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FIRST COMMITTEE

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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HEPBURN (Bahamas)

CONTENTS

DISARMAMENT ITEMS

AGENDA ITEMS 30 TO 45, 120 AND 121 (continued)

Statements were made by:

Mr. Petrovsky (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

Mr. Fisher (United States)

Mr. Naik (Pakistan)

Mr. Fein (Netherlands)

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7 November 1979

ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.00 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 30 to 45, 120 and 121 (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: In the course of our general debate on disarmament items, 105 delegations participated. As expected, there have been good and rich contributions to the debate and I believe that the time has come to translate those discussions into resolutions.

In accordance with its time-table and programme of work, the Committee will begin this afternoon consideration of and action upon draft resolutions. To date, nine draft resolutions have been submitted, of which those in documents A/C.1/34/L.1 and L.8 will be dealt with on 30 November. The Committee will have 29 meetings including this afternoon's meeting to deal with and conclude consideration of draft resolutions on disarmament items by 27 November.

Before I call on the first speaker inscribed on my list, I should like to invite members of the Committee to inscribe their names on the list of speakers now for the discussion of draft resolutions in order to enable us to utilize the time available and to avoid unnecessary cancellations due to the lack of speakers. Most importantly, I should like to appeal to delegations to provide a minimum of 12 copies of the texts of their statements which should be given to the conference officer in advance of delivery. This will enable the staff members concerned to render the best possible service to the Committee.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The delegation of the Soviet Union is today introducing draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.7, of which it is a co-sponsor together with the delegation of the United States, with regard to the conclusion of an international convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

As the Committee knows, the talks between the Soviet Union and the United States on the question of the prohibition of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction and, in that context, the prohibition of radiological weapons, led to a joint proposal being produced on the fundamental elements of such a convention. It was submitted to the Committee on Disarmament at its summer session this year. This proposal was designed to prevent the appearance of one form of weapon of mass destruction, namely, radiological weapons which, if it were to be created and used, would cause massive loss of human life and would have exceedingly dangerous consequences for mankind. We have in mind such varieties of this weapon as bombs, shells, explosive devices and so on, designed to spread the radioactive material contained in them by explosive means; special devices on equipment dispersing radioactive material by non-explosive means, for example, by dispersal in the form of liquid or solid particles; and also the actual radioactive material itself with which these technical devices are equipped.

There is every reason to believe that the magnitude of the effect produced by radiological weapons would be similar to that of the effect produced by radioactive materials resulting from nuclear explosions which cause radioactive contamination of the area concerned.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

The importance of preventing the appearance of this type of weapon of mass destruction is also connected with the fact that the speedy development of nuclear energy and technology in many countries of the world is creating objective conditions for the broad dissemination of radioactive materials and they, as we know, could be used in radiological weapons. Such use of radioactive materials could become technically accessible to quite a broad circle of States.

A convention on the prohibition of radiological weapons should become an important step towards the limitation of the arms race, thus sparing mankind the danger of the creation and use of a new type of weapon of mass destruction, through the prevention of the use of scientific and technological progress for destructive purposes.

We believe that the draft submitted to the Committee on Disarmament is a good basis for immediate work on and conclusion of an appropriate convention. Its early entry into force, we are firmly convinced, would serve the cause of strengthening international peace and security.

As the Committee knows, at the summer session of the Committee, discussion began of an agreed proposal on the prohibition of radiological weapons, submitted by the delegations of the USSR and the United States and, as we can see in the report of the Committee, it intended to continue consideration of that question at its next session.

The Soviet delegation believes that we must provide additional momentum for the talks on radiological weapons which are going on in the Committee on Disarmament and, in this context, the General Assembly could request the Committee on Disarmament to continue, as early as possible, its work on arriving at an agreement on the text of an appropriate convention, and to present a report on the results achieved for the consideration of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

This is precisely the purport of the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union and the United States.

Mr. FISHER (United States of America): Today, under agenda item 45: "General and Complete Disarmament", the United States, together with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, introduces draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.7 on the "Conclusion of an international convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of radiological weapons". Permit me to make some observations on this initiative.

On 12 August 1948, a Commission of the United Nations adopted a resolution defining weapons of mass destruction to include atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons - the subject of the draft resolution now introduced - lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb or the other weapons mentioned.

At that time, the amounts of highly radioactive materials in existence were small and confined only to a few facilities and a few countries. It was, however, recognized even then - in 1948 - that these materials could cause immense damage and massive destruction of human life. Today, the threat is far greater than in 1948 and the potential for developing and producing radiological weapons has spread, as more and more countries seek a solution to their energy needs through the technology of nuclear energy production. As a result, the material which could be used in radiological weapons is now found in many facilities throughout the world.

