

United Nations  
**GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTIETH SESSION

Official Records



**FIRST COMMITTEE, 1384th  
MEETING**

Wednesday, 24 November 1965,  
at 3.15 p.m.

**NEW YORK**

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*Chairman:* Mr. Károly CSATORDAY (Hungary).

Tribute to the memory of His Highness Abdulla Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait

*On the proposal of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of His Highness Abdulla Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait.*

1. Mr. AL-RASHID (Kuwait) thanked the Chairman and the members of the Committee for their expression of sympathy, which he would convey to his Government.

AGENDA ITEM 30

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

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

2. Mr. SHALLOUF (Libya) reminded the Committee of the appreciation he had expressed, during the debate on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, for the endeavours of the United States, the USSR and other countries to reduce world tension and pave the way to general and complete disarmament, and for the proposals and drafts they had submitted with that end in view. Libya, he wished to repeat, would support any efforts aimed at the conclusion of a treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons as a step towards a comprehensive test ban and a treaty on general and complete disarmament. Like many other nations, it had regretted the absence of a provision banning underground tests from the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, but had acceded to the treaty on the understanding that it was a first step. Unless agreement was reached soon on a ban, or at least a moratorium, on underground testing, the prospects for convening a world disarmament conference—a

step which the Committee had already approved in principle—would be small.

3. Mr. TRIVEDI (India) said the documents before the Committee showed that the regrettable fact that no progress had been made towards achieving a comprehensive test ban had not been due to any lack of international effort at all levels. The two reports of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (A/5731-DC/209, A/5986-DC/227) indicated the efforts that had been made in that body to bridge the differences between the two sides. The joint memorandum on a comprehensive test ban treaty submitted by the eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on 15 September 1965<sup>1/</sup> had appealed to the nuclear Powers to suspend forthwith nuclear weapon tests in all environments. The objective sought in the memorandum, which voiced the growing concern of all mankind, had been to achieve the immediate suspension of all nuclear weapon tests and to point out the scientific factors which could facilitate agreement on a formal comprehensive test ban treaty. The Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cairc in October 1964, had similarly urged the extension of the partial test ban treaty to include underground tests and the discontinuance of such tests pending the extension of the treaty. In its resolution of 15 June 1965,<sup>2/</sup> the Disarmament Commission, while deploring that nuclear weapon tests were taking place, had reaffirmed the call of the General Assembly upon all States to become parties to the treaty and to abide by its spirit and provisions, and had recommended that the Eighteen-Nation Committee should consider as a matter of priority the question of extending the scope of the treaty to cover underground tests.

4. India had from the outset protested against nuclear weapon testing, and more than eleven years ago it had appealed to the Disarmament Commission and its Sub-Committee to consider immediately the question of an agreement to suspend nuclear weapon tests, pending progress towards a full or partial solution of the problem of the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. That appeal had been endorsed by the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung in April 1955. India had proposed an agenda item on that subject at successive sessions of the General Assembly; and eventually the conscience of the world had triumphed and in resolution 1762 A (XVII), the Assembly had condemned all nuclear weapon tests.

<sup>1/</sup> See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January to December 1965, document DC/227, annex I, sect. F.

<sup>2/</sup> *Ibid.*, document DC/225.

5. The First Committee should concentrate in its debate on the three main considerations. The first was the fact that the partial test ban treaty had not been signed by all countries; indeed, one country, in its recalcitrant arrogance, had even gloried in its defiance of international opinion and the world's welfare. Since none of the appeals or demands made had borne fruit, the international community should consider what it could do to ensure universal acceptance of the partial test ban treaty, in order to prevent the health of humanity from being periodically attacked by the deadly debris of radio-active fall-out. In its resolution 1762 A (XVII), the General Assembly had viewed with the utmost apprehension the data contained in the report submitted by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to the Assembly at its seventeenth session.<sup>3/</sup> That report had given alarming data on the harmful effects of nuclear explosions. It had indicated that the people of the developing regions were subjected to greater damage because of the direct contamination of plants, crops and cattle and had given details of the somatic and genetic effects of radiation. Nuclear explosions were an indefensible crime against the present generation and generations yet unborn.

6. The second consideration related to the urgency of achieving an immediate suspension of all nuclear weapon tests in all environments, including underground tests. The nuclear Powers should take that step without delay; given the political will, it would not be difficult.

7. The third consideration related to the formal conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty, so that the proposed suspension could become permanently binding. Such a treaty could be concluded outright or in stages. Despite the differences between the nuclear Powers on questions of identification and verification, a partial treaty could be concluded for the cessation of underground tests above a certain agreed threshold. The threshold could be lowered subsequently, as exchanges of scientific data and other negotiations continued. While negotiations were going on to resolve the differences, all underground tests should be stopped. The eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee had referred in their memorandum to the improvement of detection and identification techniques and had stressed the advantages that would accrue from international co-operation in the work seismic detection. India had a good system of seismological observation, and had just established a large seismic array; the data collected there would be published and made available to all countries. But India did not consider that the exchange of such scientific data was a prerequisite for the suspension of underground tests. In their memorandum, the eight non-aligned countries had reaffirmed their view that all nuclear weapon tests should cease immediately.

8. Progress in those three aspects of the problem was essential not only to safeguard the health of mankind but also to reduce tension, increase con-

fidence and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The present situation was highly unstable. No progress had been made in dealing with the existing and continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons. The partial test ban treaty was partial both in the sense that it related to selected environments and in the sense that not all countries had acceded to it. Tests of nuclear weapons were continuing underground and in the atmosphere. The existing unstable situation thus threatened past achievements and posed great dangers for the future. A prompt solution was therefore imperative.

