

**CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE  
ON DISARMAMENT**

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ENGLISH

FINAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 23 February 1967, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Lord CHALFONT

(United Kingdom)

PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Brazil:

Mr. A.F. AZEREDO da SILVEIRA

Mr. D. SILVEIRA da MOTA

Mr. A. da COSTA GUIMARAES

Mr. S. de QUEIROZ DUARTE

Bulgaria:

Mr. K. CHRISTOV

Mr. B. KONSTANTINOV

Mr. T. DAMIANOV

Mr. D. KOSTOV

Burma:

U KYAW MIN

Canada:

Mr. E.L.M. BURNS

Mr. S.F. RAE

Mr. C.J. WEBSTER

Mr. C.J. MARSHALL

Czechoslovakia:

Mr. P. WINKLER

Mr. T. LAHODA

Mr. V. VAJNAR

Ethiopia:

Dejazmatch A. ABERRA

Mr. A. ZELLEKE

Mr. B. ASSFAW

India:

Mr. V.C. TRIVEDI

Mr. K.P. LUKOSE

Mr. K.P. JAIN

Italy:

Mr. F. CAVALLETTI

Mr. G.P. TOZZOLI

Mr. E. FRANCO

Mr. F. SORO

Mexico:

Mr. A. GARCIA ROBLES

Mr. M. TELLO MACIAS

Nigeria:

Mr. B.O. TONWE

Poland:

Mr. M. BLUSZTAJN

Mr. J. GOLDBLAT

Mr. E. STANIEWSKI

Romania:

Mr. N. ECOBESCO

Mr. C. UNGUREANU

Mr. A. COROIANU

Mr. C. MITRAN

Sweden:

Mrs. A. MYRDAL

Mr. A. EDELSTAM

Mr. H. BLIX

Mr. R. BOMAN

Union of Soviet Socialist  
Republics:

Mr. A.A. ROSHCHIN

Mr. O.A. GRINEVSKY

Mr. I.I. CHEPROV

Mr. V.B. TOULINOV

United Arab Republic:

Mr. H. KHALLAF

Mr. A.A. SALAM

Mr. M. SHAKER

United Kingdom:

Lord CHALFONT

Mr. B.J. GARNETT

Mr. P.W.J. BUXTON

Mr. R.I.T. CROMARTIE

United States of America:

Mr. W.C. FOSTER

Mr. S. DE PALMA

Mr. G. BUNN

Mr. C.G. BREAN

Special Representative of the  
Secretary-General:

Mr. D. PROTITCH

Deputy Special Representative  
of the Secretary-General:

Mr. W. EPSTEIN

1. The CHAIRMAN (United Kingdom): I declare open the two hundred and eighty-eighth plenary meeting of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.
2. I have two speakers on my list for today, the representatives of the United Kingdom and of Sweden. I shall take the floor now as the representative of the United Kingdom.
3. The last camp before the summit is no place for those without strong nerves, great faith and endless patience, especially when the weather is getting worse and time is running out. I think this mountaineering image is not too extreme for this new session of the Disarmament Conference. We are within sight of one of the most important arms control agreements since the nuclear weapon invaded the field of international relations; but the last stage is obviously going to require the same careful planning and the same patience that has been needed to bring us to where we now stand; and when we have solved the problems that still remain we shall find, of course, that there are other summits beyond.
4. The non-proliferation treaty itself is only a stage in a long and arduous climb. But I think we had all hoped that when we assembled for the first meeting of this session there would be at least a new draft of a non-proliferation treaty for the Conference to work on. This has not happened, although newspaper readers in various countries believe they have a pretty good idea of what such a draft would contain. When a draft is presented to the Conference I should like, of course, to make more detailed comments on it. Today I should simply like to deal with some new arguments which have come up in the great debate on non-proliferation since our last session.
5. As we all remember well, discussions last year in the Eighteen-Nation Committee centred on a difference of interpretation between the two main military alliances over nuclear sharing within an alliance. In the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, on the other hand, the main emphasis was on the importance of balance in any treaty; balance, that is, between the nuclear weapons States on one side, and States without nuclear weapons -- particularly States not members of alliances -- on the other.
6. As we all know, there are great hopes that the first difficulty -- the difficulty of nuclear sharing -- can be solved. Indeed, there are signs that it has for all practical purposes already been solved and that it no longer provides a barrier to understanding on this subject between the Soviet Union and the West.

