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FIRST COMMITTEE
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at 3 p.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. MROZIEWICZ

(Poland)

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ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 67 AND 68 (continued)

CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION ON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
AGENDA ITEMS

The CHAIRMAN: I shall now call on those delegations wishing to explain their position after the decision.

Ms. MASON (Canada): With respect to draft decision A/C.1/46/L.54, adopted this morning without a vote, it is Canada's hope that our action will provide renewed impetus to our collective efforts in the First Committee to find an agreed way to reflect in resolution form the tremendous changes that have taken place in the world, and, more important, how these changes might impact on approaches to strengthening international security since the adoption of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security in 1970.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee has now completed its consideration of agenda items 67 and 68.

CONCLUSION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee has concluded its consideration of all agenda items allocated to the First Committee.

I now call on the Secretary of the Committee, who has a statement to make.

Mr. KHERADI (Secretary of the Committee): I should like to inform delegations that, with a view to facilitating the work at this stage of preparation for the forthcoming vote by the General Assembly on disarmament matters and the other items that were before the Committee - that is, Antarctica and international security - the secretariat of the First Committee is in the process of preparing an informal tabulation paper entitled "Reports of the First Committee", which will be distributed in a few days. I should emphasize that this is only an informal paper. It will set out in tabulation

(Mr. Kheradi)

form the corresponding numbers of the "L" documents adopted in the Committee with the corresponding numbers in the Committee's reports which will be before the General Assembly when the voting takes place there. It is our sincere hope that this will facilitate and expedite the work of the members of the First Committee in the plenary meeting at that stage. I should add that this is an innovation we introduced last year. It was well received by delegations, and we intend to continue that precedent.

In addition, I should like to put on record the fact that, as necessary, a conference room paper will also be issued subsequently, setting out a consolidated statement of financial implications of the draft resolutions or decisions adopted by the First Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Jordan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. JOMA (Jordan): On behalf of the Chairman of the Group of Asian States, I have the honour and pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on the able, relaxed and expeditious manner in which you have conducted the deliberations of the First Committee. I should also like to extend our appreciation to the Vice-Chairmen, Mr. Sedfrey Ordonez of the Philippines, Mr. Ahmet Alpman of Turkey and our Rapporteur, Mr. Pablo Emilio Sader of Uruguay. They all contributed to the efficient and productive manner in which the Committee's debates were conducted.

The acknowledgement of the Group also goes to Mr. Vasilii Safronchuk, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, and to Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

(Mr. Joma, Jordan)

The First Committee's work in this session has been carried out in a businesslike atmosphere and in a spirit of dialogue and understanding, which was reflected in the large number of resolutions adopted by consensus.

Last, but not least, we also wish warmly to thank the Committee's secretariat and other officers associated with it, including the interpreters and technical staff, who, by their efficiency and cooperation, have enabled the Committee to accomplish its work in a diligent and highly professional manner.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Yugoslavia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. ZUGIC (Yugoslavia): In its capacity as Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States, the delegation of Yugoslavia is pleased to express to you, Sir, on behalf of the Group and on its own behalf, sincere congratulations on the efficient and productive manner in which you have guided our deliberations in this important Committee.

Allow me, Sir, to express our appreciation also to the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee and to our Rapporteur. I should also like to thank the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, and his capable staff, without whose collaboration our work would not be possible.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Miss THOMAS (Jamaica): As we come to the end of this year's session of the First Committee, I wish, on behalf of the member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, to thank you, Sir, sincerely for the efficient manner in which you have guided the Committee's work. I also wish to express to the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur our appreciation of their valuable contribution to our work, and to express our thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, and his staff, whose expertise has contributed to the Committee's efficient functioning.

May I take this opportunity also to thank the conference officers and interpreters, without whom our work would have been severely handicapped.

This year we have been able to work in a greater spirit of cooperation and compromise, which has contributed to the successful conclusion of our deliberations.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of New Zealand, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. ADANK (New Zealand): On behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, I am pleased to take this opportunity to join other Groups in expressing our appreciation of the thorough and skilful way in which you, Sir, and the other officers of the Committee have overseen the Committee's work at this session. We are grateful, too, for the important contributions made to our deliberations by Under-Secretary-General Akashi and Under-Secretary-General Safronchuk and by the Committee's Secretary, Mr. Kheradi, and other members of the Secretariat. Our thanks are also due to the interpreters and technical staff, whose efficient services have made our meetings possible.

