

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

Thursday, 9 October 1958,
at 4 p.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
Order of discussion of agenda items (continued) . . .	9

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

Order of discussion of agenda items (A/C.1/806)
(continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, as the Committee had requested, he had endeavoured to find a compromise solution on the order in which the items on the Committee's agenda should be discussed. He had suggested two alternatives to the representatives of the countries principally concerned. The first was to hold a general debate simultaneously on the question of disarmament, the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests and the reduction of the military budgets of the great Powers and then, on completion of the general debate, to decide how the draft resolutions would be considered and put to the vote; they could be dealt with, for example, in small groups. The second alternative was to hold a general debate following the same procedure, and then to consider the draft resolutions in groups, provided that it was agreed that the order of discussion would be as follows: discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, reduction of military budgets, and the question of disarmament.

2. Those two solutions were based in part on the proposals of the Soviet Union and the United States. However, as he had not succeeded in reconciling the conflicting views of the delegations concerned, the Committee must resume discussion of the matter.

3. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) thought that the United States and Soviet Union delegations should first put forward their views, after which the Committee could pass to the general debate.

4. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he was prepared to accept, in a spirit of compromise, the second solution proposed by the Chairman, but emphasized that it represented the minimum acceptable to his Government. He called upon the United States representative to accede to the proposal also. The first solution could not be accepted by the Soviet Union since it left unresolved the main issue of when and in what order decisions on the various items, especially the question of the discontinuance of nuclear test explosions, were to be taken. Draft resolutions on that item had already been tabled and it was desirable to consider them as soon as possible.

5. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) declared that there was absolutely no foundation for claiming that the United States wished to have a new item placed on the agenda, to reword existing items or to ask for a meeting of the General Committee.

6. If the United States proposal were adopted the First Committee's agenda would read as follows:

"1. Question of disarmament.

"2. The discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests.

"3. 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."

7. The three items could be considered together or separately, as representatives thought fit. As it was obvious that they were interrelated and dealt with different aspects of disarmament, his delegation thought that the most efficient way to deal with them was the one he had proposed, which would not prejudge in any way the Committee's eventual decisions.

8. Regarding the order in which the draft resolutions ought to be examined, he felt that a decision could only be taken when the general debate was over, since it was impossible to know beforehand what draft resolutions would be submitted. Moreover, there was no question of preventing a representative from submitting a draft resolution on several agenda items. His delegation did not think that the question of the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests should be singled out and put first, since the tests were only part of the problem and not the most dangerous aspect of it. Furthermore, he did not consider that a proposal to put the item on the discontinuance of tests first could be called a procedural motion.

9. For all those reasons the United States delegation was in favour of the Chairman's first compromise proposal.

10. Mr. NOBLE (United Kingdom) suggested that the Chairman's two proposals should be put to the vote without delay. His delegation would vote in favour of the first of the proposals.

11. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) thought that, because of the turn taken by the debate, the matter under consideration could no longer be regarded as merely a procedural matter.

12. There now appeared to be agreement that the three items concerning disarmament allocated to the First Committee and appearing as items 4, 7 and 8 of its agenda should be considered simultaneously. Though not entirely agreeing with the interpretation of the representative of the United States, he supported a solution of that nature, but pointed out that, by adopting it, the Committee would destroy the whole order of priority of the items. Moreover, it would not be possible to submit draft resolutions until after the general debate, and the question of priorities would

emerge again. The matter must therefore be considered in detail.

13. First of all, the General Committee had decided to submit three specific items dealing with particular aspects of disarmament; as a result it could not be argued that the disarmament question covered everything and that the question of the discontinuance of nuclear test explosions was merely one element of an omnibus resolution on disarmament. Furthermore, it could not be denied that the question of nuclear weapons tests was a matter of concern to the majority of the peoples of the world and that they were in favour of the discontinuance of those tests. That question was on the agenda for the conference scheduled to meet at Geneva on 31 October 1958, and it was essential that the United Nations should take a firm decision in favour of discontinuance of the tests.