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

7. The second problem -- the problem of balance -- is still with us and will, I am sure, be discussed exhaustively during this session. My delegation has already expressed its views on the subject, and all I will say now is this. The facts of history show that no treaty can for long bind a State to a particular policy or make a State refrain from certain actions if to do so is against the perceived best interests of that State. A non-proliferation treaty makes sense only if it becomes one step in a series of measures of arms control and disarmament measures which will reduce the tension that makes governments, so to speak, reach for their revolvers.

8. If the arms race between the most powerful States continues, tension and suspicion will certainly continue too. Not even the most light-headed optimist can hope that in these circumstances a non-proliferation treaty can succeed, or a non-proliferation treaty last for any considerable time. This I say in spite of the fact that I firmly believe a non-proliferation treaty to be in the interests of the security of all those who sign it, whether they possess nuclear weapons or not, and that the treaty will itself help to relax tension and suspicion among them.

9. But this advantage will be outweighed by the unrelenting pressures of the arms race, if the arms race is allowed to continue. This is why I believe it to be unnecessary, as well as imprudent, for any State to insist that the most powerful nuclear States agree now on particular measures of disarmament before agreeing to sign a non-proliferation treaty. If a treaty is not followed by further agreements, it will not last anyway. But if it is not signed, I fear that the present tendency towards a détente, towards a dissolution of the cold war that has been with us too long, may be reversed, and other measures of disarmament may be out of reach for years.

10. This is not to suggest that a non-proliferation treaty can ignore the responsibilities of the nuclear Powers in this respect. Its drafting must clearly reflect their intention to move rapidly towards agreement on measures to halt and reverse what has been expressively called "vertical proliferation"; and its terms must provide the means of redress for the non-nuclear Powers if the nuclear States are unreasonably slow in translating their intentions into action.

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

11. It is heartening in a way that the first preoccupation I talked about -- concern about the effect of a treaty on a State's military security -- has been elbowed out of the centre of discussion by another and perhaps more healthy preoccupation: that is, concern about the effect of a treaty on civil nuclear development. This concern has to a large extent grown up since the last session of the Committee. It has not yet been argued out exhaustively; and today I shall simply aim to put certain considerations before the Committee.

12. But before I do so it might be appropriate to remark that we shall still have to face, at some stage, the very real concern of some non-nuclear Powers outside military alliances that their security might be put at risk by their adherence to a non-proliferation treaty. I may say, in parenthesis, as I have said before, that I believe these concerns to be ill-founded, because I believe that the independent brandishing of nuclear weapons contributes very little to national security. But the problem remains in spite of all rational argument because it is largely political and psychological, not military at all. And political and psychological factors are as real as any others, and must be taken into account. It seems clear to me, however, that to try to write security guarantees of any formal sort into a non-proliferation treaty might delay agreement beyond the point of safety. We may be wiser to look at this matter of security assurances within the more general framework of the United Nations.

13. To return now to civil nuclear energy programmes: I think that this problem can most easily be divided into three parts. First, the question of so-called peaceful nuclear explosions. Second, the indirect benefits in the civil field, if any, that may flow from a nuclear weapons programme, the problem of what is sometimes called "spin-off". Third, the effect of a non-proliferation treaty on the free flow of scientific information about nuclear matters generally. I should like to look at each of those three parts separately. I shall not deal today specifically with the question of safeguards, which is a separate problem, although some of the same considerations apply.

14. To begin with, I should like to emphasize a general point of principle which is fundamental to my Government's policy and about which I myself feel deeply. It is this. Nothing in a non-proliferation treaty, which is designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, should discriminate against States which do not possess nuclear weapons in the field of civil nuclear technology by depriving them of

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

the benefits of that technology, whatever form it might take. Having said that with all the emphasis at my command, I shall now try to deal with each of the specific difficulties which I mentioned in turn.

15. First let me deal with the question of the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion. As far as technique or technology is concerned, peaceful explosive devices are different in kind from all other peaceful uses of nuclear energy because they depend on uncontrolled fission, or uncontrolled fission and fusion, and are like in kind to military devices. What I am speaking of now has nothing to do with controlled fusion, a process which if it were achieved would not involve an explosion and would not be affected by a non-proliferation treaty.