The work of the First Committee during the current session has been marked by a considerable degree of cooperation and greater mutual understanding between delegations. That the Committee has worked productively through its heavy agenda in such a timely fashion is a tribute, Sir, to the quality of your chairmanship.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on the representative of Gabon, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. MBA ALLO (Gabon) (interpretation from French): On behalf of the Group of African States and on behalf of my own delegation, I have the honour and privilege to express to you, Sir, our great appreciation of the outstanding way in which you have guided the work of this important Committee during the current session of the General Assembly. The spirit of moderation and compromise which dominated the work at this session was of fundamental importance in achieving solutions to the various complex and sensitive issues which were submitted for our consideration. We are proud that under your wise

(Mr. Mba Allo, Gabon)

guidance the First Committee was able to carry out such fruitful work, and on behalf of the Group of African States, I wish to congratulate you. In addition to that well-deserved tribute, we should like to extend our thanks to the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. We are also grateful to all the Secretariat personnel, from whose dedication and cooperation we have benefited.

We also most particularly thank all the interpreters, who devoted themselves to their work, without which it might have been impossible for a group in which members speak different languages to work properly.

Since 1991 is drawing to a close, I should also like to take this opportunity to express to you, Mr. Chairman, as well as to all delegations, the best wishes of the African Group for Christmas and the New Year.

In conclusion, I should like in particular to thank the Chair for the special attention which it has kindly given our Group.

The CHAIRMAN: Now the time has come for my concluding statement.

We have completed the work programme of the forty-sixth session of the First Committee, and with the Committee's indulgence I should like to share some personal reflections on our endeavours and accomplishments.

The deliberations of the First Committee during the current session have underscored the growing realization that the United Nations is well placed to take a leading role in highlighting cooperative measures on a number of long-standing issues in the field of disarmament and international peace and security. On the basis of the work accomplished here during the current session, it appears that the Committee has also positioned itself in the forefront of efforts aimed at breaking new ground in areas such as international arms transfers and transparency. Indeed, the greater measure of

(The Chairman)

agreement witnessed in the Committee during the current session underlines the growing importance of this body. By acknowledging the shifting realities of the 1990s, the Committee has thus unequivocally opted for reconciliation, compromise and concerted action.

On the whole, one can say that the disarmament agenda this year has been eventful and satisfying. The constructive approach taken by delegations demonstrates the desire not to detract the focus of attention from vital problems of disarmament by interjecting new non-pragmatic issues. This also indicates that Member States have started to concentrate on issues which are amenable to multilateral consideration and which seem to have practical solutions in the foreseeable future, thus separating them from issues not susceptible to immediate resolution.

(The Chairman)

In my view, at this session the First Committee has not merely reacted reflexively to the rapid changes in the field of disarmament during the recent past, but has seized on what many have called a critical opportunity in the post-cold-war period to map out the disarmament agenda for the future. In doing so, the Committee appears to be widening its scope from the traditional nuclear issues towards matters such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, conventional armaments and regional disarmament.

During the forty-sixth session this new movement could be perceived in the language of a number of the draft resolutions submitted by delegations. In a draft decision, for example, the Committee recognized the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by recommending the formation of a preparatory committee in 1993 for the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. In the draft resolution on biological weapons the Committee stressed the importance inter alia of the establishment of a group of ad hoc governmental experts at the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the biological-weapons Convention to identify and examine potential verification measures for the Convention. In the draft resolution on chemical weapons the Committee urged the Conference on Disarmament to resolve outstanding issues so as to achieve final agreement on the chemical-weapons convention during the 1992 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Differences in the Committee could still be witnessed on several of the traditional nuclear issues, such as the question of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, but even here sponsors of the draft resolution were able to agree on and submit a single unified text for the first time, following intensive consultations.

(The Chairman)

The dramatic events in the Middle East and elsewhere also underlined the threat posed by the conventional arms build-up and uncontrolled international transfers of conventional weapons. Developed and developing countries alike, for example, participated in the drafting of a draft resolution in which, inter alia, the Secretary-General was requested to establish and maintain at United Nations Headquarters a universal and non-discriminatory register of conventional arms. This draft resolution in my view marks a watershed, as it signals a genuine commitment by Member States from every part of the globe to direct serious attention to the threat posed by conventional arms build-ups.

The readiness to get rid of old clichés and to embark on the path of exploring new avenues in disarmament was evident in the case of almost all issues considered by the Committee. Owing to subtle but significant moves by Member States, we have witnessed a change in their disarmament philosophies and the voting patterns, as well as a greater willingness to accept a wider divergence of viewpoints without holding on to positions in the context of political polarization.

Once again nuclear issues were dominant at this session, with roughly one third of all the draft resolutions adopted dealing with nuclear armaments. Nevertheless, the redistribution of emphasis under this broad rubric is also clearly visible. Increasingly, attention was devoted to such specific areas as non-proliferation and actual reductions of nuclear weapons, the latter deserving particular mention in the light of recent unilateral initiatives of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which were welcomed by the international community.

