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Chairman: Mr. C. W. A. SCHURMANN
(Netherlands).

AGENDA ITEM 73

Urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (A/5428 and Add.1) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. McINTOSH (New Zealand) said that New Zealand had always favoured a general treaty banning nuclear tests and welcomed the conclusion, on 5 August 1963, of the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, which it had already ratified. Congratulations were due to the nuclear Powers and to the Eighteen-Nation Committee; but complacency would be dangerous, for if the treaty was not soon extended to cover underground tests, the world might lose not only a crucial opportunity to advance towards disarmament but also the very benefits of the treaty itself.

2. In accordance with the methods favoured by the Eighteen-Nation Committee, it was essential to concentrate on measures on which agreement was feasible. In the first place, therefore, the General Assembly should appeal to all States, whether or not they were Members of the United Nations, to accept the partial test ban treaty in letter and spirit. While the more than one hundred signatories of the treaty included at least eight countries which possessed the technical and industrial capacity to make nuclear weapons, it should be remembered that that capacity was also present among the few States which had not yet signed. Those countries fell into two categories: those, such as France, which, while not opposing the treaty as such, did not consider that signing it would be in their national interest for the time being; and those which, like the Peking Government, had expressed outright opposition to the treaty. In fact, the attitude of the Communist Chinese cast the gravest shadow on all attempts to negotiate a binding disarmament agreement.

3. Secondly, the General Assembly should urge the nuclear Powers to resume negotiations with a view to the conclusion of a comprehensive treaty prohibiting tests, and might ask the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament to take up the problem as a matter of urgent priority. Perhaps

scientific advances would lead to a further reduction in the number of disturbances which could not be identified. In the meantime, however, provision must be made for on-the-spot investigations, and it was to be hoped that increased political confidence among States would make it possible to set up the first rudiments of a system of international inspection. A general agreement on the banning of tests would inhibit the further development of military nuclear technology and would help check the spread of military nuclear capacity to countries which did not yet possess it. Moreover, such an agreement would leave less scope for the accusation that the nuclear Powers had agreed only to the cessation of tests of a kind no longer important to them.

4. The conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty would be accompanied, it might be hoped, by continued negotiations on the collateral pre-disarmament measures already considered at Geneva. If a general agreement were to be concluded covering some of those measures—measures to lessen the risk of war through mischance or miscalculation of intent, to limit and perhaps reduce military budgets, and to cut off the production of fissionable material—the situation would be favourable for an attempt to come to grips with the problems of the first phase of general disarmament.

5. New Zealand was also concerned at the hazards which nuclear tests represented for human health. Although the recorded degree of radio-activity was still lower in the Southern than in the Northern hemisphere, it had caused public concern. Indeed, there had been a measurable increase in the levels of radio-activity recorded in New Zealand earlier in the year following the atmospheric tests conducted by the United States and the USSR during the previous two years. The peoples of the South Pacific were opposed to any further testing in the region which might worsen the situation. For those reasons, the New Zealand Government had expressed its deep concern to the Government of France at the French decision to begin preparations for testing in the South Pacific. The tests would probably be carried out in the atmosphere, and although France had given assurances that all possible safety precautions would be taken, the peoples of the South Pacific were alarmed at the danger of such experiments. Moreover, any further nuclear tests might prove an obstacle to the conclusion of an agreement for the complete prohibition of such tests and to further progress in disarmament. New Zealand therefore added its voice to others in urgently appealing to all countries to sign the partial test ban treaty and to abide by its letter and spirit. A draft resolution to that effect was shortly to be presented to the Committee. His delegation trusted that the draft resolution would be unanimously adopted and would evoke a positive response.

6. Mr. MARTIN (Canada) welcomed the conclusion of the partial test ban treaty and paid tribute to the

nuclear Powers, to the non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, and to other Members of the United Nations which had focused international attention on the urgent necessity of ending all tests. He hoped that the treaty would be a first step in an irreversible movement towards disarmament and peace.

7. The limited test ban was of particular importance since it removed the danger of radio-active fall-out and put an end to the unrestricted development of ever more destructive weapons. He therefore noted with satisfaction that in the preamble to the treaty the nuclear Powers undertook to continue negotiations on the banning of underground tests. It was also encouraging that several countries which already possessed the means of manufacturing nuclear weapons had nevertheless signed the treaty. Among them was the Federal Republic of Germany, which had thus confirmed its intention to refrain from the production of nuclear weapons.

8. Canada for its part did not intend to alter its long-standing policy of refraining from conducting nuclear tests in any environment and from manufacturing nuclear weapons. It had therefore been one of the first to sign the treaty.

9. Canada welcomed General Assembly resolution 1884 (XVIII) prohibiting the orbiting of weapons of mass destruction, particularly as it had been urging an agreement of that type for some time. The resolution had the merit of discouraging the development and refinement of new weapons, of embracing not only nuclear weapons but other weapons of mass destruction, and of providing further evidence that the great Powers intended to confine themselves to peaceful activities.

