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CONTENTS

Chairman: Mr. Ismail FAHMY (United Arab Republic).

AGENDA ITEM 28

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (continued):
(a) Report of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (A/7072 and Add.1-DC/230 and Add.1, A/7080)

1. Mr. SHARP (Canada): This is my first appearance at the General Assembly as Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada. Although I am not a stranger to the United Nations family—I have been concerned with various conferences and agencies in my former capacities as Minister of Trade and Commerce and Minister of Finance, and even before I took office as a member of Canadian Government I was concerned with many aspects of the work of this Organization—I make my debut in this most important political forum as a novice among seasoned veterans.

2. I wish to assure the Committee of my intention—and that of the Government which I represent—to continue Canada's record of support for the United Nations.

3. We are meeting this morning to consider a draft treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is the product of prolonged and delicate deliberations in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee; more particularly, it is the result of carefully negotiated agreement among the nuclear Powers represented on that Committee.

4. Many delegations will recall the early proposal put before the Assembly, designed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. That was the renowned "Irish resolution" of the late fifties, which was eventually and unanimously adopted on 4 December 1961, as resolution 1665 (XVI). We are all indebted to the Foreign Minister of Ireland for his foresight and fortitude in persevering in that initiative—often in the face of formidable odds.

5. We are mindful, too, that when suggestions for a non-dissemination agreement were first aired in the United Nations they derived much of their inspiration and support from the group of non-aligned States.

6. Since that time, the problems of non-proliferation have been under increasingly intensive scrutiny at successive sessions of the General Assembly and in other international gatherings.

7. Canada's support for the principle of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons has never wavered. The overwhelming majorities by which resolutions on non-proliferation have been adopted testify that virtually all States Members of the United Nations share our views. It remains to translate that agreement in principle into generally acceptable terms for a binding international treaty. The draft before us is intended to serve that end. It seeks to achieve two fundamental purposes.

8. The first—and perhaps by far the most important—is to reduce the sense of insecurity which aggravates international tensions, accelerates the spiralling arms race and increases the risk of nuclear war. I draw the Committee's attention to the study published last October by the Secretary-General, from which I should like to quote a few words:

> "The mounting concern about the spread and development of nuclear weapons is a clear manifestation of the fear which now besets the world. Additional nuclear Powers accentuating regional tensions could only add to the complexity of the problem of assuring peace. Furthermore, it is impossible to deny the proposition that the danger of nuclear war breaking out through accident or miscalculation becomes greater, the larger the number of countries which deploy such weapons and the larger the stockpiles and the more diversified the weapons they hold. If a nuclear conflict were to erupt, however it started, not a single State could feel itself secure." [A/6858 and Corr.1, para. 82.]

9. That is why States without nuclear weapons should forgo their right to acquire or develop them. That is also why those non-nuclear States which are asked to accept this self-denying ordinance have a legitimate right to expect tangible assurance that they will not become the victims of nuclear attack. Otherwise they cannot be expected to have that enhanced feeling of security which is the object of this enterprise.

10. Hence the significance of the statements made in Geneva by the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, which have reaffirmed that they will introduce a draft resolution in the Security Council under which they would give assurances of assistance, either through the United Nations or unilaterally, to any party to the non-proliferation treaty not possessing weapons if that State were the victim of an act or threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons were used. This affirmation has been belittled by some as having little meaning. And yet, given the

existence of Powers with nuclear weapons and capacity, what stronger assurance could any State without nuclear weapons have, short of becoming an ally of one of those nuclear Powers?

11. The Canadian delegation also considers it significant that the nuclear Powers—including the two most powerful nations in the world—have agreed not only on the terms of a draft treaty 1/ but also to render immediate assistance, in accordance with the Charter, in the event of a threat to the security of those countries which renounce the possession of nuclear armaments. Surely this in itself is one of the most encouraging international developments in many years. It represents a great step forward in the pursuit of durable world peace.

12. As its second main purpose, the proposed treaty will serve as an initial but essential step towards the control and reduction of existing stocks of nuclear weapons. It has been suggested by some that the undertakings on the part of the nuclear Powers to proceed with nuclear disarmament are insufficiently precise. Yet it is to be noted that the nuclear Powers who sign this treaty make a firm declaration of intent to work for nuclear disarmament. Moreover, the review and withdrawal procedures in the draft text provide means for the non-nuclear parties to exert influence on the nuclear parties to live up to that declaration.