In view of the continuing accumulation of radioactive materials in the world, my Government in 1976 suggested before the United Nations General Assembly that consideration be given to concluding an international agreement prohibiting radiological weapons. In 1977, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to form a working group to study the question and, subsequently, initiated bilateral negotiations on a joint initiative. This past summer in Geneva, our two Governments concluded these negotiations and presented the joint initiative to the Committee on Disarmament for its consideration and for elaboration into a multilateral convention on the subject. The text of this initiative is contained in the report of the Committee on Disarmament to the General Assembly in documents CD/31 and CD/32.

(Mr. Fisher, United States)

The draft resolution which we are introducing welcomes the report of the Committee on Disarmament and, particularly, the stated intention of the Committee to continue consideration, at its next annual session, of proposals for a convention banning these weapons. It also requests the Committee on Disarmament to proceed with this task as soon as possible with a view to achieving - through negotiation, of course - agreement on the text of such a convention and to report the results of its work on this issue to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

In presenting the joint initiative to the Committee on Disarmament this summer, we enumerated some of the specific activities such a convention should prohibit: for example, dissemination of radioactive material from the spent fuel rods of a reactor over an area to make it impassable; for area denial; or, in a populated area, to kill, harm, or force evacuation of the population would be prohibited. The proposed convention would also prohibit the development, production, and stockpiling of devices specifically designed for such purposes. It seems important to make clear at this point, however, that no obligation undertaken by States in accordance with the proposed convention would be interpreted as covering the use of radioactive materials or any sources of radiation except such uses as the parties to the convention have undertaken not to engage in, pursuant to its provisions. For example, the convention would not apply to any of the myriad uses of radiation from radioactive decay for peaceful purposes, such as in medicine or scientific research.

Verification is an essential and long-recognized requirement of any effective arms control or disarmament measure. Arms control and disarmament agreements, if they are to succeed, must contain measures of verification adequate to the special nature of the weapons to be controlled in order to create the necessary confidence that the obligations of the agreement are being adhered to by all parties.

(Mr. Fisher, United States)

The United States is satisfied that the verification provisions incorporated in the United States-USSR joint initiative on radiological weapons meet this requirement in this particular instance.

While the threat of radiological weapons is fortunately still a potential threat, it is nevertheless a real threat. Agreement on a convention prohibiting such weapons would be a significant achievement. It would close a gap in the application of arms control measures to identified weapons of mass destruction and thus constitute one further step along the road to ensuring a more stable and secure international environment. The United States hopes, therefore, that the draft resolution calling for the negotiation of such a convention by the Committee on Disarmament will meet with the broadest support of this Committee and of the General Assembly.

Mr. NAIK (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan asked to be allowed to speak in order to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.2, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia.

The Final Document adopted at the tenth special session, of the General Assembly, devoted to disarmament, recognized that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world would contribute to the security of States in those regions and to the goals of disarmament. Pakistan is firmly of the view that the creation of such zones is at the present the most feasible way of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in various parts of the world.

My delegation has therefore welcomed the endeavour to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America, and we note with satisfaction that this is near realization. Pakistan has consistently endorsed the efforts to implement a declaration on the denuclearization of Africa. We also favour the proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

(Mr. Naik, Pakistan)

Pakistan had advanced a proposal for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of South Asia. Members are aware of the circumstances in which Pakistan submitted this proposal to the General Assembly in 1974. Pakistan is gratified that the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia has been endorsed in principle by the General Assembly since its twenty-ninth session, and that the Assembly has repeatedly urged the States of South Asia to continue their efforts towards the realization of this objective. In particular, we take special satisfaction from the fact that this concept enjoys the support of almost all the States of the region and of most of the nuclear-weapon States.

There is general agreement in South Asia on the importance of ensuring non-proliferation in that region. Successive Governments in India have categorically stated that India will not develop or acquire nuclear weapons. Pakistan, for its part, has also repeatedly declared that it would not develop nuclear weapons. We have given public and private assurances that our nuclear programme is entirely for peaceful purposes. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal are solemnly committed to non-proliferation. All the nuclear-weapon States are also in favour of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia. Some of the nuclear-weapon States have also declared their willingness to extend to the States that comprise a nuclear-weapon-free zone assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

These declarations and policies provide a solid foundation on which the arrangements for the creation of a denuclearized zone in South Asia can be constructed. It is thus with hope for tangible progress towards this objective that my delegation has once again submitted the draft resolution in A/C.1/34/L.2.

The provisions of the text are similar to those of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly last year. Indeed, they are almost identical. In its preamble, the draft resolution emphasizes the importance of ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia and recalls the previous relevant resolutions of the General Assembly on the subject. The main

(Mr. Naik, Pakistan)

provisions of the operative part of the draft resolution are, first, a reaffirmation of the General Assembly's endorsement in principle of the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia and, secondly, a call upon the States of the region to continue their efforts for the realization of this objective.

