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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEMS 64, 70 AND 72

Question of disarmament (A/3929, A/3936, A/C.1/L.205) (continued)

The discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests (A/3915, A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1, A/C.1/L.203, A/C.1/L.205) (continued)

The reduction of the military budgets of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and France by 10 to 15 per cent and the use of part of the savings so effected for assistance to the under-developed countries (A/3925, A/C.1/L.204, A/C.1/L.205) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. BRUCAN (Romania) said that it was the duty of the General Assembly to take a definite stand on the vital aspects of disarmament and to reach the necessary decisions. There had been two different approaches to the question in the Committee: according to one position, the actual substance of the question should be discussed, while, according to the other, the Committee should limit itself to wishing success to the two conferences to be held at Geneva. The first position had a logical connexion with the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The second, which was favoured by the United States, indicated a curious line of reasoning which amounted to saying that to take a stand in favour of the immediate and unconditional cessation of nuclear weapons tests was not constructive, whereas to refrain from taking a decision on that vital question was constructive. In those circumstances, it was not surprising that few delegations were taking part in the debate. The situation that was being fostered was serious, because it was aimed at minimizing the role of the United Nations.

2. For the first time in its history, mankind had acquired a means of destroying all life on the globe. The

extraordinary destructive power of modern devices gave the whole human race a common interest and a common purpose—to survive and to safeguard civilization. The most eminent scientists had warned mankind of the magnitude of the catastrophe that could be caused by the existing stockpiles of modern weapons. The question might be asked what reason there could be for carrying on a frantic armaments race and continuing to accumulate new weapons; except perhaps to destroy other planets as well. Whether or not the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests was considered a form of disarmament, the time had come to end the madness that had taken possession of the world. World opinion expected the United Nations to progress from disarmament in words to disarmament in deeds. It would judge Governments according to whether they were for or against nuclear weapons tests, and it would not be deceived by any procedural tactics that might be resorted to.

3. While nuclear weapons tests were undoubtedly confined to three States, they were no less of interest to the rest of the world, which suffered the consequences. It should not be forgotten that other countries, like France and West Germany, might soon possess nuclear weapons as well. Romania, which had already suffered twice under German militarism, could not but be alarmed at such a prospect. Surely, if the problem was to be solved, the present moment was the most opportune since only three States were involved.

4. The position of the Soviet Union, whose draft resolution (A/C.1/L.203) unequivocally met the aspirations of mankind, was well known, but the attitude of the United States was far from being as clear. The representative of that country had made contradictory statements: he had said at the 945th meeting that his Government's position on the suspension of nuclear tests was not conditional upon the existence of an entire disarmament plan, whereas earlier at that same meeting he had indicated that that position was conditioned by the adoption of other disarmament measures; moreover, he had announced that his Government was ready to discontinue tests "for one year", while at the same time proposing to do so "indefinitely".

5. The representative of the United Kingdom had stated at the 948th meeting that the responsibility for disarmament rested primarily with the United Nations, but that he would prefer that the United Nations should be relieved of that responsibility as to the subject matter of the Geneva talks. He considered that it would be unrealistic to try to commit the "nuclear Powers" to a particular course of action before they had had full opportunity for negotiation amongst themselves. Yet one of those Powers, the Soviet Union, considered such a course not only possible but necessary. Furthermore, the representative of the United Kingdom had admitted that an agreement for the

suspension of nuclear weapons tests was the desired goal. The practical application of controls would, of course, present problems, but that was not the point at issue. The task of the Assembly was to adopt a declaration on the cessation of tests. There was no room for controversy on that point.

6. Thus, the Assembly had the right and the duty to deal with the political principle of discontinuing tests, but it was for the "nuclear Powers" to work out the practical application. If the United States and the United Kingdom were as anxious for the success of the Geneva talks as they claimed to be, it was strange that they should be afraid of the General Assembly taking a decision on nuclear weapons tests. The only constructive contribution that the Assembly could make to the negotiations was to adopt a clear-cut decision recommending the cessation of the tests.

