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Chairman: Mr. Mario AMADEO (Argentina).

Opening statement by the Chairman

1. The CHAIRMAN paid a tribute, on behalf of all the members of the First Committee, to the memory of Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General, and the members of the Secretariat who had died with him. He particularly deplored the loss of Mr. Wieschhoff, who had served as the Committee's Secretary.

2. He thanked the Committee for having elected him to the office of Chairman and pledged himself to prove worthy of their confidence.

3. The First Committee was meeting at a time of exceptional difficulty for the peace of the world to consider a number of important issues. Consequently, its deliberations assumed an overwhelming significance and would be followed with interest and hope by all the peoples of the world. It was therefore essential that they should lead to positive results and, in particular, that substantive decisions should be reached on the two major issues of disarmament and nuclear testing. In order to achieve that goal, he urged the Committee to adopt efficient and flexible methods of work and to adhere strictly to the rules of parliamentary good order.

Election of the Vice-Chairman

4. Mr. DJERMAKOYE (Niger) nominated Mr. Louis Ignacio-Pinto (Dahomey) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

5. Mr. ORTIZ MARTIN (Costa Rica) and Mr. BERARD (France) seconded the nomination.

Mr. Ignacio-Pinto (Dahomey) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

6. Mr. PESSOU (Dahomey), on behalf of Mr. Ignacio-Pinto, thanked the members of the Committee for the honour thus shown to his country.

Election of the Rapporteur

7. Mr. PLAJA (Italy) nominated Mr. Enckell (Finland) for the office of Rapporteur.

8. Mr. SHAHA (Nepal) seconded the nomination.

Mr. Enckell (Finland) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

9. Mr. ENCKELL (Finland) thanked the Committee for the confidence shown in him and his country.

Order of discussion of agenda items (A/C.1/844)

10. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the letter dated 27 September 1961 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the First Committee, containing the list of agenda items allocated to the Committee for its consideration (A/C.1/844). He opened the discussion on the order in which the items were to be considered.

11. Mr. DEAN (United States of America) said that, in the view of his delegation, the question of nuclear testing should be considered separately from that of disarmament and should be given first priority. Both were urgent matters, but they were different in character. The United States would press in the Committee its plan for general and complete disarmament (A/4891) but recognized that it was a highly complex matter. It was indeed to be hoped that the Committee would make progress in the direction of disarmament but it would obviously be some months before multilateral negotiations on disarmament could even begin and much longer than that before a start would be made on the drafting of actual agreements. On the other hand, nuclear testing was a matter on which the Assembly could take immediate action. After three years of negotiation at Geneva, the three major nuclear Powers were in agreement on many of the broad features of a treaty banning nuclear weapons tests under effective international control. The complete text of a treaty for the banning of nuclear tests in all environments, which had been presented at Geneva by the United States and the United Kingdom and had been circulated at the United Nations (A/4772), was ready for signature. If the Assembly shared his delegation's conviction that a treaty to ban tests was urgently needed, it could encourage the resumption of the three-Power negotiations. The urgency of that need was underscored by the fact that the Soviet Union had that very day conducted its eighteenth test in the atmosphere since 1 September. The question of nuclear testing should not be buried in the complexities of general disarmament discussions or else progress might be postponed indefinitely.

12. The Committee was considering two items dealing with nuclear testing: item 72 of the General Assembly's agenda, entitled "The urgent need for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests under effective international control", which had been submitted by the United States and the United Kingdom, and item 73, entitled "Continuation of suspension of nuclear and thermonuclear tests and obligations of States to refrain from their renewal", which had been submitted by India. He wished to point out that there was no mention of international control in the title of item 73.

13. Although his delegation had supported the Indian representative in the General Committee in arguing that the two nuclear testing items should be kept separate and not combined as a single item, it felt nevertheless that they should be considered simultaneously. If there was to be any question of priority in considering the two items, his delegation preferred that the United States-United Kingdom item should be considered first. Since the two items related to the same problem, however, it would clearly be more sensible to discuss them together. He was not, however, proposing that draft resolutions relating to the two items should also be considered simultaneously.

