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QUESTION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTS

Letter dated 29 April 1959 from the Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 29 April 1959

I have the honour to transmit the text of a letter of 13 April 1959 from Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States, to Nikita Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, concerning the reconvening of the Geneva negotiations for the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests.

It is requested that the text of this letter of 13 April be circulated as a document of the United Nations.

(Signed) Henry Cabot LODGE

Enclosure:
As stated.

Text of letter from President Eisenhower to Nikita Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning the reconvening of the Geneva negotiations for the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests

THE WHITE HOUSE
(Augusta, Georgia)

13 April 1959

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Today the Geneva negotiations for the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests are resuming. During the recess I have considered where we stand in these negotiations and what the prospects are for the successful conclusion which I earnestly desire. I have also talked with Prime Minister Macmillan, who reported to me of his frank discussions on this matter with you.

The United States strongly seeks a lasting agreement for the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests. We believe that this would be an important step toward reduction of international tensions and would open the way to further agreement on substantial measures of disarmament.

Such an agreement must, however, be subject to fully effective safeguards to insure the security interests of all parties, and we believe that present proposals of the Soviet Union fall short of providing assurance of the type of effective control in which all parties can have confidence: therefore, no basis for agreement is now in sight.

In my view, these negotiations must not be permitted completely to fail. If indeed the Soviet Union insists on the veto on the fact finding activities of the control system with regard to possible underground detonations, I believe that there is a way in which we can hold fast to the progress already made in these negotiations and no longer delay in putting into effect the initial agreements which are within our grasp. Could we not, Mr. Chairman, put the agreement into effect in phases beginning with a prohibition of nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere? A simplified control system for atmospheric tests up to fifty kilometers could be readily derived from the Geneva experts' report, and would not require the automatic on-site inspection which has created the major stumbling block in the negotiations so far.

My representative is putting forward this suggestion in Geneva today. I urge your serious consideration of this possible course of action. If you are prepared to change your present position on the veto, on procedures for on-site inspection, and on early discussion of concrete measures for high altitude detection, we can of course proceed promptly in the hope of concluding the negotiation of a comprehensive agreement for suspension of nuclear weapons tests. If you are not yet ready to go this far, then I propose that we take the first and readily attainable step of an agreed suspension of nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere up to fifty kilometers while the political and technical problems associated with control of underground and outer space tests are being resolved. If we could agree to such initial implementation of the first - and I might add the most important - phase of a test suspension agreement, our negotiators could continue

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to explore with new hope the political and technical problems involved in extending the agreement as quickly as possible to cover all nuclear weapons tests.

Meanwhile, fears of unrestricted resumption of nuclear weapons testing with attendant additions to levels of radioactivity would be allayed, and we would be gaining practical experience and confidence in the operation of an international control system.

I trust that one of these paths to agreement will commend itself to you and permit the resuming negotiations to make a far-reaching response to the hopes of mankind.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower
