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PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE SIXTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY: ITEM PROPOSED BY THE UNITED KINGDOM OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

THE URGENT NEED FOR A TREATY TO BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTS
UNDER EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL

Letter dated 15 July 1961 from the Permanent Representative
of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States
of America, addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of our respective Governments we have the honour to request that an item "The urgent need for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests under effective international control" be included in the agenda of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

An explanatory memorandum is attached in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

(Signed) P. Dean

Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom to the United Nations

(Signed) Francis T.P. Flimpton

Deputy Permanent Representative of
the United States to the United Nations

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. In its past six sessions, the General Assembly had given serious consideration to the problem of cessation of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons tests. In a number of resolutions - the last of which was adopted on 20 December 1960 - the Assembly has recognized the imperative and urgent need for agreement by treaty on such a ban. To this end, it has urged the three States negotiating in Geneva to make every effort to achieve such agreement under conditions of appropriate international control. At the same time, while negotiations were in progress, the General Assembly urged the negotiating States to refrain voluntarily from the testing of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons.
2. The United States and the United Kingdom Governments are conscious of their responsibility before the international community and of the importance of a test ban agreement to general world peace and security. For these reasons they have negotiated patiently with the Soviet Union in Geneva for nearly three years to achieve a ban on nuclear weapons tests which would be open for adherence by all States. For these reasons they have refrained from conducting nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests since negotiations commenced in October 1958. During all this period, however, there has been no international verification to ensure that no clandestine nuclear weapons tests are being conducted by any nation. The Soviet Union has steadfastly resisted the adoption of key measures of international control which alone could afford a reasonable degree of assurance to all States that the parties to a treaty are adhering to their obligations. It must be recognized that the voluntary forbearance of the United States and the United Kingdom to conduct nuclear weapons tests, under such conditions, involves a serious risk to their security.
3. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 1578 (XV) of 20 December 1960, the United States and the United Kingdom introduced at Geneva, on 21 March and 29 May of this year, a large number of far-reaching compromise proposals dealing with the principal issues unresolved between them and the Soviet Union. These proposals would not only give the Soviet Union and States associated with it a position of absolute equality with the United States, the United Kingdom and States associated with them on the policy-making control commission and throughout

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the control system; they would also go as far as possible, consistent with the technical and organizational requirements of effective control, to accommodate Soviet sensitivities on the subject of control. Moreover, the United States and the United Kingdom introduced on 18 April 1961 a complete compromise treaty text which they are prepared to sign immediately or to use as a basis for further serious negotiation. A copy of this treaty was circulated to the Members of the United Nations on 3 June (A/4772).

4. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, did not heed the counsel of the General Assembly "to make every effort to reach agreement as soon as possible". It has failed to respond constructively to the initiative of its two negotiating partners. It has not introduced a single positive proposal within the past year and a half. Instead, since 21 March, the Soviet Union has retreated from agreements already reached. Its most significant backward step was a new proposal that day-by-day executive authority over the international control system be exercised by a three member administrative council (including representatives of the two nuclear sides and a neutral representative) which could act only by unanimous consent. This proposal retracted the Soviet Union's earlier agreement on a single administrator, who would be appointed with the concurrence of the Soviet Union, who would carry out the directives of the treaty and of the policy-making control commission, and who would be responsible to, and operate under, the supervision of the control commission. While such a single administrator could take action rapidly and impartially, under the three-man administrative council proposal any action could be blocked, or delayed by any of its members.

5. The Soviet Union justifies its proposal for a three-member administrative council by asserting that "there is no one person who can live in a society and not be influenced by one or another ideology and by mutual relations which exist between different groups within society. Neutral countries exist, but there are not and cannot be neutral people."

6. The United States and United Kingdom Governments categorically repudiate any suggestion that there are no people capable of exercising independent judgement on behalf of the international community. Indeed, the whole history of international organizations bears witness to the contrary. The two Governments

believe that the Soviet rejection of the idea of an international civil servant acting impartially under guidance from international policy-making organs can only be viewed as an attack upon the executive capacity of any international organization to act effectively.

7. The United States and the United Kingdom reject the Soviet proposal for the appointment of three-man committees, composed of representatives of States or of supposed blocs of States, in which all action would have to be taken by unanimous consent of all three - a further opportunity to add to the many individual vetoes the Soviet has cast in world affairs during the post-war period. They are convinced that all nations which do not wish the domination of great Powers will likewise reject it.

8. The Soviet Union's position is further based on other inadequacies which frustrate the concept of effective international control, chief among these are: (a) the determination to limit inspection of suspicious events in the United States, and the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to three annually; (b) the demand for a delay of four years after treaty ratification before control operations could begin; and (c) insistence on provisions permitting self-inspection, for example, by turning over direction of all control posts and inspection teams in the Soviet Union to nationals of the Soviet Union. Moreover, in introducing the specious contention that the control arrangements proposed by the United States and the United Kingdom could be misused for espionage purposes, the Soviet Union has not only overlooked the far-reaching safeguards built into these arrangements to obviate any such danger, but has also, in effect, repudiated a control system of the scope recommended by the Geneva conference of experts in August 1958.

9. Confirming its unwillingness to comply with the numerous General Assembly resolutions urging early agreement on a nuclear weapons test ban, the Soviet Union now dismisses the significance of a separate treaty. It proposes instead that a treaty banning nuclear weapons tests should await agreement on, and perhaps indeed implementation of, general and complete disarmament. This proposal reverses the Soviet Union's earlier position; it can only be concluded that this is being done in order to avoid any commitment now on a nuclear weapons test ban to which all States could accede. The United States and the United Kingdom are opposed to delaying a test ban treaty until agreement on total disarmament can be worked out. The Geneva conference has shown that a treaty under reasonable and effective

international controls is possible; before the Soviet Union started reversing its positions, the conference had such a treaty well within its reach. The United States and the United Kingdom believe that the progress made in nearly three years of negotiation should not be given up, but that efforts should continue until an agreement has been reached. They believe that an adequately controlled nuclear weapons test ban agreement concluded at an early time would be of inestimable value for: (a) halting dangerous proliferation in nuclear weapon capabilities; (b) eliminating forever concern over fall-out; (c) providing an agreed first step toward controlled disarmament; and (d) generally commencing a process which could build confidence among nations and decrease the danger of war.

10. The present attitude of the Soviet Union, as underlined by recent notes of its Government, does nothing to narrow differences between the two sides; indeed, it has enlarged them. Consequently, a serious impasse has been reached. Recognizing the importance of these negotiations to the security and peace of the international community, the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom believe that the General Assembly should consider at its sixteenth session the critical situation that now confronts the conference. The two Governments are prepared to present a full exposition of their performance in carrying out the General Assembly mandate. It is the hope of both Governments that a treaty for cessation of nuclear weapons tests under adequate international control may yet be achieved and they stand ready to continue negotiations at Geneva to this end. The importance of such an agreement as a first step in reversing the dangerous and burdensome arms race can hardly be overestimated. The nations of the world must take this opportunity of taking a first significant step toward enduring world peace.
