

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records



FIRST COMMITTEE, 1441st
MEETING

Thursday, 3 November 1966,
at 10.50 a.m.

NEW YORK

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Chairman: Mr. Leopoldo BENITES (Ecuador).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons: report of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (A/6390-DC/228, A/C.1/L.371 and Corr.1 and Add.1-4, A/C.1/L.372 and Add.1, A/C.1/L.373)

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Mr. AIKEN (Ireland) said that the Committee had been quite right in giving priority to the two items on non-proliferation. It was certain that if effective action were not taken to prevent proliferation, nuclear weapons would spread to more and more States, as all other types of weapons had done in the past; and that was the most serious threat to world peace and the future of mankind.

2. It might be possible for the world to live with five nuclear Powers, but the number of nuclear Powers had one characteristic in common with the mass of the fissile core of nuclear weapons: there was a threshold which could not be crossed without the certainty of explosion. The statement in the fourth preambular draft resolution A/C.1/L.371 and Corr.1 and Add.1-4 that failure to conclude a treaty on non-proliferation "may lead to the aggravation of tension between States and the risk of a nuclear war" was therefore too mild. Failure to stop proliferation was certain to aggravate the risk of nuclear war.

3. At present all countries were living in the shadow of a strategic balance of power between the leading nuclear States and their alliances, a balance between the size of their respective stockpiles and the accuracy and penetration of their delivery systems. But a unilateral technological breakthrough by one of the major nuclear Powers in either offensive or defensive nuclear weapon capability could upset the uneasy balance of terror and lead at once to a new and greatly accelerated nuclear arms race, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in the introduction to his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/6301/Add.1). Even worse, a breakthrough, or even a threatened breakthrough, by one side alone might start a nuclear holocaust.

4. The fact that the present uneasy strategic balance had not so far collapsed was due to the equanimity and political skill which the President of the United States, Mr. John F. Kennedy, had displayed in dealing with the Cuban missile crisis, thereby giving the world a breathing-space which it had had little right to expect and which would not continue indefinitely. Consequently, no time should be lost in arresting the spread of nuclear weapons and coming to grips with the remaining political and military problems which lay at the root of the nuclear and conventional arms races.

5. The Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom were, according to their representatives' statements during the Committee's discussion of agenda item 97, all opposed to the further dissemination of nuclear weapons, and the French Minister for Foreign Affairs had told the General Assembly at its twentieth session that France desired dissemination no more than any other country (1341st plenary meeting, para. 105). It was encouraging that at least four out of the five nuclear Powers were strongly opposed to proliferation. But the declarations of the four Powers must be incorporated in a binding treaty, if possible in a multilateral convention on non-proliferation to be signed by nuclear and non-nuclear States alike without delay.

6. Since responsibility for negotiating a treaty would rest primarily with the nuclear Powers, he was glad to note that the Soviet, United States and United Kingdom representatives all believed that the early conclusion of a treaty on non-proliferation was so vitally important that it should be dealt with as a single issue, divorced from all other disarmament measures. He appealed to all three States to produce an agreement on non-proliferation without delay and to open it for signature by all States, nuclear and non-nuclear, as had been done in the case of the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963. He would not be surprised if the People's Republic of China also signed such an agreement before long.

7. Some States capable of producing nuclear weapons were, of course, hesitant about committing themselves not to produce them. Though the Governments of those States might be under pressure from their military staffs, they should realize that national security and world peace could no longer be permanently guaranteed by national armaments or, indeed, by alliances embracing nuclear Powers. Since 1958, when his delegation had, at the thirteenth session of the General Assembly, first advocated the need for a treaty to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, the growth in the number and striking power of nuclear weapons, and in the range and penetration of their

delivery systems, had rendered the concept of permanent security through individual national defence arrangements virtually meaningless. Even the alliances, which had appeared so solid and permanent in 1958 and which had until now staved off a third world war, had been shaken to their very foundations.

8. The world had reached a stage when the security of States and the survival of peoples could be guaranteed only by a world-wide collective security system as described in Article 1 of the United Nations Charter. While the advent of the nuclear missile age had increased the need for effective collective measures as envisaged in the Charter, it had also improved the prospects of achieving them, since there were several very important factors in the present situation which had not existed in 1945. Now, for the first time in history, the super-Powers had nothing to gain and everything to lose by attacking one another. In the pre-nuclear age, defeat for a great Power had not threatened its survival as a nation. Now a war between the great nuclear Powers would end in the total or virtual annihilation of both sides. Further, the number of countries or parts of countries under the heel of an oppressor was now relatively small. Sustained moral pressure by the United Nations could force expansionist Powers peacefully to surrender control of territories which did not belong to them. Many of them had already done so, and he hoped that the process would continue. Again, most States—large and small—realized that in the present scientific age national wealth and the happiness of peoples depended on a rational utilization of national resources and on the reciprocal exchange of products, rather than on the seizure of other peoples' lands.

