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MEETING

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*Chairman:* Mr. Omar Abdel Hamid ADEEL  
(Sudan).

## AGENDA ITEM 77

*The urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (A/5141 and Add.1, A/C.1/873, A/C.1/874, A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2, A/C.1/L.311) (continued)*

### GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. BORJA (Philippines) said it was generally agreed that any rise in the level of radiation increased the rate of biological mutation, and that there was no known method of combating the effects of radio-active poisoning. The under-developed countries were the least well equipped to deal with the health problems of radiation—although the danger did not stop at their frontiers. It could be said that on the question of nuclear testing there were no aligned and non-aligned nations.

2. His delegation was pleased that the gap between the positions of the two blocs on the question of a test ban had narrowed. It was chiefly owing to the efforts of the neutral nations at the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament that a deadlock had been avoided. His delegation felt that the eight-nation memorandum of 16 April 1962<sup>1/</sup> provided a basis for the resumption of negotiations, since it was flexible enough to leave scope for accommodation between the opposing sides.

3. His delegation shared the general view that there must be inspection by means of international machinery and that the number of inspections should be held to a minimum and decided on the basis of technical studies. It was opposed, however, to the suggestions for an unpoliced moratorium pending the conclusion of an agreement banning underground nuclear tests. A moratorium had been tried already, and had proved a failure. Until mutual trust prevailed in international relations, more than mere verbal assurances would be needed to guarantee compliance with a test ban agreement.

4. His delegation saw no reason why a treaty banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water could not be signed immediately, since it was agreed that international inspection was not

required in those three environments. A partial ban of that nature would not imply the continuance of underground testing; rather, it would represent a vital first step towards a complete ban while agreement was being sought on underground testing. He could not understand the argument that if there could not be agreement on all points there should be agreement on nothing. A partial ban would halt the radio-active contamination of the atmosphere, reduce tensions, diminish the likelihood of nuclear war, and help to create an atmosphere of confidence. Furthermore, it would entail no disadvantage for either side.

5. The proposal in draft resolution A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2 that nuclear testing should cease not later than 1 January 1963 reflected the urgency of the problem. However, the Committee should not, in its haste to end testing, encourage the conclusion of an agreement which could later be broken with impunity. The matter under consideration was too serious to be left at the mercy of changing moods and vague moral preachments; it called for the conclusion of a binding agreement. Recent political events had demonstrated once again that a powerful country could act in a deceitful manner that was at variance with its public statements about peace and universal brotherhood.

6. The United States delegation had stated that it was prepared to see the cut-off date of 1 January 1963 embodied either in a treaty banning all nuclear tests in all environments under effective international control or in a partial ban which would halt tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space while negotiations on a comprehensive ban continued. His delegation felt that a partial ban to be brought into effect by 1 January 1963 was the most reasonable solution for the time being. The opportunity to make some progress now should be seized, without losing sight of ultimate goals. As the Acting Secretary-General had pointed out in a news conference at Warsaw on 31 August 1962, the greatest risk lay in wasting time in hair-splitting, and in doing nothing while nuclear weapons continued to pile up. The United Nations must demonstrate that it was capable not only of scoring advances in the social and economic fields but also of influencing man's destiny in a fundamental sense and dealing with the bitter antagonisms that blocked the road to peace. He hoped that the nuclear Powers would demonstrate a sense of responsibility for the fate of mankind.

7. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the meeting should be suspended so that the members of the Committee could be present for a vote which was about to be taken in the plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 12 noon.*

8. Mr. SHUKAIRY (Saudi Arabia) said that the question of a ban on nuclear testing was a matter of the

<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January 1961 to December 1962, document DC/203, annex 1, sect. J.

utmost urgency because nuclear war threatened the survival of humanity. Testimony given before a United States Senate Committee had indicated that a nuclear war might result in several hundred million deaths, and that the location of those deaths might be determined merely by the direction of the prevailing winds. Thus, the fate of mankind could be decided by a single factor which was beyond human control.

9. It was a fallacy that the cessation of nuclear explosions was not a disarmament measure. Testing was the heart of the armaments race; it made possible the development of more deadly and destructive weapons. While the nuclear Powers had furnished information on the number of test explosions they had carried out, which had greatly increased in recent years, they had never disclosed the number of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons which were stockpiled in their arsenals. The capacity of those weapons to destroy and to kill was beyond imagination; yet if testing continued, the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons would undoubtedly be far greater in 1970 than in 1962. Another result of the testing race might be the spread of nuclear missile bases to the moon and other parts of the universe, which had been advocated by some military experts.

10. Even though the cessation of nuclear weapon tests might not *ipso facto* lead to general and complete disarmament, it would put a brake on the armaments race and give the world the opportunity for disarmament. Moreover, while weapons could be destroyed, the knowledge of how to make them could not; thus, the production of knowledge which resulted from testing was more dangerous than the production of actual armaments. At its current session, therefore, the General Assembly must view the test ban question as a primary and cardinal problem, instead of subordinating it to the general problem of disarmament, as it had in the past.

