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CESSATION OF ALL NUCLEAR-TEST EXPLOSIONS

URGENT NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 41/54 ON THE IMMEDIATE CESSATION AND PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR-WEAPON TESTS

GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS TENTH SPECIAL SESSION

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Note verbale dated 14 August 1987 from the Permanent Mission of
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and, in reference to General Assembly resolution 41/46 B, "Cessation of all nuclear test explosions", and also to resolutions 41/46 A, "Cessation of all nuclear test explosions", 41/47, "Urgent need for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty", and 41/54, "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 40/88 on the immediate cessation and prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests", has the honour to communicate the following.

The Soviet Union believes that today, when enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons that threaten the very survival of mankind have been assembled, it is more

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vital than ever for States to adopt a new mode of political thinking and a new pattern of behaviour so that they can reduce and dismantle those arsenals and set up a comprehensive system of international peace and security to take the place of strong-arm politics, "nuclear deterrence", and military doctrines based on intimidation.

One of the most important means of turning back the nuclear arms race, forestalling nuclear proliferation and eradicating nuclear weapons entirely, as the United Nations has repeatedly stated, is to impose a complete and general ban on nuclear-weapon tests. Such a step has become all the more topical today because, under the influence of the Soviet programme for ridding the planet of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction by the year 2000 and the Soviet-American summit meeting in Reykjavik, there is a real prospect of genuine movement towards nuclear disarmament, beginning with the attainment by the USSR and the United States of agreement on the world-wide abolition of two categories of nuclear missiles: medium-range and theatre/tactical weapons. The USSR will continue to do everything within its power to encourage swift practical action to bring about a nuclear-free, non-violent world.

In an effort to overcome the inertia on the question of halting nuclear tests, the Soviet Union in 1985 imposed a unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions and maintained it for 18 months. The General Assembly hailed that move and called upon the United States to join the moratorium, also expressing the hope that all other nuclear-weapon States would consider doing so.

The moratorium turned the task of halting nuclear tests into a practical proposition, and, with it, several other problems associated with turning back the arms race. It demonstrated that it was possible to act in ways that would put real obstacles in the path of the arms race. Although the Soviet Union has had to suspend its unilateral moratorium, it does not regard it as a closed chapter and is prepared to reinstate it on any given day if the United States decides to stop its own nuclear explosions.

In entire accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations, the Soviet Union proposes that talks on a complete nuclear test ban should begin forthwith. They can involve any number of participants and take place in any forum provided, of course, that the United States attends.

The Conference on Disarmament can and must, without a doubt, contribute substantially to the preparation of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear tests.

The USSR has requested the Conference on Disarmament to lend moral and political support to the attainment of a Soviet-American agreement to prohibit nuclear tests. It will be easier to reach an accord in Soviet-American talks if both sides can be certain that other States also support a nuclear test ban and are prepared to become parties to a corresponding international treaty. For precisely this reason, the Soviet Union believes that the quest for a negotiated agreement in Soviet-American talks and the preparation of an all-embracing treaty within the Conference on Disarmament should proceed in parallel.

Seeking to prompt an immediate start on substantive work within the Conference on this priority item, the Soviet Union in conjunction with a group of socialist States recently took the initiative of submitting for the Conference's consideration a document entitled "Basic provisions of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear weapon tests". In so doing, the USSR was heeding the General Assembly's expressed belief that the elaboration of such a treaty is a task of the highest priority and should not be made dependent on the attainment of any other measure in the field of disarmament.

The draft submitted brings together in a single document the accumulated capital of many years' collective work to resolve the problem of nuclear testing and the constructive new ideas and proposals put forward recently by many other countries, in particular the "Group of 6". At the same time, the draft treaty is not just an assemblage of proposals but a qualitatively new document. It is steeped in the ideas and spirit of the new mode of political thinking, which requires diplomatic affairs to be conducted in accordance with the hard facts of the nuclear and space age.

The new text includes large-scale verification measures ranging from declaring the location of test ranges to the involvement of international inspectors in ensuring that no test explosions of nuclear weapons are conducted at those ranges.

The text submitted offers a fresh approach to the question of establishing an international seismic monitoring network. The basic components of the network, it suggests, would be seismic stations with standard specifications, operated with the participation of observers from among the members of an international inspectorate. This proposal, if put into effect, would be of substantial help in creating a climate of mutual trust between States. The foregoing is entirely in keeping with the provisions of resolution 41/47 relating to seismic monitoring and a network to monitor atmospheric radioactivity.

