

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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**Chairman:** Mr. DJALAL ABDOLAH (Iran).

## AGENDA ITEM 24

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments; conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction (A/3630 and Corr.1, A/3657, A/3674/Rev.1, A/3685, A/C.1/793, A/C.1/L.174, A/C.1/L.175/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.176/Rev.2, A/C.1/L.177, A/C.1/L.178/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.179 and Corr.1 and Add.1) (continued):

- (a) Report of the Disarmament Commission;
- (b) Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee;
- (c) Collective action to inform and enlighten the peoples of the world as to the dangers of the armaments race, and particularly as to the destructive effects of modern weapons;
- (d) Discontinuance under international control of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons

1. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the reason why the First Committee had begun its work by examining the question of disarmament was that the General Assembly was concerned over the failure of the negotiations held in London by the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission. It had been claimed that progress had been made, and indeed important proposals, for instance those made by the USSR on 18 March 1957 (DC/112, annex 1), 30 April 1957 (DC/112, annex 7) and 14 July 1957 (DC/112, annex 12), had been laid before the Sub-Committee. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to reach agreement, because the four members of the Sub-Committee which were also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) wanted to let negotiations drag on rather than seek ways of stopping the armaments race.

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2. The fine speeches made about the Sub-Committee were designed, on the one hand, to mitigate the general disappointment in its work and on the other, to give the impression that nothing would be gained by changing its composition and methods. In reality, while negotiations continued to be at a standstill, preparations for an atomic war were being intensified, particularly in West Germany, where militarist groups were steadily gaining in influence. The Western Powers were planning to equip the West German army with atomic weapons. In the space of one year, expenditures for rearming West Germany had multiplied ninefold. The idea of a greater Germany spreading from the Meuse to the Niemen was once again stirring the imagination of the heads of German monopolies.

3. The Ukrainian people, aware from its own experience to what disasters such a policy might lead, demanded the cessation of all military preparations and a radical solution for the disarmament problem, since such a solution was essential in order to allay the general anxiety, bring the international situation back to normal and furnish a solid foundation for co-operation among nations.

4. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1011 (XI), the Soviet Union had on several occasions proposed a general disarmament programme, whereas the Western Powers had merely sought for excuses to justify their refusal to reduce their armed forces and postpone the prohibition of nuclear weapons. On 30 April 1957, the Soviet Union had proposed a programme of partial measures, including in particular the reduction of conventional armaments and of military expenses and the introduction of international control. The Western Powers did not reply before 29 August, and then with a plan (DC/113, annex 5) the sole purpose of which was to render any agreement difficult.

5. The twenty-four-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.179 and Corr.1 and Add.1) sought to impose upon the General Assembly the principles underlying those counterproposals. The Ukrainian delegation had listened attentively to the statements on the subject by the representatives of the United States (866th meeting), the United Kingdom (869th meeting) and France (877th meeting), and had received the impression that the Western Powers did not want general agreement.

6. Under the USSR proposals, States would renounce the use of nuclear weapons, if only for five years, and would undertake not to install military units equipped with atomic weapons or store nuclear weapons in foreign Territory, not to furnish such weapons to other States or to the high command of military blocs and to stop tests of nuclear weapons, for a period of from two to three years.

7. The Western Powers were refusing to accept those specific measures, which could easily be applied with-

out any danger to the security of the countries concerned. They sought to bypass the General Assembly's decisions and substitute therefore the proposal for the cessation of production of fissionable materials for military purposes. That solution was unacceptable. It would not bring about the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons or the destruction of existing stocks.

8. Neither the Baruch Plan to which the United Kingdom representative had referred, nor the present proposals of the Western Powers could bring about a solution of the disarmament problem. If the Western Powers wanted to solve the question they should seek agreement on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, their elimination from the armaments of States and the complete discontinuance of the manufacture of atomic and hydrogen weapons. But that was not their purpose. In reality, they were trying to legalize the use of nuclear weapons, for example in what they called "cases of self-defence". To accept such a proposal would be to place a weapon in the hands of aggressors.

9. According to the United Kingdom representative, acceptance of the unconditional prohibition of nuclear weapons was tantamount to a promise of good conduct. That sounded as if the ruling circles in the United Kingdom thought it impossible to undertake to maintain normal relations with other States. In order to re-establish confidence in the world, States had to make a solemn undertaking not to resort to nuclear weapons. United Kingdom and United States leaders favoured what they called the "strategy of intimidation", which rested on the destructive power of atomic and hydrogen weapons. They asserted that nuclear weapons were a guarantee of peace. In that case, the larger the stocks of such weapons, the better for international security. The real purpose of that theory was to make negotiations serve as a screen for a policy based on the threat of atomic weapons. Such a policy required that the smallest possible number of States should be equipped with those weapons, and that explained the proposal to stop the production of fissionable materials for military purposes.

10. In the meantime, the United States was installing units equipped with atomic weapons and storing nuclear weapons in the territory of other States, West Germany in particular. The purpose of the proposals contained in the working paper of 29 August 1957 was to obtain recognition of the right to furnish nuclear weapons to foreign countries, which in practice meant the NATO countries. Such a policy could only exacerbate the international situation.

11. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that, while pretending to agree on the need to stop the tests of nuclear weapons, the Western Powers introduced so many limitations and conditions that in fact agreement became impossible. Furthermore, at the end of his speech, the United Kingdom representative had stated that his country reserved the right to improve and test nuclear weapons. To reassure public opinion, he had asserted that such tests produced very little radiation, but both a large number of scientists and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy of the United States Congress took the opposite view.

12. In an endeavour to prevent a discontinuance of tests of nuclear weapons, the argument that there were "clean" bombs had been advanced. The United States

claimed that it was evolving a bomb with low radioactive fall-out and that it needed to continue the tests for that reason. However, everyone knew that in case of war a "clean" bomb would be as destructive as any other.

13. According to another argument, nuclear weapons would be used only for tactical purposes and not for mass destruction. That argument was invalid, since there was no clear-cut line between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

14. Any attempt to justify an atomic war was doomed to failure. The peoples of the entire world were demanding that preparations for war should be stopped, that nuclear weapons should be prohibited and that no more tests of such weapons should be made. The United Nations could not remain indifferent to their appeals. The General Assembly would make an important step forward if it did no more than take a decision on some of the partial measures proposed in the memorandum of the Soviet Union (A/C.1/793).

15. Mr. CRAW (New Zealand) said that it was clear that the General Assembly had returned to the disarmament issue with a new sense of urgency. With every month of deadlock the dangers mounted and the cost of armaments, in human and economic terms, increased. Political tensions remained perilously high, and the prospect that other Powers would come to possess nuclear weapons was an ever-present anxiety. Measures towards the controlled reduction of armaments were therefore an imperative need, even if, in the beginning, those measures must be limited.

16. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR had expressed an undisputed truth when he said (867th meeting) that a concrete effort should be made so that words might be followed by deeds. The New Zealand delegation did not dissent from that part of his statement, however implausible it might have found the reasons advanced by Mr. Gromyko for lack of progress towards disarmament.

17. The proposals put forward by countries which were not members of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission should be given careful study, as those countries had also their part to play and should be heard in the appropriate forum. The peoples of every nation, great and small, had an equal interest in checking the arms race and in bringing under effective control the awesome power of thermonuclear weapons. It was nevertheless to be expected that the First Committee should concentrate its attention mainly on the proposals made in the Sub-Committee. Success could be achieved only by the reconciliation of disagreements among the great Powers represented on the Sub-Committee.

18. It appeared that the Sub-Committee's labours had not been entirely unprofitable. Concessions had been made on both sides. By common consent, the emphasis of the discussions had been on partial disarmament measures and on the initial steps that could be taken without delay, irrespective of the present tension in international relations. The New Zealand delegation felt that that was the only practical and sensible course to follow. The benefits of partial disarmament would be none the less real for being limited. Comprehensive disarmament might have to be regarded as a distant prospect in the present state

of international mistrust; but it must nevertheless remain the ultimate objective.

19. The most important development in the work of the Sub-Committee during 1957 was, without doubt, the submission of proposals on partial measures for disarmament formulated by Canada, the United States, France and the United Kingdom on 29 August. As their sponsors had told the First Committee, those proposals were embodied in the twenty-four-Power draft resolution. The New Zealand delegation considered that they were compact, practical and enforceable and that the General Assembly should endorse them. They took account of present realities, of agreement so far reached and of the need to balance the security interests of the Powers which were invited to put them into effect. Their sponsors did not claim that they would, in themselves, constitute the ultimate solution which the international community expected from the nuclear Powers but they would help to strengthen confidence between nations and set in train genuine disarmament measures.

20. The USSR's reaction to those proposals was, therefore, difficult to understand. The USSR had, however, made concessions in the past, just as the Western Powers had done and the Committee must not abandon hope that its considered reply would be commensurate with the gravity of the problem and the seriousness of purpose displayed by the other members of the Sub-Committee.

21. The USSR's main objection seemed to be against the proposal to stop production of nuclear material for military purposes. It argued that that would do nothing to stop the production of weapons from existing stocks, but omitted to mention that the Western proposals provided for a fully enforceable start on the reduction of nuclear stocks. Instead, the Soviet Union proposed that the Western Powers should undertake to renounce the use of their nuclear weapons for an initial period of five years. That was represented as a concession to the West, the demand up to now having been the complete prohibition of such weapons and the destruction of existing stocks. The New Zealand delegation, like many others, was bound to ask what was the use of insisting on that demand, with or without a time limit, when no regard was paid to the fundamental requirements of control and supervision.

22. Like the peoples of all other countries, the New Zealand people wanted disarmament. They wanted a peace founded on something less alarming than the nuclear deterrent. If they thought that the USSR proposals would help to bring about genuine disarmament and trust between nations, they would not hesitate to accept them; but they felt it was not common sense to believe that a practicable disarmament scheme could be put into operation, now or at any time, without effective safeguards. The world needed something more reliable than paper promises to outlaw nuclear weapons.

