

United Nations GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWENTIETH SESSION

Official Records



FIRST COMMITTEE, 1377th
MEETING

Friday, 19 November 1965,
at 10.50 a.m.

NEW YORK

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Chairman: Mr. Károly CSATORDAY (Hungary).

AGENDA ITEM 95

Question of convening a world disarmament conference
(*continued*) (A/5992, A/C.1/L.340 and Add.1-2)

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. EL-KONY (United Arab Republic) said that the Committee's debates on the preceding item—(Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons) had been unique in the annals of the United Nations in that the small countries had joined the great Powers in demonstrating a genuine concern with disarmament problems and had done everything in their power to ensure that real and concrete results at last emerged from the endless negotiations on disarmament. The big and small Powers alike had finally realized that recent scientific and technical developments had brought the world to a point of no return, and that the problem of disarmament was not the exclusive concern of two or five great Powers. Hence, it was essential to convene as soon as possible a world disarmament conference attended by representatives of all countries, including those which had been excluded from previous negotiations on disarmament. Without universal participation, no international agreement on disarmament—however comprehensive it might be—would have any value whatsoever. Even the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, despite all its merits, had contained a serious loop-hole in that two nuclear Powers had not acceded to it. The problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons could not truly be solved unless France and the People's Republic of China took part in the negotiations leading to an international treaty on the subject, and all other collateral measures would be equally meaningless if those two countries remained outside the negotiations.

2. He was not opposed to negotiations in the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament; indeed, they should be continued energetically. There was nothing contradictory in having disarmament problems studied by a small committee and at the same time convening a world disarmament conference, which might act as a stimulus to the

technicians in Geneva. He would therefore like to dispel the fears expressed by certain representatives that the proposed world conference would be a substitute for the Eighteen-Nation Committee. No suggestion to that effect had ever been made at the Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cairo in October 1964. Owing to its very nature, its scope and the level at which it would be conducted, a world disarmament conference could not perform the functions which had been entrusted to the Eighteen-Nation Committee; however, it could provide the Committee with general guidelines which would reflect the opinions of all nations and might thus help to make the Geneva negotiations more realistic.

3. Draft resolution A/C.1/L.340 and Add.1-2, which his delegation had joined in sponsoring, should not give rise to any difficulties. It was not appropriate at the present stage to discuss the financial implications, or administrative aspects, of convening the conference; the essential thing was to agree on the basic issues. Those were, first, that a world disarmament conference should be convened; secondly, that it should be attended by representatives of all countries, whether or not they were Members of the United Nations; thirdly, that a preparatory committee should be established by consultations undertaken through diplomatic channels; and, fourthly, that the composition of the preparatory committee should reflect the realities of the existing world situation.

4. If the First Committee could agree at once on those basic issues and adopt the draft resolution by an overwhelming majority, instead of wasting time in an endless discussion of minor details, it would give the world convincing proof that it was looking for real avenues to a solution of the disarmament problem and would be fulfilling the hopes expressed by the Heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries in their Declaration of October 1964.

5. Sir Harold BEELEY (United Kingdom) recalled that, at the last series of meetings of the Disarmament Commission, his delegation had expressed some misgivings about the difficult problems which would have to be solved in preparing for a world disarmament conference but had declared its sympathy with the aims of the Commission's resolution of 11 June 1965,^{1/} for which it had voted.

6. His delegation's views on the subject of a world disarmament conference were unchanged, and he therefore wished to confine his remarks at the present meeting to one aspect of the problem only. At the

^{1/} Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January to December 1965, document DC/224.

Committee's 1374th meeting, the Nigerian representative, as one of the sponsors of the draft resolution before the Committee, had pointed out that while the United Nations under its Charter had primary responsibility in matters connected with peace, security and disarmament, any attempt to link the proposed world disarmament conference too closely with the United Nations might well have results other than those desired. The United Kingdom delegation regarded the present draft resolution as an attempt to resolve that dilemma. It understood the considerations which had prompted the sponsors to draft the operative paragraphs in their present form, it appreciated the important assertion contained in the first preambular paragraph, it was in general satisfied that the balance to which the Nigerian representative had referred had been successfully achieved, and it would vote for the draft resolution.

7. However, in view of certain remarks which had been made in the course of the debate, he wished to clarify the United Kingdom's position on the relationship between the projected world disarmament conference and the United Nations. In his delegation's view, the proposed conference would be a device for achieving one important objective, namely, the participation in disarmament negotiations of States which were not Members of the United Nations, particularly those which were major military powers. The participation of those States would provide a world conference with opportunities which were not available to the bodies in which disarmament negotiations were at present being conducted—the United Nations itself and the Eighteen-Nation Committee. That was, indeed, a valid reason for convening a world disarmament conference, but it was the only reason for doing so. His delegation did not regard the draft resolution as in any way implying a rejection of the existing machinery for disarmament negotiations or of the principles underlying the negotiations. The agreement embodying those principles, which had been unanimously endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 1722 (XVI), was one of the most positive and precious elements in the existing situation. As the Italian representative had said at the 1375th meeting, the principles endorsed by the United Nations could not be imposed on States which were not Members of the Organization, but he was certain that all Member States participating in a world conference would be guided by them.