7. The Romanian delegation would therefore support the Soviet draft resolution. It reserved the right to speak at a later stage on the reduction of military budgets.

8. Mr. PALAMAS (Greece) said that his delegation regretted that the negotiations on disarmament had been practically suspended since the end of the twelfth session of the Assembly. The United Nations must not, however, abandon its attempts just because the work of the Disarmament Commission and its Sub-Committee had failed to yield the desired results. On the contrary, the great Powers should resume negotiations in close co-operation with the other Member States and continue with the talks even if those talks proved to be inconclusive for several years to come. A discussion in good faith of the various political, psychological and technical aspects of the disarmament question would in itself be a step forward which would at least make it possible to improve the general political climate, investigate the question more thoroughly, and even train a negotiating team composed of experts from different countries.

9. If discussions on the general question of disarmament were to be resumed, an effort should be made to overcome the difficulties that had arisen during the past year. In that respect the Greek delegation had heartily welcomed the suggestion made by the representative of Mexico at the 946th meeting. It was surprising that the Soviet Union would refuse to participate in the Disarmament Commission consisting of twenty-five members since the composition of that body was, in terms of voting, far more favourable to the Soviet Union than that of the standing body of eighty-one members which that country had initially proposed (A/C.1/797). It might also be wondered why the majority of the General Assembly, which had voted against the establishment of that standing body, had agreed to the enlargement of the Disarmament Commission in a way which did not reflect the political complexion of the Assembly. Besides, a commission of twenty-five members could serve propaganda purposes just as well as any body of eighty-one members. The Greek delegation considered that any organ entrusted with the task of resuming negotiations on disarmament should, to some extent, reflect the political characteristics of the General Assembly. It was therefore more inclined to support the establishment of a standing body of eighty-one members than to subscribe to some more or less artificial solution.

10. While considering that the essential point was to continue discussions on the problem of disarmament as a whole, the Greek delegation did not exclude the possibility of reaching a limited agreement on certain specific matters. Such a course might lead to partial achievements that would be beneficial to the international community and pave the way for greater accomplishments. Thus, if the great Powers agreed on an international control system for the detection of nuclear weapons tests, that agreement would not only make it possible to ensure that tests really were discontinued, but would also give hope that other disarmament measures, accompanied by international controls, might also be adopted. However, even if partial solutions were arrived at, the comprehensive nature of the problem should not be overlooked.

11. In the opinion of his delegation, the problem of the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons tests presented two different aspects. In the first place, the question of nuclear armaments, their improvement, their increase or their abolition was indissolubly linked to the issue of national and international security and peace. Any measure affecting nuclear armaments must be considered in the light of its consequences with regard to the ability of States to defend themselves. No Government would ever agree to measures destined to upset the balance of its defensive potentialities. Moreover, if an unconditional suspension, or even the cessation, of nuclear tests was decided upon, there would be a risk of creating a kind of monopoly in the production of those weapons, to the advantage of the three great "nuclear Powers". The question might arise of the right, and even of the obligation, of those Powers to share with other countries the technical data they possessed concerning the manufacture of nuclear weapons. His delegation was gratified at the success of the Conference of Experts to study the Possibility of Detecting Violations of a Possible Agreement on the Suspension of Nuclear Tests, held at Geneva in July and August 1958, but even with the prospect of a suspension of tests on the basis of effective international control, it did not underestimate the underlying political and other difficulties of the problem. Those considerations should not discourage countries, but should enable them to tackle the problem on a more realistic basis.

12. The second aspect of the suspension of tests concerned the potential victims of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, namely all the peoples of the world. Those peoples were demanding the discontinuance of tests, and that demand should find its way of expression through the General Assembly and be conveyed to the nuclear Powers. On the other hand, the peoples of the world should also be informed about the intricacies of the problem and be made aware that, while the suspension of tests prevented the danger of radiation, it did not prevent that of mass destruction, as the production of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons would continue. They should also realize that even if, with some system of control, the stage was reached when all nuclear weapons would be banned, the problem of conventional armaments would still have to be solved.