11. Although the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament had been meeting in Geneva for six months, its efforts had been fruitless. The joint memorandum submitted by the eight non-aligned nations at Geneva on 16 April 1962, which was intended to bridge the gap between the two nuclear blocs, had been met with praise but nothing more. The present debate was being used by the two sides simply for purposes of self-justification. But if a nuclear war took place it would end in total destruction, and all justifications would be useless. Moreover, such a war could break out as a result of a mere accident.

12. If a nuclear war was to be prevented, nuclear tests must be stopped. The sole purpose of testing was to develop weapons, and once weapons existed there was a strong presumption that they would be used. But the decision to use nuclear weapons—a decision which could be taken by one man—would mean catastrophe. It was therefore essential that the Assembly should make every effort to bring about a cessation of tests in all environments before the end of its current session. The particular form the agreement took was immaterial, and the charges and counter-charges exchanged by the two sides must not be allowed to create an obstacle. The question had been discussed by the Assembly for eight years, which was ample time for the nuclear Powers to have come to an understanding. They had failed to do so, and yet the United Kingdom representative still asked the rest of the world to be patient. Patience was not

a virtue when the possibility of the spread of nuclear weapons grew with every delay. There were no grounds for further procrastination, particularly since the submission of the joint memorandum of 16 April 1962 by eight nations known for their unbiased position. The memorandum offered a balanced and equitable solution to the problem, and it had been accepted as "a basis for further negotiations" by the Soviet Government and as "one of the bases for negotiations" by the Western Powers. The latter had raised a question of interpretation in connexion with the power of the proposed international commission to investigate the nature of suspicious events. However, the authors of the memorandum had not offered any interpretation, and rightly so. There was nothing ambiguous in the memorandum, and it was not fair to involve the neutral countries in the struggle between the two great nuclear Powers.

13. The chief bone of contention seemed to be the question of control, particularly with regard to underground tests. The United States and the United Kingdom had offered a general ban in all environments with control or a partial ban without control, whereas the Soviet Union insisted on a general ban without compulsory inspection. But as science progressed there came to be less and less room for differences of opinion on the subject of control. The Conference of Experts which had met at Geneva in 1958 had reported<sup>2/</sup> that an elaborate control system, entailing from 160 to 170 control posts on land and ten on ships would be necessary to detect all tests. In the four years since then, much new scientific evidence had been produced—for example, by the United States research programme known as "Project Vela"—to show that national monitoring systems were capable of detecting tests with a high degree of precision. Dr. Bethe, the United States physicist, had stated that a nuclear explosion could be detected by acoustical methods at a distance of 10,000 miles, and had pointed out that explosions carried out by each side had been detected by the other. Thanks to that progress, the ninth Pugwash Conference, held at Cambridge, England, in August 1962 and attended by the most prominent scientists in the world, had concluded that the proposals contained in the eight-nation memorandum had a good chance of proving workable.

14. There was one aspect of the eight-nation memorandum which had not received sufficient attention, namely, the provision that control should be "on a purely scientific and non-political basis". That was an essential part of the proposals. The progress of disarmament negotiations had been bedevilled throughout history by the absence of trust between nations, a difficulty which would be eliminated by a scientific approach. A scientific control system would not engage in espionage, the fear of the Soviet Union, nor would it permit clandestine testing, the fear of the West. It was not the scientists but the politicians who undermined confidence. Dr. Bethe had expressed his belief that Soviet scientists were sincere in their desire for a test ban treaty, stating that they had always been eager to accept any improvements in detection apparatus suggested by the United States; and he had argued that they would not try to violate a treaty once it was signed.

<sup>2/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda items 64, 70 and 72, document A/3897.

15. The representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States, however, had asked what guarantee there was that a test ban treaty would be observed; and they deserved an answer. The non-aligned nations considered that the eight-nation memorandum provided for guarantees such as no treaty in the history of international relations had ever contained: first, scientific, non-political inspection; secondly, the possibility of retaliation; and thirdly, the possibility of United Nations sanctions. With those guarantees, the memorandum offered an excellent basis for negotiation of a test ban treaty, as proposed in draft resolution A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2. That draft resolution had won general approval and had no disadvantages; it was to be hoped that it would be adopted unanimously. The draft resolution submitted by the Western Powers (A/C.1/L.311), on the other hand, mentioned the

eight-nation memorandum only in passing and was without merit. Despite his respect for the United States and the United Kingdom delegations, he appealed to them to withdraw their proposal. Despite the United States representative's statement that nuclear power was necessary to maintain national security, the Saudi Arabian delegation agreed with the United States President's view that to amass destructive power did not beget security. It was international security that should be uppermost in the minds of representatives, and that cause would not be advanced by a partial test ban, which would leave the door open for a continuance of tests. If the world was to be safe, there must never be another test in any environment.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.