9. But, however convincing the factors militating for peace might be, peaceful measures might not be enough to restrain Governments or peoples whose minds were deranged by revenge or greed, and force might be the only argument they would understand. In the nuclear missile age the only way of giving individual States or limited alliances an assurance of permanent security against attack by a great nuclear Power was to establish a world-wide collective security system, based on a United Nations peace-keeping force composed of lightly armed troops drawn from non-nuclear Member States and backed by a combined force supplied by the nuclear Powers which had undertaken to oppose aggression by a nuclear State against a non-nuclear State. The Security Council should request the Secretary-General and the Military Staff Committee to study the organization and control of such a peace-keeping force as a matter of the greatest urgency.

10. While it was important to pursue every proposal for maintaining permanent international peace and security, eliminating all forms of injustice and developing the world's resources, no single act would give so much momentum to the achievement of those objectives as the early conclusion of a treaty to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, and no single act by a non-nuclear State could so effectively destroy the hope of their ultimate achievement as the acquisition of ownership or control of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, all non-nuclear States should firmly resist the temptation to acquire nuclear weapons and should sign a treaty on non-proliferation as soon as a

majority of the nuclear Powers had acceded to it and it was open for signature by all States.

11. Mr. CORNER (New Zealand) said that the quest for agreement on non-proliferation was the most urgent task confronting the international community in the whole matter of disarmament. Non-proliferation was closely related to many other collateral measures which had been widely recognized in recent years as necessary and feasible. In setting out his delegation's views on those questions, he would touch on a number of the disarmament items on the agenda, while reserving the right to speak again briefly when specific proposals on those items were before the Committee.

12. As the case for a treaty on non-proliferation had been cogently argued by many speakers in the preceding discussion, as his delegation had expressed its views on the subject at the twentieth session, he wished rather to deal with certain specific aspects of the matter which had now been brought into sharper focus.

13. The course of world events, especially in Asia, was placing an increasing strain on States which already possessed, or could shortly possess, the capacity to produce nuclear weapons. World tension had increased over the past twelve months, and confidence in the ability of the United Nations to carry out its task of maintaining peace and security had unfortunately not increased to the extent that growing national anxieties could be dispelled by international reassurances.

14. Developments had been no more encouraging in the matter of nuclear weapons, since all but one of the existing nuclear Powers had continued nuclear testing in the atmosphere or underground. His country disliked all nuclear testing and had long been opposed to the continuance of testing in the atmosphere, which cause physical harm as well as political damage. It had vigorously protested against the series of nuclear tests which France was now conducting in the South Pacific and was seriously perturbed by the nuclear testing programme of the People's Republic of China. Failure to reach agreement on a test ban covering underground tests as well as tests in the atmosphere might jeopardize the existence of the partial test ban treaty and might discourage States from acceding to a treaty on non-proliferation. A comprehensive test ban was therefore the logical corollary to an agreement on non-proliferation.

15. In the present situation, particular tribute should be paid to the restraint shown by the "near-nuclear" countries, and especially by India. In spite of its uncertainty about the policy of a neighbour which had recently acquired nuclear weapons, India had adhered to its decision not to produce them itself. Indeed, all the Powers with a potential nuclear capacity had recognized that, by deciding to produce a nuclear bomb, they would be starting a cycle of events whose ultimate consequences no one could foresee.

16. It might not necessarily be true that with more than five nuclear Powers stabilization would become impossible, although the figure of five did have some relation to the present structure of world power and the basic structure of the United Nations itself. But it was certain that if one more State acquired nuclear

weapons, others would attempt to follow suit, and the opportunity of negotiating a treaty on non-proliferation might be complicated perhaps beyond remedy. Further, even if such a treaty could be concluded, one of the existing nuclear Powers was unlikely to sign it in the foreseeable future. The rest of the world had no real choice but to proceed now as well as it could; and the assurances given by the United States and Soviet representatives that their Governments were now trying to overcome the remaining obstacles to agreement had been welcomed by all delegations. In the circumstances, the Assembly should indeed ensure that no step was taken which might prejudice the outcome of the negotiations, and his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution to that effect.