13. With regard to the three draft resolutions before the Committee, his delegation considered that the seventeen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.205) was realistic and contained constructive elements. As the

other draft resolutions, particularly that submitted by the thirteen Powers (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1), also contained useful ideas and suggestions, an effort should perhaps be made to bring the respective views closer together so that all the constructive elements could be combined in a single text which would receive unanimous approval. Unanimity, especially among the great Powers was, as past experience had proved, indispensable in matters of disarmament.

14. With regard to the question of military budgets, on which the Soviet delegation had submitted a draft resolution, his delegation was in agreement with the basic idea contained in that draft resolution (A/C.1/L.204), but thought that the best way to ensure the sincere and thorough application of the solution proposed would be to have it studied by experts.

15. Mr. SUBASINGHE (Ceylon) said that the problem of disarmament grew graver with every day that passed. The armaments race was accompanied by the establishment of military bases all over the world and the conclusion of regional pacts which tended to increase tension in the regions concerned. Moreover, the economic policies of the contending parties towards the countries in those regions had in no small measure been influenced by strategic considerations. Countries which had only recently attained their independence were somewhat anxious in face of those developments, for all countries, whether large or small, had a right to protest against policies which endangered their very existence.

16. The question of disarmament was obviously extremely complex, but, in the opinion of his delegation, it would be unwise to concentrate on the technical aspect while postponing the political aspect to a later stage. The technical agreement reached by the Geneva Conference of Experts would have no effect unless the countries concerned took the political decision to cease atomic and hydrogen weapons tests. It should not be forgotten that the obstacles which had prevented the achievement of disarmament after two world wars were political and not technical. That view was strengthened by the experience of disarmament negotiations in recent years. Technical and political discussions should accordingly proceed paripassu.

17. His delegation thought that it would be impossible to embody in one resolution all that the Assembly would wish to recommend on disarmament. It would be better for the Assembly to adopt a resolution on each of the questions which had been brought up. Although disarmament in all its stages was a connected whole, it could only be considered in stages.

18. The first stage of disarmament must be the banning of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons tests. That was why Ceylon, with twelve other countries, had sponsored a draft resolution on that question (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1). Although attempts had been made to minimize the dangers arising from those tests, the peoples of the world had not been deceived, and persisted in their demand that the tests should be banned. Moreover, scientists had admitted that ionizing radiation had already affected vegetation, animal life and, of course, human life itself. The Members of the United Nations, representing mankind, had a duty to call upon the countries concerned to cease their tests of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons apart from any other consideration. The stocks of those

weapons, which would in any case have to be destroyed if total disarmament was to be achieved, were already too large.

19. As countries could not be expected to pursue a policy of unilateral disarmament, balanced disarmament was the practical approach. His delegation was of the opinion that the realization of one stage of disarmament did not have to depend on the possibility of realizing all the later stages. It also believed that because of unchangeable geographical and political factors a perfect balance in disarmament was impossible. For instance, if one party insisted on maintaining a ring of bases around the territory of the other party in the name of balanced disarmament, it would not be possible to obtain agreement. An attempt must accordingly be made to reach agreement while maintaining the most perfect balance possible.

20. His delegation did not believe in the deterrent effect of atomic weapons. The factor which was preventing a war was the overwhelming desire of mankind for peace. Disarmament should accordingly be instituted without delay, beginning with the immediate banning of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. Simultaneously with disarmament discussions, talks at the highest level should take place with a view to finding political solutions to the many issues that caused tension and motivated the armaments race. His delegation was convinced that the United Nations should play a leading role in that regard.

21. It also thought that the United Nations body entrusted with that responsibility should have equal representation for the various political trends existing in the United Nations. It should not be forgotten that disarmament was not a matter which concerned the parties in the armaments race alone. The group of countries which were not aligned with either side could also make a substantial contribution and should accordingly be better represented in the discussions on disarmament.