10. It was desirable that all countries should become parties to the partial test ban treaty. In that connexion, Canada had noted the proposal of the Peking Government for a conference of all Heads of Government directed at the prohibition and destruction of all nuclear weapons. Of course, it was gratifying that the Peking Government was interested in the elimination of nuclear weapons, and he hoped that it would reach the conclusion that universal accession to the partial test ban treaty was a first step in that direction. He also hoped that the Peking Government would understand that nuclear disarmament, whatever its value in a disarmament agreement, could not be envisaged without the simultaneous reduction of other types of weapons and of armed forces. The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament was at present working towards a balanced disarmament agreement capable of world-wide application. A treaty on general and complete disarmament must embrace at least all the great military nations. He hoped that the Peking Government would eventually support the efforts now being made and would realize that it was premature at the present stage to convene a conference of Heads of Government.

11. Canada would support a draft resolution inviting the Eighteen-Nation Committee to continue its efforts to reach agreement on underground testing. He hoped that that Committee would soon resume its work at Geneva, both on that subject and on collateral or preliminary measures and general and complete disarmament.

12. The Canadian Government believed that the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarma-

ment was the most effective forum for disarmament negotiations. Even though final agreement might be concluded outside the Eighteen-Nation Committee, the latter enabled all sides to express and confront their ideas; and it was well known, moreover, that the non-aligned members of that Committee had contributed much to the conclusion of the partial test ban treaty. The present atmosphere of harmony offered the Geneva Conference a unique opportunity of finding new areas of agreement on measures to reduce international tension and of reaching agreements involving concrete disarmament measures. Priority should be given to measures to reduce the risk of surprise attack, such as the establishment of ground observation posts, to measures to prevent the dissemination of nuclear weapons, to practical disarmament measures and to continued negotiation with a view to a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. Countries should be satisfied with step-by-step progress in consolidating the climate of confidence, which in turn would make it possible to implement disarmament measures of wider scope. Regarding the proposal made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union in the General Assembly (1208th plenary meeting) that the Eighteen-Nation Committee should convene early in 1964 at the level of Heads of Government, he recalled that the Prime Minister of Canada, while recognizing that there might be occasions when summit meetings were essential, had pointed out that in the present context such a meeting would have to be carefully prepared and must offer some promise of concrete achievement; if those conditions were met, Canada would be glad to attend.

13. If the great Powers were moving towards the end of the armaments race and if they planned to cease relying on national armaments for the maintenance of their security, it became a matter of particular urgency that the capacity of the United Nations to deal with situations that might threaten international peace should be strengthened. Canada had already taken steps to maintain, train and equip units that could be placed at the disposal of the United Nations. It had invited other States to do likewise, not with a view to creating a standing United Nations army but to ensuring co-ordinated national preparations designed to meet United Nations requirements.

14. While general and complete disarmament must be viewed as a long-term objective, diligent efforts should be made to work out preliminary agreements facilitating progress toward that goal. The Eighteen-Nation Committee was in the best position to undertake the detailed studies necessary for that purpose, and the General Assembly should reaffirm its conviction that the Committee was capable of pursuing its task. The Committee's success required, in addition, the active participation of all its members, particularly so far as concerned nuclear disarmament.

15. Although the recently concluded agreements gave cause for great satisfaction, it was important that efforts should not lag, for the fact was that not a single missile, warhead or even machine-gun had so far been scrapped as a result of agreement to disarm. The relaxation of tension had not solved the political problems; it signified only that the great Powers had come to understand that in certain limited areas they had common interests. Still, that was a positive factor which reduced the enormous store of suspicion built up over the years and which made it possible to contemplate the other steps needed to attain the final

objective. The Canadian Government was convinced that the nations of the world must spare no effort to achieve a realistic disarmament programme. In the final resort, peace could not be guaranteed by national armed forces but must be based on effective international agreements for the reduction of armaments and the strengthening of machinery for settling disputes by peaceful means. Canada for its part would continue to pursue the goal of disarmament with proper safeguards.

16. Mr. RAJAOBELINA (Madagascar) said that disarmament and the abolition of atomic weapons were among the international questions of greatest interest to his country. At the seventeenth session, his delegation had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution on the urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests, later adopted by the General Assembly as resolution 1762 (XVII). More recently, the Malagasy Republic had been one of the first countries to sign the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water.

17. As the Indian representative had pointed out, the principal contribution of that treaty was that it reduced

international tension and opened the way to new agreements; in other words, its value was less in its content than in its psychological repercussions. Yet despite the inadequacies and weaknesses of the treaty—particularly with respect to underground testing and the possibilities of withdrawal under article IV—Madagascar welcomed that initial achievement and paid tribute to the United States, the USSR and the United Kingdom, and to all signatory States. It remained convinced, however, of the need to supplement the treaty with more extensive and effective agreements.

Organization of the Committee's work

18. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the tentative time-table for the Committee's work drawn up by the Secretariat (A/C.1/L.325). He appealed to the members of the Committee to be ready to speak on the dates when the various items were expected to be taken up.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.