17. If the great Powers were soon able to overcome the principal remaining obstacle to an agreement—the problem of nuclear control within military alliances—the next question to be answered was how such an agreement could be made acceptable to the "near-nuclear" States. The General Assembly, in resolution 2028 (XX), had recommended only general guiding principles, for example, that the treaty should embody an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations between the nuclear and non-nuclear Powers. Further negotiations and consultations would be required to translate those recommendations into contractual obligations. What resolution 2028 (XX) had made clear was that an agreement on non-proliferation should not be regarded as an end in itself, but as part of a continuous process of disarmament. Suggestions had been made that the treaty should be accompanied or followed by various additional measures, which could be divided into two categories: first, physical disarmament measures such as a comprehensive test ban, a freeze on the number and characteristics of nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles, a cut-off in the production of fissionable material for weapons use and a complete cut-off in the further manufacture of nuclear weapons by existing nuclear Powers; and, secondly, measures to ensure the security of non-nuclear States, such as undertakings by the nuclear Powers not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States and guarantees of the security of non-nuclear States by the nuclear Powers.

18. Though many of the proposals in the first category appealed to his delegation, it doubted whether they could soon be negotiated and put into effect. It would surely be better to concentrate for the moment on the possibility of agreement on non-proliferation, and to proceed with negotiation of further measures once that major hurdle had been cleared.

19. Of the further measures suggested, priority should be given to a comprehensive test ban, agreement on which was also tantalizingly close. A ban on nuclear tests in all environments would in itself help to prevent proliferation, and would prove that the nuclear Powers had at last abandoned their intention of refining and expanding their nuclear armouries. In that connexion, the Swedish proposal for an exchange of seismic data^{1/} deserved further attention.

20. The proposals for a freeze on the number and characteristics of nuclear weapons and their delivery

vehicles and a cut-off in the production of fissionable material should also be pursued, and he was glad that they were being given increased attention by the non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee. But such measures, involving the difficult question of verification, would require further patient negotiation, and premature insistence on them might jeopardize the conclusion of an effective treaty on non-proliferation.

21. On the subject of verification, he had noted with interest the Japanese representative's suggestion during the debate on agenda item 97 that IAEA might be requested to report on the role it could play in the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and had welcomed the IAEA representative's positive reply to that suggestion. The Netherlands representative's constructive suggestion for a programme of action to develop and expand the IAEA safeguards system was also very impressive.

22. Measures to guarantee the security of non-nuclear States raised some highly complicated questions, which would require detailed multilateral and bilateral discussion. They had already given rise to considerable controversies in more than one military alliance, and were unlikely to be solved more easily in other situations where immediate political sympathies were not so obvious. Accordingly, a guarantee of the type proposed in operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.1/L.371 and Corr.1 and Add.1-4 was too simple, and its precise meaning was not clear.

23. The representatives of Pakistan and Japan had both referred to the need for consultations between the major nuclear Powers, which were at present the principal negotiators, and other States; and the Committee's discussions could, surely, be followed by informal consultations in which States would be free to inform the principal negotiators, privately and in detail, of their views on the problems raised by the Pakistan and other delegations. He did not see what could be gained by discussing those problems in isolation from the nuclear Powers, which would inevitably have a vital part to play in giving effect to any decisions taken, although some of the questions might call for special consideration in the Eighteen-Nation Committee or in the General Assembly.

24. Some controversy had already developed over the provision of facilities for peaceful nuclear explosions. But countries which were in earnest about non-proliferation could not ignore the fact that a nuclear explosion was a nuclear explosion, whatever its purpose and whatever advances there might be in future in harnessing nuclear techniques to science and engineering. He doubted whether any State would necessarily incur any serious disadvantage by undertaking not to develop such techniques. The provision of peaceful nuclear services by the major nuclear Powers, through some appropriately costed and internationally supervised arrangements would, surely, provide other States with the maximum possible return for the minimum outlay.

25. In the present atmosphere of mistrust, it was not surprising that the Eighteen-Nation Committee had devoted little attention during the past year to the wider question of general and complete disarmament; efforts should still be made to prepare carefully

^{1/} See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January to December 1965, document DC/227, annex 1, sect. B.

thought-out measures which could be put into effect immediately when the world climate became more propitious. In order to exploit all possible opportunities, it was essential to understand the nature and the scale of the present arms race, especially as it related to the question of nuclear deterrence. The proposal made by the United Arab Republic at the 271st meeting of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on 7 July 1966, for a study of all aspects of the question of nuclear deterrence by a working group was of considerable interest. The suggestion made by the Secretary-General in the introduction to his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/6301/Add.1) for a thorough study of the consequences of the invention of nuclear weapons was wider and more profound than the limited proposal in the Polish draft resolution (A/C.1/L.370) submitted under agenda item 27.

