

CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE
ON DISARMAMENT

ENDC/PV.398
27 March 1969
ENGLISH

FINAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 March 1969, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. A. ZELLEKE

(Ethiopia)

GE.69-7091

PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Brazil: Mr. S.A. FRAZAO
Mr. C.A. de SOUZA e SILVA
Mr. L.F. PALMEIRA LAMPREIA
Mr. J. NOGUEIRA FILHO

Bulgaria: Mr. K. CHRISTOV
Mr. M. KARASSIMEONOV
Mr. B. KONSTANTINOV
Mr. I. PEINIRDJIEV

Burma: U KYAW MIN

Canada: Mr. A.G. CAMPBELL
Mr. J.R. MORDEN

Czechoslovakia: Mr. M. KLUSAK
Mr. T. LAHODA
Mr. V. SAFAR
Mr. J. STRUCKA

Ethiopia: Mr. A. ZELLEKE

India: Mr. M.A. HUSAIN
Mr. N. KRISHNAN
Mr. K.P. JAIN

Italy: Mr. R. CARACCIOLO
Mr. F.L. OTTIERI
Mr. R. BORSARELLI
Mr. U. PESTALOZZA

Mexico: Mr. A. GARCIA ROBLES
Mr. M. TELLO MACIAS
Mr. H. CARDENAS RODRIGUEZ

Nigeria: Alhaji SULE KOLO
Mr. C.O. HOLLIST
Mr. L.A. MALIKI

Poland:

Mr. K. ZYBYLSKI

Mr. H. STEPOSZ

Mr. R. WLIZLO

Mr. S. DĄBROWA

Romania:

Mr. N. ECOBESCO

Mr. V. CONSTANTINESCO

Mr. V. TARZIORU

Mr. C. GEORGESCO

Sweden:

Mrs. A. MYRDAL

Mr. A. EDELSTAM

Mr. R. BOMLN

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics:

Mr. A.A. ROSHCHIN

Mr. I.I. TCHEPROV

Mr. N.S. KISHILOV

Mr. V.A. USTINOV

United Arab Republic:

Mr. H. KHALLAF

Mr. O. SIRRY

Mr. M. ISMAIL

United Kingdom:

Mr. I.F. PORTER

Mr. R.A. RIDDELL

Mr. M.E. HOWELL

United States of America:

Mr. C. GLEYSTEN

Mr. W. GIVAN

Mr. R.L. McCORMACK

Special Representative of the
Secretary-General:

Mr. D. PROTITCH

1. The CHAIRMAN (Ethiopia): I declare open the 398th plenary meeting of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.
2. Mr. CHRISTOV (Bulgaria) (translation from French): In speaking for the first time at this session, I should like, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, to associate myself with the words of welcome addressed here to the newly-appointed representatives to this Committee, and in particular Ambassador Smith, head of the United States delegation and co-Chairman of our Conference; Ambassador Frazão, head of the delegation of Brazil; Ambassador Ignatieff, head of the delegation of Canada; and Ambassador Klusák, head of the delegation of Czechoslovakia. I should also like to greet the representative of Sweden, Mrs. Myrdal, and the representative of Mexico, Ambassador García Robles, on their return to the Conference. My delegation is also happy to address greetings to Mr. Protitch, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to all the members of the Secretariat.
3. The problems of disarmament remain the key problems of our time. In the final analysis, all quests with a view to resolving serious outstanding questions pass through disarmament. Even if at times one is tempted to believe that in order to achieve rapid progress towards disarmament we must first restore confidence and improve the international climate, we have only to look more closely at the means of achieving that aim to realize that the restoration of confidence and the improvement of the international climate depend primarily on one prerequisite, which is precisely the achievement of progress in the field of disarmament. In this case there is no question of the classic vicious circle; but unless progress is achieved in the extensive field of disarmament, it would be futile to expect a lasting improvement in confidence and in the political climate on our planet.
4. However justified the criticisms levelled at our Committee may be, progress along the path on which we are often compelled to mark time and the solution of disarmament problems do not depend solely, and most of the time do not depend at all, on the goodwill of the negotiators. They depend on a definite political choice, and the result obtained is, in the final analysis, only the expression of a resolute political will.
5. In this connexion, and convinced as we are that every manifestation capable of strengthening confidence can have a favourable effect on the discussions in this Committee, I should like to draw the attention of representatives to a document of primary importance. I am referring to the appeal addressed to the European States by

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the Warsaw Pact countries during the Conference held at Budapest on 17 March, and in particular, I wish to recall the passages which define the policy of peace and relate directly to disarmament problems.

6. After declaring that the Warsaw Pact countries consider it their duty to do everything in their power to prevent new military conflicts in Europe and to open the way to more extensive co-operation between all countries, irrespective of their social structure, the States Members of the Warsaw Pact:

" ... confirm their proposals against the division of the world into military blocs, against the armaments race and the resultant threat to the cause of international peace and security, and the other measures and proposals contained in the Declaration on the Strengthening of Peace and Security in Europe adopted at Bucharest in 1966" and

" ... make a solemn appeal to all European countries to strengthen the climate of confidence, and to that end to refrain from any action liable to poison the atmosphere in relations between States. They call upon them to go beyond general statements about peace to concrete acts and measures for the relaxation of tension and disarmament, for the development of co-operation the peace between the peoples."^{1/}

7. However arduous the task before us may be, we welcome each resumption of the Committee's work in the hope that the disarmament negotiations will enter a conclusive phase in several respects and that our efforts will lead to the concrete results which the world expects from the Committee's work.

8. It is in that sense that we interpret the statements made during previous meetings by several representatives who very rightly stressed the special importance of this session of the Eighteen-Nation Conference on Disarmament.