22. He reserved the right to speak again later on the question of the reduction of military budgets.

23. Mr. HERRERA BAEZ (Dominican Republic) recalled that the plenipotentiaries meeting at San Francisco in 1945, being profoundly convinced that, except in cases of self-defence, force should only be used in the common interest, had incorporated in the new general conception of collective security the question of disarmament and the regulation of armaments. That was why they had conferred specific powers on the plenary body of the Organization, so that among the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security, particular importance should be given to those governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments. They had, moreover, established the right of the General Assembly to make recommendations on those principles to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both.

24. The efforts which the General Assembly had made to carry out the task assigned to it by Article 11 of the Charter had led to the resolution which it had adopted during its twelfth session (resolution 1148 (XII)) and in which it had approved five general conditions representing the basis of any international system of disarmament and regulation of armaments under United Nations auspices.

25. His country deeply regretted that the specialized body set up to deal with disarmament problems was not at present functioning, but it noted with satisfaction the results accomplished by the Conference of Experts held at Geneva in July and August 1958 and the initiative taken by the Secretary-General in asking for the inclusion of the disarmament question in the agenda of the thirteenth session.

26. Although the frightening spectre of atomic and hydrogen weapons made the problem of disarmament especially urgent, the peoples of the world were not seeking just any solution of the question, nor did they expect to be given a choice between all or nothing. Everything seemed to indicate that it would be better to seek reasonable solutions, rather than to adopt an over-simple solution to an infinitely complex question. Nothing would be gained by too great haste, or at least nothing final would result. International experience provided excellent lessons in that respect. Thus, the present system of narcotic drugs control had been worked out after years of effort.

27. One very encouraging prospect, however, was the conference at Geneva which was scheduled to convene on 31 October 1958, the importance of which lay in the fact that an attempt would be made to pass the stage of preliminary technical studies and inaugurate a new era in the history of disarmament, that of constructive agreements and practical achievements.

28. Turning to the seventeen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.205), he noted that stress was laid on the actual establishment of an international control system, an idea that was in conformity with the principle of the international community. That system had for a basis the report of the experts (A/3897), who, meeting at Geneva, had concluded that it was technically possible to set up an effective control system to detect violations of any agreement on the cessation of nuclear tests. The text of the draft resolution left no doubt as to the good faith of its sponsors, who in their statements before the Committee had shown the need for international control. Admittedly they had linked the question of the cessation of tests to the progress made towards general disarmament, but in that connexion, his delegation had been favourably impressed by the statement of the United Kingdom representative, who, speaking of the conditional element in the cessation of tests of nuclear weapons, had said that the United Kingdom Government would interpret the condition laid down, that was to say, the achievement of satisfactory progress in further negotiations, in a reasonable manner, taking into account the time factor and the inherent difficulties of the question (948th meeting).

29. After carefully studying the various draft resolutions submitted to the Committee, his delegation believed that, although the seventeen-Power draft resolution could be improved by being connected not only to one of the present agenda items, but also to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1148 (XII), it gave a balanced treatment to the problem of the suspension of nuclear tests and other specific measures toward disarmament. Furthermore, in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7, it established a link between the United Nations and the new negotiations which were about to open outside the Organization.

30. In those circumstances, while reserving its vote

on the separate parts, his delegation supported the seventeen-Power draft resolution in principle.

31. Prince WAN WAITHAYAKON (Thailand), referring to the proposal made by the representative of Mexico at the 946th meeting in connexion with the composition of the Disarmament Commission, expressed the view that it would be particularly desirable for that Commission to start functioning again. It seemed to him that there were a number of possible compromise formulas for reaching that objective. For instance, the Disarmament Commission might constitute a consultative body and its Sub-Committee a negotiating body, whether on a parity basis or otherwise, as appropriate to the nature of the question to be agreed upon in each case. If an agreement could be secured on that matter, the forthcoming conference at Geneva to negotiate an agreement on the suspension of nuclear weapons tests and the actual establishment of an international control system to ensure its observance would be within the framework of the United Nations instead of being outside it.