14. If the general debate was to deal with only one question or—which amounted to the same thing—with several questions considered simultaneously, the draft resolutions would have to be taken up in the order in which they had been submitted. It was not possible to establish an order of priority among draft resolutions which related to different agenda items. After the general debate, it would therefore be necessary to co-ordinate the draft resolutions, while giving priority to the question of the discontinuance of tests. The order of priority ought to be determined by political and other considerations, taking into account the degree of interest attaching to the various draft resolutions, the Geneva conference, and the fact that the drafts which had been submitted first should be considered before those submitted later. In that connexion, he hoped that the delegations would invoke the rules of procedure to request priority for the draft resolutions in the latter category in exceptional circumstances only.

15. With regard to the conference which would meet at Geneva on 31 October, he felt that the question of the discontinuance of tests did not merely concern a few great Powers which possessed the hydrogen bomb, but the people of all other countries as well. Whatever the results of the Geneva conference might be, the General Assembly would therefore have to consider the question again at its thirteenth session. The longer the delay in settling it, the greater would be the number of countries possessing the hydrogen bomb and the more difficult it would be to reach an international agreement on the matter.

16. Finally, he drew attention to the fact that the disarmament question was once more on the Committee's agenda. The decision taken at the twelfth session of the General Assembly to reconstitute the Disarmament Commission (resolution 1150 (XII)) had not proved fruitful. The question therefore required further consideration by the United Nations, inasmuch as it concerned all Member States.

17. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) moved that the Committee should decide that the general debate would deal simultaneously with items 4, 7 and 8 of its agenda and that the decision on the order of priority of draft resolutions should be taken on their merits following the general debate.

18. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) thought that, if the United States motion was put to the vote, it should be voted upon in two parts.

19. The CHAIRMAN observed that the United States motion was a slightly modified version of one of the proposals which he had made himself. He would take both it and the Indian representative's suggestion into account when the Committee proceeded to the vote.

20. Mr. ENCKELL (Finland) pointed out that one of the two draft resolutions relating to the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests (A/C.1/L.202, A/C.1/L.203) provided, *inter alia*, for certain recommendations to the representatives of the "nuclear Powers" which were to meet at Geneva on 31 October 1958 and which bore the primary responsibility for achieving a solution of that agonizing problem. The Committee should therefore come to a decision on that draft before the Geneva conference opened in three weeks' time. Accordingly, arrangements should be made to consider the question and take a vote before 31 October. He hoped that the Committee would take a decision to that effect without the need for a vote on the procedural question, which would scarcely help to reconcile the opposing points of view.

21. He pointed out that he had merely drawn attention to some practical considerations and had, for the time being, deliberately refrained from taking a position on the relationship between the discontinuance of tests and the general problem of disarmament.

22. Mr. BELAUNDE (Peru) was glad to find that the members of Committee were in agreement on holding a general debate on all three items, which constituted distinct aspects of the disarmament problem, simultaneously. The question of the order of priority of the draft resolutions could not be settled satisfactorily at the present stage and it would be wiser to open the general debate without further delay. On the basis of a gentleman's agreement, members of the Committee could take up the question of the draft resolutions on the conclusion of the general debate. It should be borne in mind that by that time the prevailing atmosphere, which was not at present conducive to the adoption of a satisfactory draft resolution, might have changed; moreover, the general debate would reveal the relative importance and urgency of the various questions. Moreover, the Committee would not be able to classify the draft resolutions until they had been submitted. The best course would, therefore, be to postpone a decision on the question of the draft resolutions until the end of the general debate.

23. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) stated that if it was decided to adopt the proposal of the United States, which was trying to involve the Committee in a debate on the whole question of disarmament just when a partial solution appeared to be possible, the results could only disappoint the peoples of the world. It was easier to discuss the specific questions. Moreover, the groundwork had been prepared for the specific solutions required: the question of the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests had already been thoroughly studied. The United States representative's argument, that time would be saved by considering the three items together, was a pretext designed to hamper the adoption of partial measures and to prevent the General Assembly from adopting a resolution urging all States engaged in nuclear arms testing to put an end to such experiments.