9. Sir Harold BEELEY (United Kingdom) said he could not agree with the USSR representative's statement at the 1382nd meeting that technical discussions on the possibility of detecting and identifying underground tests would be a waste of time and that the question could only be settled on a political basis.

10. The Western Powers represented in the Eighteen-Nation Committee believed that underground tests could not be identified by national means alone. The Soviet Government believed that they could. The Western Governments had based their conclusion on the best scientific and technical advice available to them; and the Soviet Government had presumably done the same. In the circumstances, it seemed logical that experts from each side should meet and explain their arguments to one another, with a view to producing an agreed technical assessment which could be used as a basis for resuming political negotiations.

11. Further, the Soviet representative's statement that negotiations on the prohibition on nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water had been held up for many months by differences of opinion on technical questions of control and inspection, and that the partial test ban treaty had been the result of a political approach to the question, was inaccurate. The negotiations to which the Soviet representative had referred had been concerned with underground nuclear weapon tests as well as tests in the other three environments; and the fact that they had for so long yielded no results had been due largely to disagreement over means of identifying underground tests. The political approach mentioned by the Soviet representative had resulted in an agreement to disregard underground tests for the time being, and to conclude a treaty banning tests in the other three environments, for which national means of identification were generally acknowledged to be adequate. The political decision had not resolved any scientific and technical differences but had merely put them aside for settlement later; and in the United Kingdom delegation's view technical discussions still offered the best prospects of resolving the present differences of opinion on means of detecting underground tests.

12. Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus) said that there were four main reasons why the partial test ban treaty should be extended to cover underground nuclear weapon tests as soon as possible. First, the absence of a ban on underground tests tended indirectly to increase the risk of tests in the atmosphere. So long as underground tests were not prohibited, a State might plead justification for beginning tests of

<sup>3/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/5216).

nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, on the ground that it was prevented by lack of technical or other resources from carrying out the underground tests to which it was legitimately entitled under the partial test ban treaty. Further, the continuance of underground testing by the nuclear Powers encouraged countries which had not signed the treaty to continue their tests in the atmosphere.

13. Secondly, a comprehensive test ban treaty would help to slow down the armaments race, since new atomic weapons could not be perfected without tests. Thirdly, France and the People's Republic of China, the two nuclear Powers which had not signed the partial treaty, would be much more likely to accede to a comprehensive treaty. Lastly, a comprehensive treaty would help to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

14. The obstacles to agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty were both technical and political. As a temporary solution to the technical difficulties, his delegation wished to reiterate a proposal which it had made in the Disarmament Commission: that the partial treaty should be extended to cover underground tests above the threshold at which, as was generally recognized, they could be detected and verified by national means alone. There should be a moratorium or other arrangement for the discontinuance of tests below that threshold pending the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty; and a strictly limited conference of seismic technicians might be convened to consider the latest advances in the detection and verification of underground occurrences.

15. The most serious political obstacle to a comprehensive test ban treaty was the fact that, although the international community as a whole had decisively and emphatically condemned nuclear tests as a serious threat to the lives and health of the present and future generations, the countries directly concerned were not yet entirely convinced of the advantages of a comprehensive treaty. A solution of the technical difficulties would undoubtedly facilitate political agreement on the question; and some lessons could also be learnt from the previous test ban negotiations. For six years, both of the major nuclear Powers had been chary of concluding a treaty; but by 1963 both had become convinced that their national interests would be better protected by signing a treaty than by not signing one. On the question of a comprehensive test ban, too, the nuclear Powers might soon come to realize that whatever the risks and obstacles involved, the advantages of concluding a treaty far outweighed the disadvantages; and all other countries should strive, individually and collectively, to ensure the complete and final cessation of nuclear tests, with a view to ending the armaments race and eliminating for all time the dangers which nuclear tests involved.

16. Mr. HSUEH (China) said that while the goal of the work of the Eighteen-Nation Committee was general and complete disarmament, every collateral measure agreed on was a step in that direction. The United

Nations could achieve its historic mission of general and complete disarmament only with patience and hard work.

17. The main obstacle to the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty was the difference of opinion on the question whether on-site inspections were needed to ensure that any violation of such a treaty would be detected. If that question were approached from the technical and scientific standpoint, it might be possible to find a satisfactory answer. From memoranda submitted to the Eighteen-Nation Committee by Sweden<sup>4/</sup> and the United Kingdom,<sup>5/</sup> it would appear that underground disturbances could indeed be detected, but could not be identified, by national means of detection alone. Other States asserted that national systems were capable of identifying, as well as detecting, underground occurrences. Countries such as his own did not possess either the scientific information or the facilities required to demonstrate which of those assertions was correct; and the burden of proof undoubtedly rested on those who claimed that they had satisfactory national means of detection and identification.

18. It did not seem excessive to ask countries possessing the necessary facilities to undertake a number of joint experiments for the good of mankind as a whole. Those who regarded on-site inspection as essential could arrange some man-made underground explosions in secret, at intervals and at places of their own choice; and those who considered their national detection systems to be adequate could then try to identify the man-made explosion with their national systems. The results obtained after a period of one year should be sufficient to enable the international community to reach a reliable conclusion. If the results showed that national systems alone could detect and identify man-made underground explosions, and if such systems could be made generally available, a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty should be concluded and signed immediately without any provision for on-site inspection. If the results showed that national systems could not identify man-made underground explosions, then a comprehensive test ban treaty, with a provision for on-site inspection, should be acceptable to all parties, unless in the meantime some other satisfactory means of identification had been discovered.

19. In his delegation's view, a year of joint scientific experimentation in search of concrete proof would be much more valuable than another year of debate. The Eighteen-Nation Committee had done useful work in clarifying the issues involved, and he hoped that it would press for the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

<sup>4/</sup> See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January to December 1965, document DC/227, annex 1, sect. B.

<sup>5/</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. C.