13. The race to produce nuclear armaments must be stopped; eventually these weapons must be eliminated. On this the nations here assembled are agreed. It has been argued that we should be more likely to halt the arms race if the States not having nuclear weapons were to refuse to become party to a non-proliferation treaty unless it included a clause under which the nuclear Powers would commit themselves to cut off further production of fissile material, nuclear weapons and their means of delivery.

14. But, in the light of the history of disarmament negotiations, would other nations really credit a treaty undertaking by the nuclear Powers to stop the production of nuclear armaments and, if so, when—in one, three or five years? Is it reasonable, in the present world situation, especially in view of the refusal of France and China to take part in disarmament negotiations, to expect the nuclear Powers not to make any stronger commitment than they have made in article VI of the present draft?

15. The answers to both those questions are likely to be negative, however much we might wish them to be positive. If the history of efforts to achieve arms control or disarmament agreements teaches anything, it is to put progress ahead of perfection. The measure which we are now discussing—a partial measure just one step on the long road to general and complete disarmament—has taken seven years to accomplish. To wait for the nuclear Powers to make a commitment to reduce nuclear arms is to run the risk of jeopardizing early agreement to stop dissemination.

16. There would then be no legal impediment to the acquisition of nuclear weapons, either as such or as devices to be used for peaceful explosions. As dissemination proceeded, there would be an increased incentive for the nuclear Powers to keep ahead of those who aspired to become members of a nuclear club. In less than two decades the number of nuclear Powers has increased from one to five. Unless effective steps are taken without delay, the next few years could see that number doubled at least, with the consequent and serious increase of insecurity which I have mentioned.

17. Conversely, if proliferation can be checked, through general acceptance of the proposed treaty, the nuclear Powers can face more confidently the task of reducing nuclear armaments in accordance with their declared intention.

18. Fundamental to the effectiveness, acceptability and implementation of the treaty would be its safeguard provisions in article III, which would serve not only to ensure that the treaty was being observed by all parties, making it a credible and durable instrument, but to extend and consolidate international safeguard procedures, thereby facilitating exchanges and co-operation in the peaceful nuclear sphere. While the Canadian preference was for safeguards to apply to nuclear as well as non-nuclear parties, we believe that the recent unilateral undertakings by the United States and the United Kingdom to accept the same international safeguards as non-nuclear parties will help to establish balanced and equitable safeguard procedures.

19. It is also our view that the fears expressed by some that the draft treaty may entail economic inequities have little foundation. On the contrary, the development of nuclear energy for peaceful uses and the trade in nuclear material could be stimulated by the very international confidence and co-operation the treaty would inspire. The undertakings in article IV constitute a kind of charter of rights in the sphere of nuclear science and technology for developing countries which does not exist now and which would be of great potential benefit to them.

20. The only restriction of any significance on non-nuclear countries in the field of peaceful use would be the prohibition of nationally conducted nuclear explosions for engineering and other civil purposes. Canada accepts this prohibition as necessary to the fundamental purpose of the treaty because peaceful and military explosions are technologically indistinguishable. In our view, article V, offering peaceful nuclear explosive services to all non-nuclear parties at nominal cost, is a reasonable and economical alternative.

21. During recent discussions, much has been made of the idea that the treaty should embody an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations as between the nuclear and non-nuclear States. No one can quarrel with that principle. We think, too, that that principle is fairly reflected in the draft treaty. I suggest only that the text before us should be judged in terms of whether a better balance is attainable at the present time, given the basic difficulty of reconciling the positions of the nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots.

22. We are also aware of the argument that the treaty is an instrument which could perpetuate the monopoly position of the States now possessing nuclear weapons, and in a sense it is. That is an inescapable aspect of a

1/ See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for 1967 and 1968, document DC/230 and Add.1, annex I.

non-proliferation treaty. This treaty does demonstrate, however, that the nuclear Powers are becoming increasingly aware of the great responsibility that rests upon them and are demonstrating a willingness to respond to the anxious advice tendered by the vast majority of the non-nuclear States to negotiate a cessation of the nuclear arms race.

23. The success of our efforts here will depend in great measure on the determination of the non-nuclear nations, which are really the parents and historical guardians of this project, to see it through to its conclusion. Unless we can act in concert now, our long and earnest efforts may have been in vain.

24. We at this twenty-second session of the General Assembly have been given the opportunity of bringing into effect the only arms control agreement now possible of achievement. Without this agreement, is there much prospect of future progress in disarmament?

25. The Governments here assembled have an opportunity to take a step forward towards a more peaceful and secure world by approving the proposed treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Canada urges the Assembly to act now.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

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