16. I hope none will think I am casting any doubts on their motives if I say very bluntly that the arguments put forward against the prohibition of peaceful nuclear explosions by non-nuclear-weapon States seem to me unconvincing. First, as the representative of the United States has pointed out time and again -- and he should know, since, as far as I am aware, his is the only Government which has carried out both military and civil nuclear tests -- there is no difference in technology between the two kinds of explosion. A device which moves a million tons of earth to dig a canal or create an oil deposit can just as easily pulverize a city of a million people. The only missing ingredient is the delivery system, which is easy to provide; and in any case for a number of good and conclusive reasons this treaty does not cover delivery systems.

17. Now, from this technologically indisputable fact -- that peaceful and military explosive devices are indistinguishable -- comes a political fact which is of equal importance, since this treaty we are trying to agree on is after all a matter of politics. The political fact is this: that an essential feature of any policy designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons must take account of, and try to reduce, suspicion between pairs of States which are on bad terms with each other and may seem to detached outsiders to be unduly suspicious of each other's motives, policies and actions. It would be impolite to name names; the antagonists of today may be the allies of tomorrow; but in general the phenomenon seems only too likely to persist. A non-proliferation policy is concerned with such pairs of antagonists because it is in this direction that there lies one of the greatest dangers of the spread of nuclear weapons.

18. Let us just picture the reaction in one of such a pair of States if, even with the most blameless motives in the world, the other conducts -- or even is known to be

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

preparing -- the explosion of a so-called peaceful nuclear device. The general staff of the first country will testify that from a military point of view the other State has, for all practical purposes, perfected or is perfecting a nuclear weapon and urge that their own government should follow suit. The political results, as regards relations between those two States and tension in the area, will be exactly the same -- I repeat, the political results will be exactly the same -- as if one State had carried out a military nuclear explosion. That is why, if you want a non-proliferation treaty to have the slightest chance of success, it is essential to lump all nuclear explosive devices together.

19. Having demonstrated the political mistrust and instability that would arise from the development of the so-called peaceful nuclear explosion, we must clearly go on immediately to see whether non-nuclear-weapon States themselves will in fact be put at a serious disadvantage, from the point of view of their own industrial or other development, by being unable to devise and execute such explosions; and, if so, how we can set about redressing any such disadvantage. I am not myself a technologist and I must depend on technological advice here. But it does not seem at all likely that the uncontrolled use of nuclear energy -- and this is what peaceful explosions amount to -- will ever constitute an everyday industrial technique. It is likely to be hazardous -- at least above ground --, expensive, and of strictly limited application.

20. I say this fully conscious of the risk of negative prophecies of this kind. A distinguished member of the British General Post Office said publicly some time about the middle of the last century that, owing to the abundant supply of messenger boys, the telephone would never be needed in England. But it does seem to me that the peaceful nuclear explosion is not likely to become a frequently used technique. It is not yet within sight of being an economic or a practical proposition. If this is true, it should be the easier to devise workable arrangements, possibly of an international kind, to make the technique available, if and when it is developed, without any strings at all to non-nuclear-weapon States who find that they need it. I believe that it is right and fair that such a provision should be made in or along with a non-proliferation treaty. My delegation will be receptive to any suggestions about how the arrangements can best be made.

21. The second part of the problem can, I think, be dealt with more summarily. It is being disputed whether there is any "spin-off", or immediate technological advantage in the civil field, from a military programme. I am convinced that there is in fact very little, if any. No one, as far as I know, has suggested that such



(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

an advantage at the moment gives any nuclear-weapon Power the edge over a civilian nuclear Power in the development of civil techniques. But even if it were true, what then? Is this an argument against signing a non-proliferation treaty at all? Is it suggested that the civil nuclear Powers -- which have with commendable restraint not developed nuclear weapons although they had the ability to do so for several years -- should now make nuclear weapons, with all the political consequences of such a decision, simply because of the possible by-products in the civil field? Or is it even suggested that they should refuse to sign a non-proliferation treaty in order to keep this option open?

22. This does not seem to me credible. We are not here talking about technical processes; we are not talking of reactors, or chemical separation plants, or gaseous diffusion plants, which have a possible military use -- for manufacture of nuclear bombs -- as well as a civil use; none of those processes would be prohibited by a non-proliferation treaty. They are therefore irrelevant to the argument about "spin-off". And the basic technical weakness of the argument seems to me to be this: the main stream of civil nuclear development is controlled fission -- and perhaps one day controlled fusion. The basis of weapons development is uncontrolled fission and fusion. The two techniques are fundamentally different.

