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AGENDA ITEM 30

**Urgent need for suspension of nuclear and ther-
monuclear tests: reports of the Conference of
the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament
(A/5731-DC/209, A/5986-DC/227)**

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Mr. OBI (Nigeria) said that during the two years since the conclusion of the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water^{1/} and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1910 (XVIII), in which the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament had been requested to continue with a sense of urgency its negotiations to achieve the objectives of the treaty, some nuclear Powers had been conducting underground nuclear tests. The eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee had made sincere efforts to find an acceptable compromise. Nigeria, for example, had suggested that the treaty should be extended to cover all underground tests which could be detected by national control networks alone, the threshold or limit to be agreed by the two sides. In that connexion, it had called for the reactivation of the Sub-Committee on a Treaty for the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests, and had suggested that it would be useful to associate scientific experts in the discussions. It was in response to a plea from Nigeria that the United States had given the Eighteen-Nation Committee information about current developments in the detection and identification of seismic events.

2. Despite all the efforts made, however, the positions of the two sides remained substantially unchanged and had even moved farther apart. The Nigerian delegation had come to the conclusion that the main obstacle to agreement on a comprehensive test ban was political rather than technical; what seemed to be lacking on both sides was the political will to reach agreement. Nigeria did not see why the Soviet Union could not revert to the position it had held briefly three years ago and agree, as an act of

political compromise, to three on-site inspections, without abandoning its contention that such inspections were not technically necessary. At the same time, Nigeria was far from convinced by the arguments adduced by the Western Powers to prove the need for international verification arrangements. It was true that not all tests, particularly very small ones, could be detected and identified by national means. However, there was little likelihood of a series of tests remaining undetected, even if they were conducted with elaborate and expensive precautions that would make their military value doubtful.

3. Scientists had recently revealed that underground tests were not so free from radio-active contamination and debris as had been generally believed. Furthermore, the absence of an agreement to ban underground tests was undermining the partial test ban treaty. If they continued underground tests, the nuclear Powers had no right to expect other countries to refrain from testing and acquiring nuclear weapons. Nigeria, which had never considered that the partial test ban treaty in any way legalized underground tests, condemned all nuclear weapon tests by any country in any environment. The United Nations had consistently condemned all tests; and in its resolution 1762 A (XVII) the General Assembly had condemned all nuclear weapon tests and asked that they should cease not later than 1 January 1963. The fact that some countries had not voted in favour of those provisions of the resolution did not absolve them from blame, any more than refusal to sign the partial test ban treaty exempted countries from blame for carrying out tests.

4. The continuation of nuclear weapon testing, even if only underground, would weaken the position of Governments which had so far resisted mounting domestic pressure for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, would breed a sense of insecurity among peoples and would compel Governments to seek a nebulous security by acquiring such weapons. The great Powers should weigh those effects of their failure to cease testing against the advantage to them of maintaining a position for reasons of prestige or internal politics. It was to be hoped that they would collaborate on that issue, and would do so quickly. They should take into account the proposals made by the non-nuclear countries; Nigeria, for one, pledged its continued assistance to them in the attainment of the desired objective. The General Assembly should bring its full moral weight to bear on the problem and give clear directives.

5. Mr. TSARAPKIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country had consistently advocated the prohibition of nuclear and thermonuclear weapon tests in all environments as a means of con-

^{1/} Signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963 (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 480 (1963), No. 6964).

solidating peace and slowing down the armaments race. The prohibition of nuclear weapon tests could not in itself halt the armaments race once and for all, nor would it appreciably reduce the threat of nuclear war; but it would put a stop to any further refinement of nuclear weapons and would end the dangerous contamination of man's environment by radio-active substances.

6. The Soviet Union had been the first nuclear Power to suggest, as long ago as 1955, that States possessing atomic and hydrogen weapons should discontinue nuclear weapon tests. The persistent efforts made by his country and other peace-loving States, supported by world public opinion, had led to the conclusion in August 1963 of the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. That treaty had subsequently been signed by more than 100 States, but it was only a partial solution of the problem; though the Contracting Parties had expressed their desire to "achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time", no agreement banning underground tests as well had as yet been concluded.

