly would have a salutary effect on the entire international atmosphere, would constitute the first important step towards the complete prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons, and would create favourable conditions for the solution of other important disarmament problems.

The Soviet Government considers that the question of the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests should be separated from the general disarmament programme and resolved independently and at once, and that it should not be linked with other disarmament problems on which substantial differences exist among the States. Such an approach to the solution of this problem is the one which corresponds to the interests of peace.

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