23. But of course, in line with the principle I set out at the beginning of what I am saying this morning, if there is any significant "spin-off", or if any should emerge in the future, then it is only right that we should devise a way to share it equally among nuclear-weapon Powers and the rest. But I can see no reason to alter any drafting of the treaty, because I do not see how the point could be met by altering it; and still less would I think it intelligent to abandon the treaty because of this difficulty.

24. The third part of the problem of the effect on civil nuclear development of a non-proliferation treaty is the suggestion that the exchange of scientific information will be curtailed by it. I cannot see why this should conceivably be. A treaty in which all parties have confidence, supported by adequate safeguards, will surely lessen rather than increase any worry about passing information -- with a conceivable military value -- from a nuclear-weapon State to a non-nuclear-weapon State, signatory to the treaty. I can see no justification in this argument.

25. I should like to conclude this statement -- which has dealt with only one aspect, but an important aspect, of the treaty -- by a brief reflection on this problem of

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

balance. The non-aligned States here, and others at various times and with varying degrees of emphasis, have called for measures which would curtail the armament of the nuclear Powers as a price for agreeing to sign a non-proliferation treaty. Their aim, to exert pressure on the nuclear Powers to match their words with deeds, is one which in spite of my country's position as a nuclear Power I share whole-heartedly. But I should like to point out three facts.

26. First, for various obvious reasons it is clearly politically impossible to find a measure of disarmament by the nuclear Powers on which the nuclear Powers could agree within the time we have left to us to conclude a non-proliferation treaty. Second, once the treaty is signed, tensions will inevitably relax and the chances of further agreement will be better. Third, a treaty will not last if further measures of arms control and of real disarmament do not follow within a reasonable period. This treaty is not for all time by itself, and on this subject I should like to quote a few sentences from a recent leading article in that great international newspaper The Times of London. On the day our Conference re-opened here The Times made the following editorial comment:

"The treaty, therefore, would not and could not stop anyone reaching the threshold of nuclear power. Nor can it provide absolute guarantees to non-nuclear Powers. Nor can it actually prevent any country from making nuclear weapons. It can, however, provide an additional barrier. It can make a country pause on the threshold. It can also spread confidence by ensuring that no signatory of the treaty steps over the threshold in secret. Finally, it can provide a valuable symbol of east-west co-operation and confidence at a time when the war in Viet-Nam is putting a premium on such symbols. Perhaps, too, it could prepare the way for a moratorium on anti-missile missiles. A great deal hangs on it".

27. Although The Times, contrary to a widely-held belief in some quarters, is not an organ of the British Government, in this we share its views without reservation. Whatever the shortcomings or the difficulties of a non-proliferation treaty, any country that refused to sign it without a reason legitimately based upon the security of its real and demonstrated interest would be assuming a horrifying responsibility. There is quite clearly a definable if tenuous line between the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and the proliferation of nuclear devices that can be used

(The Chairman, United Kingdom)

in war. To try to blur this line or to suggest that it does not exist will achieve nothing but confusion and delay.

28. No one is being asked to bind himself indefinitely to an agreement that will remain immutable through any conceivable political or military or scientific development. We are all being asked to agree to a treaty that will give us the breathing-space we so desperately need to bring wars to an end, to bring the nuclear weapon under control, to stop and reverse the arms race, and to create a climate in which real disarmament becomes a matter of practical politics and not endless debate. It is a treaty that will only last, whatever its provisions may say, if it turns out for everyone to see that it is a link in the chain of man's lifeline to sanity and peace.

29. Mrs. MYRDAL (Sweden): In raising my voice today for the first time after the resumption of our work in the Eighteen-Nation Committee, I wish to start by joining those who have expressed their great satisfaction with the signs of rapprochement which we are so eagerly registering these days. This session undoubtedly opens with great expectations that we shall reap some harvest from that spirit of co-operation which became apparent during the debate on disarmament at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

30. The considerable number of resolutions on disarmament tabled at the Assembly and the importance of those adopted (ENDC/185), give further proof of the enormous interest in disarmament prevailing throughout the world. Most of those resolutions refer directly to efforts to be made within this Committee; several times stressing that it is "imperative to make further efforts". We are now under the obligation to live up to those expectations and to present to the world some concrete results of our labours, some definite promise of beginning disarmament in our time.