26. The world was in urgent need of agreements on issues the Committee had been discussing for the past three years; and the conclusion of treaties on issues on which agreement was nearest—non-proliferation and a comprehensive test ban—would help towards the solution of other grave and urgent problems.

27. Mr. OWONO (Cameroon) recalled that the conclusion of the partial test ban treaty in 1963 had raised high hopes for the future of nuclear disarmament measures, but those hopes had quickly been followed by disappointment when it had become clear that the major nuclear Powers were not prepared to discontinue underground tests. Since then all debates on disarmament had been conditioned on prior agreement between the nuclear Powers on the minimum concessions they were prepared to make. The General Assembly should appeal expressly to the nuclear Powers to reconsider their over-all nuclear arms policy, which was the chief obstacle to the conclusion of an international treaty on general and complete disarmament. Nevertheless, the partial results achieved each year through the First Committee's work constituted a minimum of progress which, he hoped, would one day make the nuclear Powers realize the danger their stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction posed to mankind. His delegation was therefore prepared to vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/L.371 and Corr.1 and Add.1-4. However, it believed that the draft resolution should be amended somewhat, both in form and in substance, in order to make it reflect the General Assembly's aims more accurately; his delegation's proposed amendments were contained in document A/C.1/L.373.

28. As to form, his delegation believed that operative paragraphs 2 and 4 should be combined in a single paragraph, first because they were directly related to operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, reaffirming General Assembly resolution 2028 (XX), and, secondly, because they complemented each other.

29. As to substance, the wording of operative paragraph 3 of the original draft resolution was open to the interpretation that nuclear-weapon Powers might retain the privilege of using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against other nuclear-weapon Powers. His delegation therefore believed that the paragraph should be amended to make it clear that no nuclear-weapon Power should use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any other State.

30. Mr. VALENCIA (Ecuador) wished to give his delegation's views on various aspects of the items relating to disarmament, and in particular the report of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.

31. Disarmament was the most important problem facing the world today. The survival of mankind depended on its solution. Yet in spite of the persistent efforts of the United Nations, the earnest endeavours of the great Powers and the repeated appeals of the middle-sized and small States, little progress had been made towards such a solution, chiefly because of the existing state of tension and mutual distrust among nations.

32. Nuclear weapon tests had continued during the past few years. Even underground tests had the effect of aggravating international tension, and tests in the atmosphere, in addition, increased the level of radioactive contamination. His delegation regretted that some nuclear Powers had not become parties to the partial test ban treaty and hoped that they would become parties to the treaty and scrupulously comply with its provisions.

33. Some advances had been made on the question of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The United States representative had pointed to four items on which the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament had achieved some success. Moreover, the informal exploratory talks between the representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union had progressed satisfactorily. It was important to prevent any increase in the number of members of the "nuclear club", or, worse, a unilateral increase in the might of one nuclear State. Efforts must be continued in all possible ways to achieve an understanding between the two nuclear alliances and to replace the uneasy balance of terror with a firm balance of reason and right.

34. The two leading nuclear Powers had prepared separate draft treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the Eighteen-Nation Committee had analysed them in detail. It was natural that there were differences between the two drafts at the outset, but the essential and positive fact was that there were points of agreement between the two Powers and other points on which the differences were not profound. Only a few years earlier there had not been even a glimmer of possible agreement on non-proliferation, experiments had been conducted with nuclear weapons of inconceivably large destructive power, and the precipitation of a nuclear war by accident or design had seemed imminent. In comparison with that situation, today's circumstances were clearly better and gave encouragement for continuing efforts by all States, large and small, to reconcile the differences between the great Powers.

35. The eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee had made a number of commendable suggestions on non-proliferation, which he hoped the nuclear Powers would put to good use. Particularly noteworthy was the suggestion that the nuclear Powers should take immediate steps to halt all nuclear weapon testing pending the conclusion of a treaty on non-proliferation.

36. Both the eight non-aligned nations and the Secretary-General had expressed their conviction that a treaty prohibiting underground nuclear tests would in itself be an effective measure for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and his delegation had been gratified to note the statements of the Soviet Union and the United States that they would be prepared to accept an amendment of the partial test ban treaty to include such a prohibition, even though there were still some difficulties on the subject of verification.