Many delegations spoke of the urgent need to turn the attention of the international community to problems of conventional weapons, arms transfers i

(The Chairman)

general and transparency in particular; the positive effects of confidence-building measures were increasingly recognised; the debate on the relationship between disarmament and development moved beyond a theoretical framework to broader practical areas of conversion and reduction of military expenditures for the purpose of peaceful development. The positive attitude towards the earliest possible conclusion of the treaty banning chemical weapons is particularly noteworthy. It was the feeling in this Committee that, in the light of recent positive developments, conditions may now be propitious for the completion of the convention in the near future. Significant progress was also registered with regard to the strengthening of the biological-weapons Convention at the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

In the deliberations on the question of Antarctica, delegations widely welcomed the increasing mutual understanding and support which are emerging for the maintenance of Antarctica as a peaceful natural reserve. Moreover, it was broadly underscored that there is a need to ensure the protection and conservation of Antarctica's environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems for the benefit of all mankind. Despite these favourable developments, positions of various States or groups of States remained at odds on some aspects of this question. This is reflected in the fact that consensus on this item was elusive in the Committee's deliberations. It is evident, however, that the signing of the Madrid Protocol last October represented a major step forward that reflects the narrowing of traditional differences on the question of Antarctica.

In the field of international security a number of Member States underlined the need to define a new system of security in the post-cold-war period and, in particular, the role which the United Nations could play in

(The Chairman)

such a regime. As was rightly pointed out, the First Committee retains particular responsibility concerning the issues of disarmament and international security as the relevant forum of the General Assembly. The fact that a wider concept of security encompasses several important components, which in their own right are being considered by other organs of the United Nations, should in no way diminish this responsibility. At this session we have made a step in the right direction, by approaching security with a new vision, and the First Committee offers the appropriate place and opportunity for Member States to develop their views and comments on major aspects of international peace and security.

I should also like to take this opportunity to note that the Committee has once again given the Department for Disarmament Affairs a number of significant tasks and responsibilities, which reflects the continued confidence of Member States in the Department and the Secretariat.

(The Chairman)

At this stage, let me make a few remarks with respect to the question of further rationalization of the work of the First Committee. As representatives are aware, this particular matter was not addressed at this session within any formal framework. However, the prevailing atmosphere and the newly emerging international order were in themselves conducive to the crystallizing of a de facto rationalization of our work and proceedings. This is evident in the outcome of our work. As I had occasion to point out earlier, three years ago in the First Committee 74 draft resolutions were submitted by Member States; two years ago, 64 were submitted; and last year a total of 54 draft resolutions and decisions were submitted. During the current session a total of 48 draft resolutions and decisions were submitted. Of this figure, 2 draft resolutions and 1 draft decision were not pressed to a vote and 26 were adopted by the Committee without a vote, a figure which represents almost 58 per cent of the total number of draft resolutions adopted.

Interesting and pertinent suggestions have been submitted as to the procedure to be followed for the consideration of disarmament and security issues, with a view to rationalizing the Committee's work in a manner that reflects the intertwining relations between two broad areas of our agenda. In this context, I am particularly mindful of the statements made recently by the representatives of Canada and New Zealand. On the basis of the suggestions made, I intend to undertake appropriate consultations, both here and in Geneva, with delegations and groups of delegations on issues related to the further rationalization of the Committee's work. In this process I shall count on the cooperation of the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, whose experience over the years in these matters will be of great assistance to both me and the Committee as a whole.

(The Chairman)

I cannot conclude my work as Chairman at this session without a clear and sincere expression of thanks to those individuals who have worked closely with me over the past few months. First, I wish to express my gratitude to delegations for their cooperation and support. It has been my privilege to serve with my fellow officers of the Committee, the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassador Ordonez of the Philippines and Mr. Alpman of Turkey, as well as the Committee's Rapporteur, Mr. Sader of Uruguay.

I should also like to extend my gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs, Mr. Vasilii Safronchuk, for their support and guidance.

I believe that all members of the Committee will join me in paying a tribute to the Committee's Secretary, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, whose advice has contributed to the smooth manner in which the Committee has completed its programme of work during the forty-sixth session. I want him to know how deeply grateful I and the Committee are to him. I also greatly appreciate the contribution made by his colleagues - in particular, the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Sattar, Mr. Ion, Mr. Lin, Mr. Ishiguri, Mr. Alasaniya, Ms. Patil, Mr. Biggs, Ms. Brosnakova and Mrs. Amaritnant, for their commendable service.

I should like to express my appreciation to the conference officers, the interpreters - I thank them very much - the verbatim reporters, the press officers and all the others who have enabled the Committee to function effectively and efficiently.

(The Chairman)

The Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are approaching, so let me also wish everyone present all the best and happiness.

It is my strong feeling that the First Committee has achieved something quite important. Once again, let me thank you all for your cooperation and work. I feel privileged that I have had the opportunity to chair this Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.