14. He was therefore submitting a proposal (A/C.1/L.281) to the effect that the Committee should decide: "(a) that agenda items 72 and 73, which deal with nuclear testing, be considered by the Committee as the first items on its agenda; (b) that agenda items 72 and 73 be discussed simultaneously by the Committee, with the understanding that separate consideration will then be given to the draft resolutions before the Committee."

15. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) congratulated the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur on their election.

16. Turning to the question of the order of discussion of the agenda items allocated to the First Committee, he recalled that the Soviet delegation had already made its position clear in the General Committee and the General Assembly: it believed that general and complete disarmament should be discussed first, as it was the most important question of the day and the settlement of other issues, including the cessation of nuclear weapons tests, depended on its solution. The arguments for that view were well known from statements made by the Soviet Government and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

17. The United States had argued that the cessation of nuclear tests should be given priority. But to consider that question in isolation from general and complete disarmament would produce no useful results. The question of tests must be considered in the context of the whole problem of general and complete disarmament. The United States representative had said that the disarmament problem was so complex and difficult that to link the two matters might delay a solution to the question of tests indefinitely. That showed that the United States did not believe in the possibility of a solution to the problem of general and complete disarmament, despite the fact that it had submitted a detailed plan on that very question. The logical inference was that the United States had no confidence in its own disarmament plan.

18. In the Soviet Union's view, by contrast, the time was opportune for important decisions on the fundamental question of disarmament. The ground had been prepared by the adoption of agreed principles for general and complete disarmament after talks between the Soviet Union and the United States in Washington, Moscow and New York, an important step towards a practical solution which had evoked favourable comment in the General Assembly. The way was thus open for effective discussion of the specific problems which remained undecided. The task was made easier by the fact that there were two plans for general and complete disarmament: the USSR plan, based on the programme put forward by the Soviet Government in 1959, and the plan put forward recently by the United States. Once the few outstanding problems had been settled, those plans could become the basis for negotiations for a

concrete disarmament programme, which should take place in a less unwieldy body than the General Assembly. There seemed to be no justification, therefore, for postponing consideration of the question of disarmament in favour of another question, which in any case could not be decided in isolation. The enthusiasm of the United States for the cessation of nuclear tests was all the more incomprehensible in that it had not voted in favour of a resolution on the subject submitted as recently as the previous session. The sudden change raised doubts about the sincerity of the United States attitude.

19. Furthermore, at the fifteenth session, after a similar discussion, the First Committee had decided to consider the items in the following order: disarmament, suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests, and prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons. Since any discussion on disarmament would inevitably raise the issues of the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and the discontinuance of nuclear tests, it would be reasonable to follow much the same order at the present session. He proposed that agenda item 19 (Question of disarmament), agenda item 73 (Continuation of suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests and obligations of States to refrain from their renewal), agenda item 72 (The urgent need for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests under effective international control) and agenda item 81 (Prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons) should, in that order, be considered by the Committee as the first four items on its agenda. But his delegation felt that those items must be discussed together, with the question of general and complete disarmament at the centre of the discussion. A separate discussion of the question of nuclear tests would be quite inappropriate. But if it were linked to general and complete disarmament his delegation would not fear a discussion of the question and would be glad to answer any questions that might be raised during the general discussion on disarmament.

20. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) congratulated the officers of the Committee upon their election and observed that although the order of discussion of agenda items was normally a procedural question, the importance and urgency of the items that had been mentioned was such that even the procedural debate assumed a substantive nature. Indeed, in some ways, each of the items was more important than the others and it would be highly desirable for a decision on any one to cover the others as well.

21. In July 1961, when the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests had come to a halt, the Government of India had requested the inclusion in the agenda of the sixteenth session of the item entitled "Continuation of suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests and obligations of States to refrain from their renewal" (A/4801 and Add.1). At that time, the voluntary moratorium on testing agreed to by the three nuclear Powers which had been negotiating in Geneva had not yet come to an end. That moratorium had been broken, however, in September, by the resumption of tests by the Soviet Union and, shortly thereafter, by the United States, and it was against that background that he would urge the Committee to weigh his arguments.

