



Thursday, 22 November 1951, at 3 p.m.

Palais de Chaillot, Paris

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Chairman: Mr. Finn Moe (Norway).

*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Carlos Blanco (Cuba), presided.*

**Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments (A/1943 and A/C.1/667) (*continued*)**

[Item 66]\*

**International control of atomic energy: report of the Committee of Twelve (A/1922) (*continued*)**

[Item 16]\*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. LLOYD (United Kingdom) had been struck by the note which recurred in all the speeches in the general debate—the intense common desire for peace which was echoed by millions of men and women. He was prepared to accept that both sides earnestly desired to avoid war. That was the common ground to which they must cleave.

2. War came through disparity of forces, which tempted the strongest nation to abuse its power. In the past, the United Kingdom Government had made positive contributions to disarmament, both in its discussion and in its practical application. It was the danger to peace from the existing disparity of armaments that had compelled the United Kingdom Government to rearm after reducing its armed forces to a dangerously low level in 1945. Nevertheless, it did not seem to be necessary for the balance of forces to be at the existing level, or at levels at present contemplated.

3. In spite of the common desire for peace, there was tension in the world today, due primarily to mutual suspicion. It was that vicious circle which the United Kingdom was resolved to try to break. They must make a fresh start. As the representative of Haiti (448th meeting)

had rightly pointed out, armaments were the symptoms and not the cause of the present tension. That was why other steps were necessary concurrently with the work of the disarmament commission envisaged in the joint draft resolution (A/C.1/667). A solution of the problem in Korea and of other issues in dispute was certainly necessary. Tension would thus be reduced and the work of disarmament would be advanced.

4. At the 448th meeting, the representative of Peru had said that the positions of the Soviet Union and of the western Powers were drawing closer together. It was to be hoped that that was indeed the case. It might be appropriate, without embarking upon a detailed examination of the draft resolution, to remind the Committee of a number of its salient features.

5. First, the joint draft resolution proposed to dissolve the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments. Secondly, it proposed the establishment of a new commission, the disarmament commission, which would deal, under the authority of the Security Council, with the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments. Thirdly, the disarmament commission would deal with both the control of conventional armaments and the control of atomic weapons; henceforward the two aspects of the problem would be linked.

6. On those three matters there was therefore no disagreement of principle between the position of the western Powers and the position of the Soviet Union.

7. Fourthly, the commission would, as its first task, examine plans for the disclosure and verification of all types of weapons. The Soviet Union had opposed a similar proposal submitted by France in 1949,<sup>1</sup> but had stated that if the United States would agree to include both types of armaments in the same system of information, agreement could be reached on the question of the control system. That had now been done and there appeared to be no wide

\* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 348th meeting.

margin of disagreement between the two sides. That was of the greatest importance for the process of verification was the basis of any disarmament programme.

8. Fifthly, effective safeguards must be established to ensure strict observance of disarmament programmes. On that point again the position of the three Powers was close to that of the USSR delegation, which had earlier in a plenary meeting<sup>1</sup> called for the establishment of an international control organ.

9. Sixthly, the draft resolution sought to ensure the prohibition of the atomic weapon and to ensure the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. On that point again there would appear to be agreement.

10. With regard to means of rendering the control of atomic energy and the prohibition of atomic weapons effective, the authors of the draft resolution would be prepared to consider any better or no less effective system than that already put forward as the United Nations plan. The new disarmament commission would also be required to try to seek criteria of general application which could be simply and clearly stated and, taking into account those criteria, to formulate for each State ceilings for all armed forces and armaments. That method appeared to offer a much more businesslike approach than proposals for an arbitrary cut of a fixed percentage in national forces.

11. Once the national ceilings had been established, the commission would have to consider how, by methods of mutual agreement, States could be prevented from building up disproportionate or unbalanced forces within the figure allowed them.

12. Finally, the draft resolution envisaged the convening of a general conference of all States to consider the draft disarmament proposals. The leader of the USSR delegation, in his speech to the General Assembly,<sup>2</sup> had also seemed to call for much the same sort of conference. The only difference seemed to be one of timing. It would appear to be preferable to request the disarmament commission to undertake the preparatory spade-work rather than to convene the conference at a specified date in 1952.

13. It could be claimed that the proposals contained in the joint draft resolution were practical and that they followed a logical sequence. With goodwill they could lead to the most sweeping results that could be wished for—complete international agreement on the control of all armed forces and weapons, including the atomic bomb and its abolition.

14. The representative of the United Kingdom had drawn the attention of the Committee to a number of points with regard to which agreement with the Soviet Union appeared to be possible; nevertheless there was disagreement as to the sequence in which the various measures should be put into effect. The order suggested by the representative of

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 336th meeting.

the Soviet Union was as follows: after a convention for the prohibition of atomic weapons, the five great Powers would be invited to reduce their armaments and their armed forces by one-third; then, following upon the adoption of those decisions by the General Assembly, all States would be called upon to submit information on their armed forces; finally, the Assembly would recommend the establishment of an international control organ whose duties would include verification of the information submitted.

15. The sequence proposed in the draft resolution of the three Powers appeared to be preferable.

16. The Soviet Union proposals would involve calling for the destruction of existing stocks of atomic bombs before any organ capable of ensuring that their destruction was real and complete was established. That was tantamount to calling upon the great Powers to reduce their forces before they had any reliable information on the military strength of the other parties to the scheme. There would thus be no guarantee of the good faith of the other parties in carrying out their part in it. It was quite unrealistic to pretend that, in the present state of the world, any country could gamble with its security in that way or run such a risk. The one-third cut in armaments could of course only perpetuate existing disparities.

17. Those objections to the proposals of the USSR were of fundamental importance, but the differences between the two methods suggested should not constitute an insurmountable obstacle.

18. Mention should also be made of two other reasons why agreement had been difficult to reach in the past. The first was that when the same form of wording appeared in the Soviet Union proposals and the proposals of the western Powers, the same meanings were not always attached to the words. Thus, in spite of the many phrases common to the draft resolutions which had been submitted, it would be unwise to think that a process of "verbal juggling", whereby those common phrases were somehow selected and pieced together, would produce a real basis for agreement.

19. The western Powers had made a genuine move to provide a basis for agreement. They had renewed those efforts every year and had held out their hand to the Soviet Union. Surely it was not too much to hope that in the changed atmosphere of the present session of the General Assembly there would be a response.

20. The United Kingdom representative stressed the fact that the international confidence which must be established before disarmament proposals could be put into effect could only be built up by degrees. He ventured to hope that the discussions of the Committee, treating the matter in a sober and businesslike manner without recourse to polemics or acrimony, would create an atmosphere favourable to the work of the future disarmament commission.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.