23. Contrary to the affirmations of the representative of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR, the five-year ban on atomic weapons could neither be applied nor controlled. It would place a premium on aggression. Unaccompanied by radical measures with respect to non-nuclear weapons, it would allow one party to assert its acknowledged superiority in conventional arma-

ments by requiring the other parties to strip themselves of the nuclear weapon on which their security so greatly depended.

24. On the other hand, the limited agreement on disarmament proposed by the Western Powers would remove the issue from the domain of controversy and propaganda. While it would require the same kind of safeguards as a more far-reaching agreement, those safeguards would be on a smaller scale and would be less onerous for those countries which had always been reluctant to accept the necessary intrusion into what they regarded as their internal affairs; but a disarmament agreement which was not adequately controlled and safeguarded would have no meaning.

25. There were signs that the USSR was reconciling itself to that point of view. It seemed to accept the need for controls which would assure States that their own disarmament measures were matched by similar efforts on the part of others. It was now willing to admit, by inference, that aerial inspection was not merely a cover for espionage, as it had itself submitted proposals for aerial inspection, inequitable though they might be in relation to the areas to be opened for inspection. The USSR had also indicated its readiness to accept inspection as part of an agreement to cease the testing of nuclear weapons. It had showed itself unwilling however to discuss the practical aspects and to begin a detailed study of the question. It was even more strangely reluctant to admit the natural connexion between a cessation of tests and measures of real disarmament, particularly the discontinuance of the production of nuclear materials for military purposes. Nor had the USSR given up proclaiming that the West was trying to frustrate an agreement by its emphasis on control. In the debate, the United Kingdom and France had been accused of reviving policies on control which, in the view of the USSR, had prevented the League of Nations from bringing about disarmament. That was a curious charge, for surely the mistake which the United Kingdom and France had made had been to reduce their defences when there had been no safeguards to protect them against the repeated violations of solemn pledges by great expansionist Powers.

26. Turning to the question of tests of nuclear weapons, he said that many people in New Zealand felt a very real anxiety about the dangers to the health and well-being of the present and future generations, if test explosions were to continue indefinitely, solely at the discretion of those States now possessing nuclear weapons. There was no doubt that throughout the world many earnest people were genuinely apprehensive about the long-term effects of radiation if tests were not brought to an end. That uncertainty was also reflected in the divergent opinions of scientists. The New Zealand Government looked forward to the publication in 1958 of the report of the Special Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, not only because it expected that report to answer many urgent questions which had arisen concerning the problem of atomic radiation resulting from test explosions, but also because it hoped that the report would make it possible to view the question in its proper perspective, against the background of the total effects of radiation from all sources. In the meantime, New Zealand welcomed the assurances of two of the nuclear Powers, the United States and the United Kingdom, that, if no

agreement was reached on suspension they would continue their nuclear weapons tests only in such a way as to keep radiation from rising to more than a small fraction of what might be dangerous levels. It was to be hoped that the other great nuclear Power would show similar restraint.

27. That did not mean to say that the discontinuance of the tests had become any less desirable and urgent. Agreement on that issue remained primarily a matter for the three nuclear Powers; but the attitude of the USSR was hardly encouraging: it was seeking to score simultaneously a propaganda and a military advantage by insisting on the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests independently of other initial measures. But the mere suspension of tests would not prevent other countries from making bombs, and those already possessing them could maintain and even increase their nuclear strength. The suspension of tests was not disarmament, nor was it a first step towards disarmament. And surely disarmament must be the prime endeavour. As the Committee had been reminded by the representative of the United States, the real danger lay in the possible use of nuclear weapons.

28. It was important to note that the Western Powers proposed that nuclear weapons tests should be suspended as soon as a partial disarmament had been concluded. Under the proposals of the four Western Powers the suspension would come into effect before the application of the measures of real nuclear disarmament to be laid down in the proposed agreement and even before the establishment of a system of inspection, the necessity for which all parties were

now willing to acknowledge. It was therefore untrue to say that the United Kingdom and the United States were opposed to agreement on that point.

29. New Zealand anxiously awaited the time when the conditions necessary for the cessation of nuclear tests could be established. But proposals calling for an immediate and unconditional suspension of tests must be regarded as falling short of what, in the New Zealand view, was the minimum indispensable requirement. That remained a linked agreement to stop nuclear weapons tests and to stop making nuclear materials for use in weapons. Proposals for the suspension of tests in isolation from genuine measures of nuclear disarmament, however laudable their intention, would tend to upset the existing balance of military strength. Such a development would make more difficult a solution of the problem of disarmament, which was already intractable enough.

30. It was for the Assembly to set the Sub-Committee on the road to constructive action. The twenty-four-Power draft resolution pointed the way.

31. The CHAIRMAN announced that the first speakers on his list were not able to take the floor at the present meeting. Although he was anxious to fall in with their wishes, he very much regretted the new delay in the general debate. In the interest of the sound organization of the Committee's work, he would henceforward be obliged to request all speakers who were not ready to make their statements to speak only when the draft resolutions were being considered.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.