In this draft resolution, as in previous proposals adopted by the General Assembly, my delegation has made an effort to accommodate the objections raised by certain States against the proposal. For example, in response to the idea that a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be created in an area broader than the region of South Asia, we have provided in operative paragraph 2 that consultations on the subject would be open not only to South Asian States, but also to such other neighbouring non-nuclear-weapon States as may be interested. My delegation hopes that consultations for the purpose of elaborating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia can be initiated in the near future.

Pakistan remains open to suggestions with regard to the manner and modality of the conduct of such consultations. We believe, of course, that the United Nations has an important role to play in this process, and we have therefore provided that the Secretary-General should continue to be available to provide assistance to the South Asian States in this endeavour.

(Mr. Naik, Pakistan)

Yet this is not the only modality that can be adopted to promote the objective of denuclearization in South Asia. A serious dialogue has been opened on this subject within the United Nations as well as in other important forums such as the Committee on Disarmament. Also, we attach great importance to the separate bilateral discussions which have been held on the question of nuclear non-proliferation in our region.

Pakistan is also flexible as regards the precise form of the arrangements to ensure denuclearization in South Asia. We have submitted various ideas on how the States of the region can take a first step towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. For instance, we have proposed the elaboration of a joint declaration among the South Asian States which would be legally binding on successor Governments. We have suggested the reciprocal inspection of nuclear facilities in the regional context. Pakistan is prepared to accept full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on a reciprocal basis. We are, furthermore, ready to explore other ways and means of mutually reassuring each other in South Asia against the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Pakistan remains optimistic that, given goodwill on all sides, agreement can be reached on concrete arrangements which can lead to the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. In the meantime, the draft resolution urges the regional States to refrain from any action contrary to the objective of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. The importance of this reiteration is self-evident and reflects the continued commitment of my country to the objective of denuclearization in South Asia.

From the aforementioned perspective, Pakistan looks forward to tangible progress towards the goal of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia during the course of the coming year. The draft resolution would therefore have the General Assembly decide to resume consideration of this item at its thirty-fifth session.

(Mr. Naik, Pakistan)

In conclusion, I am confident that the objectives which draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.2 seeks to promote are shared by all members of this Committee. The establishment of a regional arrangement for denuclearization in South Asia is the most equitable and feasible way in which the threat of nuclear-weapon proliferation can be prevented in South Asia.

Mr. FEIN (Netherlands): I should like to address myself to draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.7, which was so ably introduced just now by the representatives of the Soviet Union and of the United States, and in particular to its operative paragraph 2.

Without going into any details at this moment, and while reserving my right to do so at a later stage, I should like to note that the representative of the United States, in his introduction, stressed the fact that the request to the the Committee on Disarmament "to proceed as soon as possible to achieve agreement" meant, in fact, through negotiation.

This is a statement which is of great interest to my delegation, since we believe that the agreement on radiological weapons in the Committee on Disarmament should be achieved by negotiation. And I wonder, without submitting any formal amendment at this moment, whether the sponsors of this resolution - the Soviet Union and the United States - would be willing to consider substituting for the word "achieve" the word "negotiate".

As I said, I reserve my right to return to a discussion and an explanation of this suggestion later if it should be necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: I would inform the Committee that Mali has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/34/L.3.

It appears that no other representatives wishes to discuss the draft resolutions at this time, and I should like to urge delegations once again to hand in their proposals to the Secretariat as soon as possible so that we may meet the deadline of 16 November and allow ample time for discussion.

In this connexion I would point out that there is only one name on the list of speakers for tomorrow morning, and that unless others are added we shall be unable to hold a meeting then. Moreover, Thursday is to be devoted to negotiation and

(The Chairman)

consultation to give delegations an opportunity to co-ordinate their texts and prepare them for presentation.

I call now on the representative of Egypt, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. MESHARRAFA (Egypt): The representative of Israel, in his intervention yesterday, raised several points, and my delegation finds it necessary to make the following clarification.

Egypt has signed a peace treaty with Israel and hopes that it will be the prelude to the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. In our statement on 2 November the representative of Egypt reiterated our legitimate concern over and opposition to Israel's nuclear activities. It is relevant to repeat once more that Egypt is deeply concerned and perturbed about Israel's continued refusal to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is to be recalled also that Israel has constantly refused to support the General Assembly resolution which calls for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

We firmly believe that the United Nations should take all measures to ensure that nuclear weapons will not be acquired, produced or stationed in our sensitive region, and this can only be achieved through adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the area, and with all nuclear activities being carried out under proper International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.