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Chairman: Mr. Omar Abdel Hamid ADEEL
(Sudan).

AGENDA ITEM 77

The urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (A/5141 and Add.1, A/C.1/873, A/C.1/874, A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2, A/C.1/L.311) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. RIFAI (Syria) said that nuclear tests had been a matter of profound concern to the whole of mankind for several years, not merely because of their relation to disarmament in general but also because of their effects on the health of present and future generations; even if total destruction was avoided, a point would ultimately be reached where continued contamination made life on earth impossible. The harmful effects of radio-active fall-out had been established mainly by scientists who were citizens of the nuclear Powers, and yet it was those Powers which, by their policies, were creating the danger. As the Norwegian representative had said (1254th meeting), no Government had the moral right to poison the air and food necessary to support life.

2. Syria condemned nuclear testing, as it had in the past, without distinguishing between different environments. It considered that the most effective way to end the hazard to health would be to stop all tests, for as the representatives of Burma, Ceylon and Iraq had shown, a partial ban would at best be temporary and would not do much to reduce international tension or bring about general and complete disarmament. In view of the progress made at the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament at Geneva, a comprehensive agreement should not be difficult to achieve; the gap between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union had been considerably narrowed, and the differences that remained were of such minor importance that they could no longer justify the existing stalemate.

3. Since there was agreement concerning tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, the only remaining problem was the identification of underground tests. The Western Powers insisted that on-site inspection was necessary to identify earth tremors

whose nature could not be determined with the instruments at present available. The Soviet Union claimed that there were instruments capable of identifying such events; nevertheless, it had not completely rejected the idea of compulsory inspections, but had indicated that it was prepared to agree to inspections by invitation if they were considered necessary by the international commission provided for in the joint memorandum submitted by the eight non-aligned countries at Geneva on 16 April 1962.^{1/} There was thus no serious obstacle to an agreement banning all nuclear tests. The eight-nation memorandum offered the best basis for further negotiations, if not for a final agreement. Both sides had accepted it as such, though they disagreed on the interpretation to be given to it. However, since they had both expressed their confidence in the sincerity and objectivity of the eight non-nuclear nations, it was not too much to expect them to accept the interpretation of the eight nations with regard to the one obstacle that remained.

4. Although no solution to the problem of nuclear tests was possible without the agreement of the nuclear Powers, the United Nations must spare no effort to bring about such agreement. With that idea in mind, his delegation had joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2, which asked for all tests to be ended by 1 January 1963 at the latest and endorsed the eight-nation memorandum as a basis for negotiation. The nuclear Powers could not go on subjecting the human race to terror merely because they did not trust each other. The suspicions harboured on both sides were excessive. There were no grounds for Soviet fears of espionage, inasmuch as the memorandum called for only a small number of on-site inspections, to be carried out by an international commission of neutral countries. The West, on the other hand, was too rigid on its insistence on control. The two sides must discard their exaggerated suspicions of each other and consider instead their responsibility to the peoples of the world.

5. Mr. GARCIA INCHAUSTEGUI (Cuba) said that his delegation was in favour of the suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests by all States in all environments as quickly as possible. An agreement to that effect would remove the danger to health created by radio-active fall-out and would help to relax international tension. As a peace-loving State currently suffering aggression by a neighbouring nuclear Power, Cuba was particularly anxious for such a relaxation.

6. The Western Powers declared that they would agree to a ban on tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water without control and inspection; but they insisted on verification of underground tests. The Soviet Union was prepared to ban tests in all environments without inspection; confronted with the

^{1/} Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January 1961 to December 1962, document DC/203, annex 1, sect. J.

Western position, it had expressed willingness to sign a treaty banning tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space and to continue negotiating for the prohibition of underground tests provided that such tests were not carried out during the negotiations. It would thus seem logical to adopt immediately an agreement banning tests in environments where there was no problem of control and inspection. It also seemed reasonable that underground tests should be suspended while negotiations concerning them were taking place. If they continued, any country specializing in such tests could gain an advantage, which would affect the balance of power and international confidence. But in point of fact the detection instruments which the nuclear Powers had at their disposal made inspection and control of underground tests unnecessary, and it was understandable that the Soviet Union should reject control procedures which might be used as a screen for espionage.

7. Although Cuba sympathized with the idea of denuclearized zones, it would prefer the whole earth to be denuclearized. Even if that could be achieved, however, there would remain the threat of other kinds of arms, which were used by the imperialists to impose their domination on peoples struggling for their independence. Accordingly, the elimination of foreign military bases was also essential, if there was to be lasting peace in the world.

8. The eight-nation memorandum of 16 April 1962 represented a serious effort to solve the problems facing the Committee, and Cuba, being keenly interested in the cessation of nuclear testing, believed that it should serve as a starting-point for negotiations.

9. Mr. JAKOBSEN (Denmark) said that the cessation of nuclear testing was imperative because, in addition to protecting mankind against the harmful effects of radio-activity, it would represent a first step towards disarmament and would prevent the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons.

10. The eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee had made a constructive contribution to the Geneva negotiations. If they were to be successful in their role as mediator, however, it was essential that there should be complete confidence in their lack of bias with respect to the nuclear Powers. It was not sufficient to express regret—as draft resolution A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2 did—over the failure to reach agreement on a test ban.