37. The United States had expressed special interest in the Swedish proposal for international co-operation to halt underground nuclear explosions and to establish a voluntary international exchange of seismological data; similarly, the Soviet Union had agreed to the suggestion made by the United Arab Republic at the 224th meeting of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, on 17 August 1965, that the partial test ban treaty should be extended to cover underground tests above a seismic magnitude of 4.75, and that there should also be a moratorium on all other underground tests until agreement had been reached on a comprehensive test ban. There had also been favourable comments about the method of "verification by challenge", since that method would facilitate not only the control of underground nuclear tests, but also other disarmament measures. All new proposals for the verification of nuclear explosions should be carefully studied in order that agreement on the cessation of all nuclear tests might be reached.

38. A treaty on non-proliferation must state the precise obligations of all States and must guarantee the positions of both the nuclear and the non-nuclear States. As the United Kingdom representative had said (1432nd meeting), no treaty on non-proliferation could be acceptable if it interfered with the legitimate right of Governments to enter into arrangements for collective security and take part in consultations in that regard. Similarly, the treaty must take account of the existing situation between the nuclear Powers and the non-nuclear Powers, which constituted the great majority of the world's States. The nuclear Powers should not be allowed to increase their nuclear weapon stockpiles under the proposed treaty; that was one reason for the recommendation by the eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, in their memorandum of 19 August 1966,^{2/} that the treaty "should be coupled with or followed by tangible steps to halt the nuclear arms race and to limit, reduce and eliminate the stocks of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery".

39. The resolution adopted on agenda item 97 (resolution 2149 (XX)) would help to secure the conclusion of a treaty on non-proliferation by creating an atmosphere in which the nuclear Powers could discuss the substantive aspects of the problem. The points discussed should include the United States representative's suggestions that the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes should be halted, that nuclear weapon stockpiles should be reduced and that certain quantities of enriched uranium should be transferred to peaceful uses.

40. The denuclearization of certain geographical areas could be a step towards non-proliferation. The Members of the United Nations had been informed of the decisions adopted by the Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearization of Latin America at its third session, held at Mexico in April and May 1966 (A/6328 and Corr.1). The Latin American countries were convinced that they could make a positive contribution to world peace by concluding a denuclearization treaty. The Soviet Union and the United Kingdom had offered to respect the status of denuclearized zones or, at least, to support such zones under appropriate and effective conditions. It was essential that all Powers possessing nuclear weapons should make similar commitments with regard to Latin America. The Secretary-General, in the introduction to his annual report (A/6301/Add.1), had said that a treaty on the denuclearization of Latin America could point the way to the denuclearization of Africa and other areas and, if it received the support of the nuclear Powers, would also help in reducing the size of the problem of proliferation and promoting other disarmament measures.

41. The current race in conventional armaments throughout the world was a grave danger to world peace. A careful study of the matter must be made, with a view to agreement on gradual measures of disarmament, scaled in keeping with the capacity of each country and aimed at the final objective of general and complete disarmament. The Ecuadorian Minister for External Relations had recently sent a telegram to the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics appealing for their co-operation in preventing a catastrophic armaments race among the nations of the Western hemisphere. In that spirit, Ecuador was prepared to support any effective and practical measures to curb the conventional armaments race, so that the resources now devoted to the acquisition of arms might be used instead to improve living conditions.

42. Ecuador supported the Secretary-General's suggestion in the introduction to his annual report, that the United Nations should explore and weigh the impact and implications of all aspects of nuclear weapons. It also recognized the special importance of a world disarmament conference. It realized, however, that there were political and other difficulties in the way and therefore favoured the continuation of the studies aimed at convening such a conference, which, held in a suitable atmosphere and under suitable circumstances, could constitute a decisive step towards the consolidation of peace. Lastly, it hoped that the nuclear Powers, which were most directly concerned in the questions of non-proliferation and of general and complete disarmament, would find ways to overcome the differences now separating them and that the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament would continue its efforts to develop a treaty on general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

43. Those engaged in the difficult and slow work of promoting disarmament would find inspiration from the words of Pope Paul VI. His Holiness had said, in the message he had addressed to the Secretary-General on 24 January 1966,^{3/} that no lasting peace

^{2/} Ibid., Supplement for 1966, document DC/228, annex 1, sect. P.

^{3/} Ibid., sect. C.

could be established among men without an effective, general and controlled reduction in armaments and he had urged everyone to work for the elimination of the painful and acute contrast between the huge sums spent on armaments and the immense and growing material

distress of over half the human race, whose most elementary needs remained unsatisfied.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.