31. In order to expedite our work, we must establish an agenda which will offer a sufficiently wide framework for our discussions. The work schedule should also provide sufficient time margins for negotiations on all the issues that have been referred to us by the United Nations. In the foreground of our deliberations there should be at least the following:

To bring to a conclusion a treaty preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons;

To elaborate without delay a treaty banning underground nuclear-weapon tests;

(Mrs. Myrdal, Sweden)

To achieve substantial progress in regard to general and complete disarmament under effective international control; and in this connexion -- and this is somewhat newer --

To seek an agreement on cessation of the development and production of chemical and bacteriological weapons.

32. In addition to those items, expressly referred to the Committee by the United Nations, my delegation assumes that such a question as that of the halting of the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes can also be discussed under one of them.

33. My Government requests that, in order to make the best possible use of our time during this session, negotiations should proceed simultaneously along several lines. One reason for this is that there is greater hope of achieving success if several tracks are followed conjointly: we must have a kind of real grid system for incessant cross-checking of our arguments and their consequences. This should preferably consist of draft treaty texts on each of the important issues in the field of nuclear disarmament; because these issues are indeed technically interdependent.

34. The most important reason for our request, however, is that such parallel negotiations would, in our view, enhance the possibilities of obtaining political results; because, precisely when we are about to enter what seems to be a period of serious negotiations, the Committee must constantly view the measures in this field in a broad perspective. In order to get our final positions clarified, it would consequently seem far less promising to concentrate on one issue only at a time, expecting that the other issues will be pursued in a later sequence.

35. It is of crucial importance to the non-nuclear weapon States, and particularly to the non-aligned ones, that there be firm assurances that other concrete measures will be forthcoming, resulting in definite curtailment of the nuclear armaments race which is continuing both in the qualitative and the quantitative directions. Such assurances are, of course, most definitely measurable if progress is being made on specific issues, such as a comprehensive test ban which would imply disarmament undertakings on the part also of nuclear weapon States.

36. This request for parallel consideration of several nuclear disarmament issues mandated to us by the United Nations is certainly not intended to delay progress.

(Mrs. Myrdal, Sweden)

On the contrary, my delegation feels that the line of parallel efforts is indeed a constructive one in order to facilitate a universal acceptance of non-proliferation. This may become even clearer if we return to the technical links between that issue and the other ones mentioned. I will take but two examples where our negotiations now may otherwise encounter some hurdles.

37. One is the question of the peaceful use of nuclear explosions, which Lord Chalfont has also spoken of today. Evidently the problems raised in this respect belong especially to the context of considerations in connexion with a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Particularly to those of us who agree -- on the basis of expert advice -- with the view of the nuclear weapon Powers that the process for production of nuclear explosives is, at least for the present, in practice one and the same whether the explosives are to be used for peaceful purposes or not, it becomes necessary that some international order be instituted to control both the production and the use of peaceful nuclear explosives.

38. To make such international control of the latter -- that is of the explosions -- world-wide and thus both effective and truly equitable, for instance, by some form of international licensing for each and all of such undertakings, would however be a subject that would most logically be treated in connexion with discussions on a test ban, even if in the final instance a special agreement for this purpose be entered into. The control of peaceful nuclear explosions made by nuclear-weapon States cannot very well be discussed under the heading of non-proliferation. Therefore, treaty texts must be seen in juxtaposition and compared.

39. The case is similar to the other example also at present under debate: namely the form of international control of peaceful nuclear activities of the "controlled" kind, to borrow a phrase just used by Lord Chalfont. When discussing how such safeguards should be imposed on certain activities and/or on certain groups of countries, we must be able to perceive the pattern of their universal application. Only then can we judge rationally how far in the direction of universality to proceed at the first step. The substance falling under this heading is thus definitely connected with both non-proliferation and a cut-off of production of fissile material for weapon purposes. It must be discussed here, not only outside the Committee, and discussed in this prospective context.

40. In order to study the issues indicated thoroughly and effectively, so that we can see a pattern emerging for the future, we need to follow a procedure of simultaneous negotiations. That is my plea to-day

The Conference decided to issue the following communiqué:

"The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament today held its 288th plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the chairmanship of Lord Chalfont, representative of the United Kingdom.

"Statements were made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and Sweden.

"The next meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 28 February 1967, at 10.30 a.m."

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.