11. The Western Powers had gone a long way towards bridging the gap between the positions of the opposing blocs. The United States-United Kingdom draft resolution (A/C.1/L.311) accepted the memorandum of the eight non-aligned nations as a basis for negotiation. The Western Powers were prepared to ban immediately all tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space, insisting on arrangements for international verification in the case of underground testing only. They agreed that decisions concerning on-site inspection should rest with an international commission of scientists, and that there should be inspection for only one out of every five unidentified explosions. To reject that minimum of inspection would surely be carrying fear and suspicion too far. There was admittedly a risk, on the one hand, that some nuclear explosions would not be detected and, on the other hand, that inspection would lead to the disclosure of some State secrets. However, those were very small

risks in comparison with that of world destruction. Furthermore, if the Soviet Union was unwilling to take any risks at all, it could accept, pending agreement on a comprehensive test ban, the Western offer to ban tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space; they were the tests which represented a threat to human health.

12. He appealed to the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/L.310 and Add.1-2 to bring forward a more balanced text which would be acceptable to all the nuclear Powers. He also appealed to the Soviet Union not to cling to fears which, although they might have historical justification, were today exaggerated.

13. Mr. RAFAEL (Israel) said that although the three resolutions adopted at the previous session by the General Assembly (resolutions 1632 (XVI), 1648 (XVI), and 1649 (XVI)) had not halted nuclear testing, progress had been made towards agreement on a test ban. It was clear that such agreement would not come about as a result of exhortations and appeals, but only when the nuclear Powers became convinced that a test ban would be faithfully adhered to and that there was no advantage to be derived from continued testing. It was therefore the duty of the Committee not to engage in a race of competing resolutions, but to help to enlarge the common ground between the three nuclear Powers.

14. Previous speakers had made a number of valuable suggestions on the outstanding issue—underground tests. Those suggestions could be roughly grouped in two categories: those dealing with the question of time limits and methods of negotiation, and those dealing with the technical means of detecting and identifying underground nuclear explosions. The scientists and technicians whose skill and ingenuity had brought nuclear weapons into existence should be capable of devising means of detecting violations of a ban on underground testing. He recalled in that connexion the United Kingdom representative's statement (1250th meeting), that many seismic events could now be identified by national detection systems, and that once all such events could be identified without the necessity of on-site inspection, the present problem would no longer exist. His delegation would suggest that the negotiating Powers should consider the possibility of concluding a transitional agreement on on-site inspection pending the development of automatic detection and identification instruments.

15. The adoption of either or both of the two draft resolutions now before the Committee would be more likely to solidify the existing area of disagreement than to promote agreement. His delegation would prefer the debate to be concluded by a unanimous expression of the Committee's views on the wide range of issues on which there was agreement, accompanied by an urgent appeal to the negotiating Powers to take speedy action on the remaining problems in the light of the various proposals made in the First Committee. He noted in that connexion that both the Eighteen-Nation Committee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space required a unanimous vote for all decisions.

16. Mr. DAAR (Somalia) said that the Powers responsible for the spread of radio-active fall-out sought to justify their actions on the ground of national defence. However, measures taken in defence of national interests became offensive when they began to threaten the lives and property of other nations.

17. In view of the profound distrust existing between the two nuclear blocs, careful consideration should be given to all practical suggestions which might lessen that distrust and improve the prospects of negotiation. While a complete and immediate nuclear test ban was highly desirable, suggestions should not be rejected outright simply because they did not go far enough to meet all demands. A partial test ban, even if it was only a palliative, would afford a temporary respite pending preparations for a more extensive and permanent agreement.

18. The eight-nation memorandum of 16 April 1962 should prove invaluable in bridging the gap between the positions of the Soviet and Western blocs. It was most gratifying that representatives of both sides, speaking in the First Committee, had said they accepted the memorandum as a basis for negotiations.

19. His delegation felt, first, that the nuclear Powers should agree to negotiate for the immediate suspension of all nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapon tests, pending the conclusion of the necessary internationally binding agreements on the cessation of such tests; secondly, that more energetic and sincere efforts should be made to negotiate an international treaty binding the nuclear Powers to outlaw and prohibit the use of nuclear weapons as weapons of war, and to secure the destruction, under international supervision, of existing stocks of nuclear weapons; and thirdly, that the pressure of world opinion should be exerted on France and on other Powers which were on the brink of becoming nuclear Powers to desist

from further experiments in the field of nuclear armaments.

20. The eight-nation memorandum was most realistic in its approach to the problem of international verification. With an efficient network of well-equipped and well-manned observation posts throughout the world, it should be possible to detect and identify the majority of man-made explosions. All parties to a test ban treaty should accept the obligation to furnish an international commission with the facts necessary to establish the nature of any suspicious explosion. He was confident that the nuclear Powers, given an international agreement on the matter, would not refuse to extend an invitation to a United Nations body wishing to inspect any suspicious explosions occurring on their territories.

Organization of work

21. Mr. PAZHWAK (Afghanistan) said that the practice of scheduling meetings of the First Committee at the same time as plenary meetings of the General Assembly had caused considerable difficulty to many delegations. Accordingly, his delegation, after having consulted others, wished to request the Chairman to take whatever steps he considered appropriate to bring the matter to the attention of those concerned and seek some way of solving the problem.

The meeting rose at 12.5 p.m.