7. In its memorandum of 7 December 1964 (A/5827),² his Government had stated that it was prepared to reach agreement forthwith on the banning of underground nuclear weapon tests, based on the use of national means of detection for control of the ban. As a number of representatives had pointed out in the Committee's earlier discussions, an agreement prohibiting nuclear weapon tests in all environments would to some extent help to prevent the dissemination of nuclear weapons, though it would not of course have that effect if its provisions were circumvented by giving countries access to nuclear weapons through military alliances. Clearly, for example, such an agreement would have no serious value as an anti-proliferation measure if the West German Bundeswehr were able, through its participation in a NATO multi-lateral nuclear force, to obtain access to existing well-tested nuclear weapons.

8. Nevertheless, his delegation was gratified that the USSR proposal for banning underground tests had, like the USSR proposal for a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, been actively supported by all countries interested in peace, disarmament and the reduction of international tension. The USSR was ready to agree immediately to the extension of the partial test ban treaty to include underground tests of nuclear weapons; it had supported the suggestions made by the representative of the United Arab Republic on 17 August 1965, at the 224th meeting of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, that the partial test ban treaty should be extended to cover underground tests above a seismic magnitude of 4.75, and that the nuclear Powers should also agree to a moratorium on all other underground nuclear weapon tests until agreement had been reached on a comprehensive test ban. That proposal had been reiterated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Republic in the General debate at the Assembly's current session (1351st plenary meeting); and the Soviet delegation, in accordance with the position

² See Official Records of the General Assembly, Nineteenth Session, Annexes, annex No. 9.

outlined in its memorandum of 7 December 1964, was quite prepared to accept it as a basis for negotiation. But there was still one obstacle to solving the problem of prohibiting underground nuclear weapon tests: the attitude adopted by the United States.

9. The United States was still demanding the right to send foreign inspectors or controllers into Soviet territory, on the pretext of investigating suspicious underground events. In the United States memorandum submitted to the Disarmament Commission on 29 April 1965,³ it was stated that "the requirement for on-site inspection to verify compliance with the ban on underground nuclear tests still exists". His own country could not accept that position, for a number of States—including, of course, the United States—already possessed fairly reliable scientific devices for detecting nuclear explosions, so that they would be able to verify without any international inspection at all whether an agreement banning underground tests was being observed. It was obvious too that in present circumstances, when no disarmament had taken place, verification by foreign inspectors would merely serve the interests of those militarist circles which were trying to penetrate the territories of the Soviet Union and other peace-loving countries for the purpose of espionage.

10. From time to time certain countries had advocated technical discussions as a useful means of determining the possibilities of keeping a check on underground tests. However, the Soviet delegation had repeatedly pointed out that any attempt to revive the discredited idea of solving the problem of a prohibition of underground tests on a technical basis would merely complicate it and indefinitely delay agreement. Negotiations on the discontinuance of nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water had been held up for many months by differences of opinion on questions of control and inspection, and a political approach to the matter had been required before the partial test ban treaty could be concluded. Now, two years after the signing of the treaty, no doubt remained that national means of control were adequate to ensure that it was being complied with; and the obvious solution was now to extend its provisions to cover underground nuclear explosions as well.

11. The attitude adopted by the United States suggested that it was not in the least interested in ending underground nuclear weapon tests, and that it intended to go on developing its nuclear weapons by underground testing. Such an attitude was contrary to the interests of peace and disarmament and to the appeals made in the General Assembly for an immediate end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, an agreement to extend the provisions of the partial test ban treaty to cover underground testing would act as an additional brake on the nuclear armaments race; and his delegation hoped that the General Assembly would adopt a resolution in that sense at its current session.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.

³ See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January to December 1965, document DC/214/Add.1.