32. If, for reasons of expediency, it was sometimes found necessary to adopt a procedure outside the framework of the United Nations, there should be facilities for bringing the matter back to the United Nations, if necessary, without having to wait for the next regular session of the General Assembly.

33. The essential task of the United Nations was not only to secure agreement in the matter of disarmament, but also to secure an agreed disarmament. Unilateral declarations of disarmament, or even unilateral acts of disarmament, however welcome they might be, were liable to unilateral modification or cancellation. It was a corollary of the provisions of Articles 11 and 26 of the Charter that the problem of disarmament should be taken as a whole and should be the subject of an international agreement under the United Nations. Thus, at its twelfth session, the General Assembly, in operative paragraph 1 of its resolution 1148 (XII), had recommended certain comprehensive principles for an early disarmament agreement.

34. As, however, certain delegations had declared a boycott of the Disarmament Commission, a year had gone by without the possibility of anything being done by the United Nations itself in the matter of disarmament. Fortunately, owing to initiatives taken with the knowledge of the United Nations, it had been possible to make a technical approach to the question of control in connexion with a possible suspension of nuclear weapons tests. The experts of both sides, meeting at Geneva, had reached agreed conclusions on the possibility of detecting violations of a possible agreement on the suspension of nuclear tests if a defined control system was set up. As a result of that happy technical approach, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the USSR, as countries which had held nuclear weapons tests, would meet at Geneva on 31 October 1958 to negotiate an agreement on the suspension of such tests under effective international control. All the world prayed for the success of those negotiations and also of the study relating to measures against the possibility of surprise attack, which would also be initiated at Geneva on 10 November 1958.

35. Commenting on the seventeen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.205), he said that the draft made clear

the continuing interest and responsibility of the United Nations in the field of disarmament, and that it invited the conferences on the question of nuclear weapons tests and on that of surprise attack to avail themselves of the assistance and services of the Secretary-General and requested them to keep the United Nations informed. Further, the Secretary-General was invited, in consultation with the Governments concerned, to render whatever advice and assistance might seem appropriate to facilitate current developments or any further initiatives related to problems of disarmament. The delegation of Thailand attached particular importance to the participation of the Secretary-General in the work of the conferences, not only because of the unquestionable value of such participation, but also because it was an evidence and a guarantee of participation by the United Nations in all disarmament activities.

36. The draft resolution had been co-sponsored by his delegation because it laid down correct principles, namely that, while negotiations were in progress, there was to be a kind of truce or cease-fire, namely, no testing of nuclear weapons, and because the object of the agreement was to be the suspension of nuclear weapons tests and the establishment of an international control system to ensure its observance.

37. In that text the word "suspension" and not the word "cessation" was used, but from the explanations given by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States, it could be taken that the period of suspension contemplated would be renewable as a matter of course, on condition that a control system was established and that there was satisfactory progress in the general field of disarmament. Those

were reasonable conditions, because the problem of disarmament was a complex whole.

38. The representative of the Soviet Union had stated that his Government had accepted the control system agreed upon by the Conference of Experts. However, that control system was not mentioned in the Soviet draft resolution (A/C.1/L.203) as a condition of the cessation of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, as it should have been. The delegation of Thailand therefore regretted that it could not support the Soviet draft resolution.

39. His delegation also regretted that it could not support the revised thirteen-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.202/Rev.1 and Add.1), for although that draft contemplated an agreement in connexion with the technical arrangements and controls considered necessary to ensure the observance of the discontinuance of the tests, it did not indicate what would happen if no such agreement was reached.

40. With reference to the USSR draft resolution on the reduction of the military budgets of the four great Powers (A/C.1/L.204), Thailand, as a small Power and an under-developed country, was naturally desirous of receiving greater assistance for its economic and industrial development, but it would not like such aid to come from funds released through the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers unless the great Powers concerned were in full agreement. Thailand was sincerely convinced that what was needed in the matter of disarmament was a solution resulting from an agreement and not from a recommendation.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.