8. In short, the proposed conference was an exceptional measure to deal with a specific difficulty. As such it might have some positive value, but it should not be regarded as a substitute for, or a rival to, the existing machinery for seeking progress in disarmament. Indeed, it would be a tragedy if the work of the General Assembly or the Eighteen-Nation Committee were to be slowed down, interrupted or in any way adversely affected by the attempt to establish an additional and complementary forum of discussion. If progress was made at a world conference, the Eighteen-Nation Committee and the General Assembly would gratefully welcome and endorse it. If the conference failed to achieve progress, there should be no relaxation whatsoever in the efforts already being made in New York and Geneva.

9. Mr. SHALLOUF (Libya) said that, by deciding to convene a world disarmament conference, the United Nations would be fulfilling the obligations laid upon it in Article 1 of the Charter to maintain international peace and security and to take effective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace.

10. His country had suffered from the consequences of two world wars, which had greatly impeded its economic development; all the developing countries, which were trying to match the tremendous scientific and cultural attainments and economic progress achieved by the developed countries during the past twenty years, still lived in fear of war—especially nuclear war, which might mean the total destruction of mankind.

11. The internal and external policies of Libya—which was a member of the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States as well as of the United Nations—were based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and his Government fully supported the Organization's activities. It believed in Afro-Asian solidarity, which was aimed at consolidating peace and stability in the world, and it attached great importance to the efforts of the non-aligned countries to reduce international tension and promote co-operation between peoples and regions.

12. In the light of those principles, his delegation, which was a sponsor of the draft resolution now before the Committee, would favourably consider any amendments which would serve to strengthen the resolution and not reduce its effectiveness. He thought that the consultations referred to in operative paragraph 2 should be entrusted to the Eighteen-Nation Committee, with the participation of other countries wishing to be represented on the preparatory committee, and that permanent machinery should be set up to deal with all aspects of the disarmament problem until general and complete disarmament under effective control had been achieved. All efforts to reach agreement on disarmament should be made within the framework of the United Nations and in conformity with its principles, since the adoption of important measures outside the United Nations would tend to defeat the Organization's purposes.

13. Mr. KISELEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the arms race, for whose continuance the Western Powers were responsible, ran directly counter to the genuine needs of mankind. The NATO countries had spent \$900,000 million for military purposes during the past fifteen years, and many other countries had assumed the unbearable burden of arms expenditure, which now amounted to \$500 million daily. Mankind would suffer dire consequences unless it effectively curbed the forces preparing for a new war.

14. In June 1965, the Disarmament Commission had adopted by 89 votes to none a resolution recommending that the General Assembly should give urgent consideration at its twentieth session to the proposal of the Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries for the convening of a world disarmament conference to which all countries would be invited. At the current session of the General Assembly, his delegation had supported the Soviet

Union's proposal that such a conference should be convened in mid-1966. The world was suffering from a disease called tension, caused by the arms race which the imperialist forces were promoting and by their periodic acts of aggression; the proposed conference could cure that disease by finding a way to general and complete disarmament.

15. At present, France's seat in the Eighteen-Nation Committee was empty, while a second nuclear Power, the People's Republic of China, was not represented at all on that Committee and was thus unable to make any contribution to its work. At a world disarmament conference, however, that obstacle to a constructive approach to the disarmament question would not exist; all five nuclear Powers could meet at the conference table to discuss, on an equal footing, questions relating to international peace and security.

16. Everyone but fools and reactionaries realized today that disarmament was a matter of concern to all States without exception. One of the tasks of the world disarmament conference would therefore be to clarify fully the positions of all States on the question of general and complete disarmament, since the United Nations had unfortunately not yet become a truly universal body reflecting the world as it was today. Regardless of whether or not certain people accepted the policy or even the existence of any particular State, the participation of all States in the world disarmament conference was necessary and desirable; anyone who refused to accept that fact showed that he opposed disarmament and was an enemy of international peace and security.