On-site inspections occupy a very prominent position within our proposed monitoring system. The USSR sees the purpose of such inspections as being to resolve questions which give rise to doubt as to compliance with a total ban on nuclear tests which cannot be eliminated by means of the other verification measures provided for in the text. It should be emphasized that a State receiving a request for on-site inspection would be unconditionally obliged to grant access to the location specified in the request. What is meant, in other words, is not voluntary but mandatory inspections. It is now necessary to draw up the criteria and procedures for requesting inspections and for conducting them, including a list of the rights and functions of the inspecting personnel. This could be done by the Conference on Disarmament, particularly as experience has been accumulated in other negotiations on a nuclear test ban.

As a practical move to advance the preparation of a treaty banning nuclear-weapon tests, the USSR proposes the establishment of an ad hoc group of scientific experts with a mandate to provide the Conference with agreed recommendations and supporting arguments relating to the structure and functions of a monitoring system for any possible agreement prohibiting nuclear-weapon tests.

There is also, in our view, a need to establish an international system for global radiation monitoring, using space communications circuits. Such a system would be useful in terms of enhanced effectiveness in monitoring compliance with a nuclear test ban, when such a ban is imposed.

The text submitted confirms that the Soviet Union is prepared to reach a settlement on the problems of verifying that tests have stopped. It is open to constructive discussion and to any other proposals or considerations that will lead to the swift conclusion of an effective treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests.

The Soviet Union still regards verification not as an end in itself but as a means of ensuring that the treaty is effective; the treaty, in turn, should be a major measure in its own right, and one that advances the cause of reductions in and the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. In a world rid of nuclear weapons, furthermore, the treaty and the strict verification it calls for, together with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, should serve as safeguards against the reappearance of such weapons and an important structural component in a comprehensive system of international peace and security.

Without doubt, halting and prohibiting nuclear weapon tests depends first and foremost on the USSR and the United States which, according to the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, bear special responsibility for the attainment of the goals of nuclear disarmament. For that reason the Soviet Union suggests that the Treaty should allow for the possibility that, initially, only the USSR and the United States should be parties to it, not all the nuclear Powers.

The involvement of the Conference on Disarmament in the practical process of drawing up a treaty prohibiting nuclear-weapon tests in no way conflicts with efforts being made by the Soviet Union to resolve this matter bilaterally with the United States. The Conference cannot nowadays be highly productive unless a balance is struck between bilateral and multilateral negotiations on security problems. There should be no conflict between the two; the principles of interaction and mutual advancement should apply.

The Soviet Union would like full-scale Soviet-American talks leading to a complete ban on nuclear testing to begin as soon as possible. Having made a realistic assessment of the situation, it has proposed that such full-scale talks should, as a first step, consider the issues associated with ratification of the Soviet-American Agreements of 1974 and 1976, a significant reduction in the thresholds set by those Agreements for the force of nuclear explosions, and a simultaneous restriction in their numbers. As an immediate practical step associated with such talks, it would be prepared to reach, for example, an interim agreement with the Americans limiting the force of underground nuclear explosions to a threshold of one kilotonne and the number of nuclear-weapon tests to two or three per year.

To hasten the ratification of the aforementioned Soviet-American Agreements, the USSR is prepared to come to terms with the United States on the conduct of the

requisite calibration experiments at each other's test ranges. It has said that such experiments should use both the two countries' national seismological apparatus and the seismic monitoring facilities of the "Six States" - provided, of course, that they agree.

It is the Soviet Union's opinion that, even given the most favourable confluence of circumstances, Soviet-American talks, owing to their bilateral nature, cannot finally resolve the issue of a treaty prohibiting nuclear-weapon tests everywhere and by all parties. Hence its conviction that the negotiation of agreed positions in Soviet-American talks and the preparation of an all-embracing treaty within the Conference on Disarmament should proceed in parallel.

Overall, our position is that it is necessary to work practically, constructively and without delay on a radical solution to the nuclear test issue. We do not wish simply to bring the existing machinery into play, but to ensure that it produces results in the shortest possible time. We reaffirm our readiness to attend a conference for the purpose of extending the scope of the prohibitions embodied in the 1963 Moscow Treaty, for this would be in complete accord with the wishes and commitments voiced by the parties at the time of signature, and with resolution 41/46 B.

Many years of experience in talks and discussions on the problems of nuclear-weapon tests, the proposals made on the subject, and the advanced level of modern technology that can be used for verification, suggest that concluding a treaty is entirely possible. Today as never before, what is needed is the requisite political will on all sides to turn this genuine opportunity into reality in the shortest possible time.

The Permanent Mission of the USSR to the United Nations requests that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 50, 51, 58, 63, 67 and 74 of the provisional agenda.