24. His delegation was prepared to support the procedure proposed by Panama at the previous meeting;

namely, a combined general debate, followed by consideration of and voting on various draft resolutions on each item in turn, beginning with the question of the discontinuance of test explosions.

25. Mr. LEWANDOWSKI (Poland) felt that in view of the urgency of the problem of the discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests it would be dangerous to prolong the procedural discussion. He had therefore welcomed the suggestion of the representative of Afghanistan at the 943rd meeting. That suggestion had resulted in the submission of two compromise solutions by the Chairman. The first was, in effect, a repetition of the United States proposal, and the Polish delegation could not support it. The second represented a compromise acceptable to those delegations which were opposed to giving consideration of the discontinuance of tests of nuclear weapons priority over the general debate. If the Committee adopted that solution, it should decide at once the order in which it would examine the draft resolutions, so as to avoid another procedural discussion when the draft resolutions were taken up. He regretted the loss of time in procedural discussions. Those who were to take part in the conference at Geneva at the end of October should know the position of the United Nations from the very beginning of the conference. Since the only draft resolutions submitted so far dealt with the discontinuance of test explosions, the Committee might decide to begin with that question. Moreover, that was the question on which views of the great Powers were closest.

26. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) said that with respect to that question his Government desired nothing better than to see progress. The Geneva conference was the first sign of progress towards the discontinuance of test explosions. It was the indispensable first step. The United States delegation hoped to introduce a draft resolution very soon which would show the importance it attached to that conference.

27. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered the United States representative's remarks one more reason for deciding forthwith that the draft resolutions on the question of the discontinuance of nuclear weapons tests should be considered first. The Soviet delegation would only accept a general debate on all three items of the Committee's agenda if it was assured that the draft resolutions on the discontinuance of tests would be dealt with first.

28. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) hoped that the United States representative would view favourably the idea of taking up first the draft resolutions on the discontinuance of tests of nuclear weapons. The General Assembly would do well to adopt a resolution which would encourage the participants in the Geneva conference.

29. The Indian delegation proposed that the Committee should begin with a general debate on the three items of its agenda followed by separate consideration of the draft resolutions in the order in which they had been submitted.

30. The CHAIRMAN summed up the situation and said that he would have to put the United States motion to the vote first.

31. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that an examination of the development of the procedural discussion would show that his delegation had done all it could to promote a compromise solution. It was regrettable that one delegation had never modified its position and had rejected any compromise.

32. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) said that he was as interested as any other representative in reaching a compromise. He always tried to meet the views of others, as all who had worked with him would attest. He noted that he had inserted into his motion the words "on their merits" suggested by the representative of India.

33. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) reiterated what he had said about the priority to be given to draft resolutions: it should be based on several considerations, one of which was the merits, political and otherwise, of the draft in question. Unless everything he had said was taken into account, his proposal would amount to a mere request for postponement and that was not what he had intended.

34. Mr. ILLUECA (Panama), in reply to a request by Mr. DE LEQUERICA (Spain) for clarification of his proposal, explained that first items 4, 7 and 8 of the Committee's agenda would be discussed simultaneously and then any draft resolutions before the Committee would be grouped under the separate items. Because his delegation wished to facilitate the adoption of constructive measures, its great concern was to ensure that all delegations were absolutely free to present draft resolutions and that their proposals were given all due consideration by the Committee.

35. The CHAIRMAN, after having explained the order in which he intended to put to the vote the various proposals, requested the Committee to vote on the United States representative's proposal worded as follows:

"The Committee decides that there shall be general debate on items 4, 7 and 8 of its agenda together, with the decision on the priority of all draft resolutions to be taken on their merits after the general debate is over."

A vote was taken by roll-call.

Honduras, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Honduras, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Federation of Malaya, France, Greece, Guatemala.

Against: Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia.

Abstaining: India, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Republic, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana.

The proposal was adopted by 50 votes to 9, with 19 abstentions. 1/

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

1/ See 945th meeting, para. 2.