17. The representative of Canada, supported by a number of other Western representatives, had said that the convening of a world disarmament conference would involve difficulties with regard to its form, date, place, financing, agenda and procedure. If those who expressed such fears would recognize by deeds, rather than words, the urgency of a disarmament conference and the need for the participation of every State, the supposed difficulties could soon be overcome. The real trouble, however, was that the Western Powers did not really want a disarmament conference and were trying to prevent it by imposing unacceptable conditions. It was in that spirit that the United States representative had cast doubt upon the desirability of a conference, suggesting that it might interfere with the discussion of urgent disarmament questions and advising the Committee to consider first what the chances were for the success of a conference. His delegation was disappointed at the attitude of a number of Western Powers which had stated that they favoured a world disarmament conference "in principle" but had in practice proposed so many pre-conditions as to suggest that they wanted to prevent the conference or to postpone it indefinitely.

18. The Byelorussian SSR maintained that the imposition of any pre-conditions for the holding of a world disarmament conference was unacceptable in principle, since its prospective participants were sovereign States which had equal rights and could not be dictated to. Every nation on earth was concerned with disarmament and the problems related to it, and the effectiveness of disarmament talks could be ensured

not by the imposition of dubious formulas but by the willingness of States to reach agreement.

19. The attitude of most States had been expressed by the Secretary-General, who had said at the 1355th meeting that all Powers should participate in the world disarmament conference and that the idea of a world conference was not incompatible with the Geneva negotiations. His delegation believed that, in order to avoid additional difficulties, the conference should be held outside the framework of the United Nations and should not be associated with it or under its auspices. Relinquishing the Organization's position of primacy in the present case would create the most favourable conditions for an exchange of views among Member and non-member States on a basis of equality and leave the way open for initiatives from any source.

20. General and complete disarmament depended on the agreement not only of the great Powers but of all countries, for increasing economic, scientific and technical development made it possible for many countries to manufacture weapons which could endanger international security. The world disarmament conference proposed by the non-aligned countries and supported by the socialist countries therefore had every prospect of making a new and important contribution to the cause of disarmament and of fulfilling the hopes of millions throughout the world.

21. Mr. KHATRI (Nepal) said that his country had joined in sponsoring the draft resolution that had been adopted by the Disarmament Commission on 11 June 1965, because it had firmly believed that most Members of the United Nations wished to find a new forum in which all countries, both Members and non-members, could exchange views on the vital problem of disarmament. In particular, Nepal believed that the People's Republic of China should participate in the world disarmament conference, not only because it was excluded from all existing disarmament forums but also because it was a nuclear Power. He was gratified to note that even those countries which had voted against the admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations had supported the Disarmament Commission resolution, thereby tacitly recognizing the necessity and desirability of bringing the People's Republic of China into disarmament negotiations. The People's Republic of China had, in 1963 and again in 1964, proposed the convening of a conference along the lines of the one now under discussion. He also hoped that France would accede to the majority's wish that the composition of the world disarmament conference should be universal.

22. The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, while certainly useful, had not lived up to the world's expectations; France had refrained from participating, and the major Powers represented in the Committee had demonstrated an utter lack of the spirit of compromise which was essential for any agreement on disarmament and arms control. The pressure of world opinion at a world disarmament conference might shake the major Powers out of their entrenched positions.

23. He suggested that the preparatory committee for the conference should be composed of about twenty of the non-aligned countries that had participated

in the Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries. The agenda of the conference might include: first, a review of disarmament negotiations held thus far in the United Nations, in the Eighteen-Nation Committee and elsewhere; secondly, collateral measures on which agreement was near, especially an agreement on non-proliferation, a comprehensive test ban treaty, the creation of nuclear-free zones, the peaceful uses of outer space, and undertakings by the nuclear Powers not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Other subjects that could usefully be considered were the question of allocating for the advancement of the developing countries the resources released through a reduction in military spending, the proposal for a non-aggression pact between the States members of NATO and the States members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and a verified freeze of the manufacture of strategic offensive missiles, together with a reduction of existing stockpiles.

24. He suggested that the conference should be held in Paris by the middle of 1966.

25. Mr. Amjad ALI (Pakistan) said that the great hopes placed in the United Nations had unfortunately not been borne out. Instead of slowing down, the arms race had gathered momentum, with the most alarming increase in nuclear arsenals. The danger of accidental war continued to grow, and defence spending was placing a heavy burden on national economies. Yet, war had become meaningless as a method of solving political problems, for it threatened the very existence of mankind. Science and engineering had abolished the barriers of time and space, and all nations were part of a world-wide society of States. Hence, the problem of disarmament could not be approached in piecemeal fashion; a realistic approach had to be universal.

26. One of the major reasons why only limited progress had been made was the restricted character of the Eighteen-Nation Committee. That Committee represented an Organization which excluded the representatives of almost one-third of mankind, including a nuclear Power—the People's Republic of China. It was also regrettable that one of the other four nuclear Powers, France, had not participated in the discussions of the Eighteen-Nation Committee. The Committee had not been able to take into consideration the views of many States which were responsible for the defence of large populations and areas. That was an important shortcoming in view of the real danger of the spread of local conflicts. It was unrealistic and dangerous to think that disarmament concerned only the big Powers.