22. The Government of India strongly supported two other important items, namely, general and complete disarmament and the conclusion of a treaty banning nuclear weapons tests, yet it felt that a moratorium

on testing not only would not militate against attainment of those objectives, but would in fact improve the climate both for complete disarmament and for a treaty on testing. Moreover, experience had shown that agreement among the three nuclear Powers on general and complete disarmament or on a treaty banning tests could only be worked out after lengthy and detailed discussion—the treaty had been discussed in Geneva for three years—and depended, in the last analysis, exclusively on the will of the three Powers to reconcile their differences and come to agreement. On the other hand, the Indian item was an Assembly matter and the Assembly could, immediately and without further negotiation, call upon the four Powers engaged in nuclear testing to desist and continue the moratorium. In view of the fact that the attempts being made at Geneva to reach agreement on the broader disarmament question and on the conclusion of a treaty to ban nuclear tests were temporarily in abeyance, it became all the more important for the Assembly to proclaim world opinion that no action should be taken which would lead to further deterioration of the situation.

23. There was no case whatever for the continuation of nuclear testing by any nation. The world already had sufficient power to annihilate its entire population and the tests were not being made in the interest of science; the only purpose of continued testing was to perfect nuclear weapons, accumulate more of them and prepare for nuclear war. A cessation of testing would slow down the psychological and mental orientation towards nuclear war.

24. Furthermore, the Committee had to accept moral responsibility for the resolutions on the discontinuance of nuclear testing which had been adopted in the past. He recalled that General Assembly resolutions 1577 (XV) and 1578 (XV), urging the three Powers at Geneva to continue their voluntary suspension of tests and to keep the Disarmament Commission periodically informed of their negotiations and report the results to that body, had been adopted by overwhelming majorities in the Assembly and without opposition. So far as was known, the Geneva negotiations, although temporarily suspended, had never been terminated, and the Disarmament Commission could still look forward to a report on the results in due course. Consequently, it was the duty of the Assembly to verify compliance with previously adopted resolutions and, if necessary, to take further action in respect of them. That duty became all the more imperative against the background of 163 nuclear explosions by the United States from 1951 to 1958, 55 by the Soviet Union during the same period and 21 by the United Kingdom, while France had exploded four nuclear devices on African territory in 1960 and 1961. If the testing of nuclear weapons was to go on concurrently with the preparation of peoples for nuclear war, the climate for negotiations both with regard to complete disarmament and with regard to a treaty banning tests could only become more difficult. Obviously, the first prerequisite for fruitful negotiations was a cessation of testing.

25. For all those reasons, the Government of India urged the Committee to decide to discuss agenda item 73 as the first item for debate. India strongly felt that no country should embark on nuclear testing even if others were so engaged, not because it advocated a unilateral solution, but because the exercise was wholly lacking in common sense when the parties concerned had frequently maintained that their respective stores of weapons were sufficient to destroy the whole world.

26. He drew a distinction between a decision regarding the order of items on the Committee's agenda and a decision to discuss two or more of them together. He referred to the suggestion of the United States representative that the Indian item on testing might be debated concurrently with the United States-United Kingdom item on a nuclear treaty, and pointed out that the two were separate items for purposes of a decision on priorities and that the proposal of India was intended merely to give priority to the question of the continuation of the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests.

27. There could be no doubt that general and complete disarmament and the conclusion of a treaty banning nuclear tests were optimum goals and wholly unexceptionable. It was unwise, however, to sacrifice what was good or better—in the present case, a continuation of the moratorium on testing—for what was ideal or best. India was convinced that what was immediately required was a cessation of all nuclear explosions, and the Assembly, reflecting the opinion of the world, had a right to urge it upon the parties concerned. Accordingly, he submitted a proposal (A/C.1/L.282) to the effect that the Committee should decide that agenda item 73 should be discussed by the Committee as the first item, and requested that that proposal should be given priority in the voting.

28. Mr. PAZHWAK (Afghanistan), speaking on a point of order, observed that the question before the Committee was not merely one of procedure or priority, but was on the contrary an exceedingly important matter of principle. He was confident that the nuclear Powers, particularly the Soviet Union and the United States, were even more concerned than other nations to reach a solution of the major disarmament questions since they had a far greater responsibility towards humanity. Consequently, it was desirable to reach an understanding on the points of principle involved in the debate. Several concrete proposals had already been placed before the Committee and it would be advisable to give the delegations a little more time for consultation. He accordingly moved the adjournment of the meeting.

The motion for adjournment was adopted by 54 votes to 16, with 18 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.