27. For those reasons, his delegation welcomed the draft resolution that had been submitted, which should permit the convening of a truly universal disarmament conference. If the conference was to be successful, it was essential to ensure the participation of the People's Republic of China and other States outside the United Nations, such as Indonesia. The proposed "widely representative preparatory committee" should include nations with different ideologies and from different regions; nations which were responsible for the defence of large populations should also be consulted. If the work of the preparatory committee was to be successful, the initial consultations should be held on the widest possible basis. Pakistan was not opposed

to the idea of the committee having a limited membership, but, whatever its membership, it should be fully representative. Although his delegation would have welcomed the convening of a disarmament conference not later than 1966, it appreciated the practical difficulties involved and therefore endorsed the suggestion that the conference should be held not later than 1967; however, the preparatory committee should make every effort to hold it earlier, if possible.

28. A world conference would provide a forum for the discussion of all points of view and for discussions among Powers which were more important in terms of conventional armaments. Moreover, the small nations of the world were bound to play a constructive role. Those factors would create favourable conditions for an exchange of views on the political and economic as well as the military aspects of disarmament. The preparatory committee might consider the possibility of establishing an economic committee as one of the conference's main committees.

29. The preparatory committee would have to make suggestions regarding the financing of the conference, but that should not be an insurmountable problem. In his delegation's view, the conference could be financed on the same basis as the regular United Nations budget.

30. Mr. VERGIN (Turkey) noted that his country had voted in favour of the Disarmament Commission resolution of 11 June 1965, which had recommended that the General Assembly should consider the convening of a world disarmament conference. It would therefore co-operate to that end and welcomed any constructive proposals on the subject. Experience had shown, however, that international meetings held within a very broad framework without a specific agenda produced interminable, unconstructive discussion. A world disarmament conference should therefore be prepared with scrupulous care from both a practical and a political standpoint. Its agenda should be limited to disarmament and collateral measures and should not be of such a nature as to obstruct or duplicate the work of the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

31. Although it would support draft resolution A/C.1/L.340 and Add.1-2, his delegation still thought that the most appropriate forum for the study of disarmament problems was the Eighteen-Nation Committee. A limited and specialized body of that kind was better suited to discussion of the complex problem of disarmament than a world conference where deliberations on the substance of the matter might easily degenerate into tendentious political statements or pure propaganda. A world conference should be restricted to work by experts and technicians. Furthermore, it should be held under the auspices of the United Nations. Any other procedure would mean repudiating what had already been accomplished by the Organization in the disarmament field.

32. His delegation shared the apprehensions expressed about the vague term "all countries" which appeared in the draft resolution. In that connexion, he endorsed the statement made at the 1374th meeting by the Netherlands representative. It was generally agreed that no tangible results could be achieved without the presence and positive participation of the

People's Republic of China; Turkey did not wish to limit the universality of the conference or set any prior conditions. It thought, however, that in order to forestall confusion and differences of interpretation, it would be clearer to refer to "all countries recognized by at least one-third of the Members of the United Nations" or "countries belonging to specialized agencies of the United Nations", or to use a formula covering both concepts.

33. Mr. SADI (Jordan) said that the adoption by the Disarmament Commission, by an overwhelming majority, of its resolution of 11 June 1965, of which Jordan had been a sponsor, had strengthened his country's conviction that a world disarmament conference was needed. Jordan had also sponsored the draft resolution before the First Committee. It assumed that the countries which had supported the Disarmament Commission resolution would also support the draft resolution. All that remained was to determine the arrangements and procedures for implementing the decision to convene a world disarmament conference. The preparatory committee envisaged in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution would be able to accomplish that task.

34. His delegation's support of the principle of a world conference was motivated by five main factors. Firstly, the progress made by the Eighteen-Nation Committee was not satisfactory. Secondly, disarmament, or at least nuclear disarmament, was no longer the concern of the nuclear Powers alone but of all peoples. Thirdly, disarmament required fresh and positive initiatives which the Eighteen-Nation Committee had failed to provide and which would be possible only if world pressure was brought directly to bear on the discussions. Fourthly, a nuclear Power which was not a Member of the United Nations should be given the opportunity to contribute to disarmament; there could be no meaningful discussions without universal participation. Lastly, France did not participate in the work of the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

35. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of Saudi Arabia had now submitted as formal amendments^{2/} to the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.340 and Add.1-2) the suggestions he had made at the 1374th meeting.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

^{2/} Subsequently distributed as document A/C.1/L.344.