9. Of course, the difficulties of every kind which the Committee has had to face throughout its seven years of existence have taught us to temper our optimism. But we have also learned that we have no right to despair, that pessimism serves no purpose and that a great deal of patience is required.

10. The international reality, which is characterized by the arms race and its manifold implications, political, economic, social and psychological, makes the need to find adequate solutions to disarmament problems still more imperative, if that were possible.

^{1/} The appeal by the States members of the Warsaw Pact was later reproduced in document ENDC/243.

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The majority and the most important of those problems, including those relating to nuclear disarmament, have been on the agenda for a long time. In the course of detailed discussions they have been examined and studied in all their aspects. At the same time, attempts have been made to explore the possibilities of reaching the required decisions.

11. But, despite all this work of study, investigation and exploration carried out during previous sessions, we are, it seems, far from being able to consider that everything has been said and done in this connexion and that no more areas remain to be explored.

12. The international political situation, in which disarmament problems have their place, is constantly changing; some of those problems are today seen in a new light. Moreover, the great scientific and technological revolution is proceeding with giant strides and its progress - which is unfortunately dominated to a great extent by the arms race - far outstrips the possibilities of analysis and political decision, which does not facilitate the work of a Committee such as ours.

13. In his message to the Committee, the Secretary-General, U Thant, refers to this state of affairs when he says: "The Committee is certainly aware that its task is becoming increasingly urgent in view of new developments in the arms race." (ENDC/PV.395, para.4).

14. In the opinion of the Bulgarian delegation, we must make the necessary effort to highlight these new facts, both those which raise new difficulties and, above all, those which are likely to further our work.

15. The message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, the message addressed to the Committee by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Mr. Kosygin (ENDC/238), and the letter from the President of the United States, Mr. Nixon (ENDC/239*), which was communicated to our Conference by the representative of the United States, are encouraging factors for all members of the Committee. They express the confidence - reiterated in the resolutions of the General Assembly - which the nations and governments continue to show in the Committee.

16. An important factor in this connexion is undoubtedly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (ENDC/226*), in the conclusion of which the Eighteen-Nation Committee played a very important role. We are all aware of the vicissitudes of the negotiations, and of the criticisms and reservations that were made. It could not have been otherwise, since that international agreement was the first of its kind and

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closely affected the interests of all nations, small and large, nuclear and non-nuclear. That is why the fact that almost ninety countries have already signed the Treaty, and that a number of others have ratified it or are preparing to do so, is of great significance. This proves that the Non-Proliferation Treaty is capable not only of eliminating the possibility of a further dissemination of nuclear weapons, but also of opening the way to new measures aimed at ending the nuclear arms race, and that it is already beginning to play a specific role as an international instrument which constitutes an example in a field of vital interest to all peoples. We agree, once again, with the representative of Sweden, Mrs. Myrdal, when she said: "Even before it is legally enforceable, this Treaty is evidently beginning to serve many States as a norm for their behaviour." (ENDC/PV.397, para.93). However, while emphasizing this influence of the Treaty, we cannot ignore certain disquieting facts.

17. First of all, there is the fact that a number of States, including States which, because of their industrial potential, could manufacture nuclear weapons, have not yet signed the Treaty. Moreover, certain circles and influential statesmen continue to subject the Treaty to fierce attacks.

18. It is quite obvious that a negative attitude of that kind could delay the entry into force of the Treaty and the whole sequence of measures - some of them in process of preparation - which are designed to put a brake on the nuclear arms race. That would delay the elaboration of the control system and the conclusion of agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Any delay would also have negative effects on cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy and could prejudice the interests of many countries. It would postpone the assistance which the nuclear Powers should give to non-nuclear countries under explicit provisions of the Treaty.

19. Representing a country which was among the first signatories of the Treaty and which is preparing to ratify it, we associate ourselves with the appeals made by other delegations that the non-proliferation Treaty should come into force as soon as possible.

20. As regards the course which we should follow in our discussions, we consider that our task is made easier this time by the useful work done during the last session of the Committee. The agenda decided upon in August last (ENDC/236, p.3) was approved by the General Assembly. Similarly, we are helped by the presentation of the Memorandum of the Soviet Government (ENDC/227). That Memorandum was submitted to the General Assembly at its twenty-third session and recommended by it to the Committee with a view to taking into consideration the urgent measures relating to the cessation of the arms race and to disarmament proposed by the Soviet Union.

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21. Moreover, we cannot ignore the fact that a number of problems have become very urgent matters and have been put, so to speak, on the agenda of public opinion which, being gripped by growing concern, is calling for their solution through appropriate agreements speedily concluded.
22. In our opinion, one of the first urgent measures is the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. The discussion of this problem in our Committee and the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly over many years has shown the political and psychological importance that a solution involving the conclusion of an international convention could have for the relaxation of tension and for further progress in disarmament.
23. There is no need to stress the favourable effect which such a decision would have on the negotiations on general disarmament and on the solution of nuclear disarmament problems in particular. We believe that the Committee will give this question the attention it deserves and, at this stage, we do not intend to go into details. But I should like to recall that the main argument put forward in past discussions against the solution advocated was that the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would not remove the nuclear threat, which would continue to exist as long as nuclear weapons exist. In this connexion I shall confine myself to remarking that the same argument could be used in many other cases; for example, when the cessation of underground tests is called for. Yet no one thinks of renouncing such a measure. On the contrary, almost all delegations lay particular stress on the need to solve, in the shortest possible time, the problem of the complete cessation of nuclear-weapon tests, including those carried out underground.
24. The Bulgarian delegation, like the great majority of delegations, has always advocated the conclusion of an agreement to that effect. There is no doubt that an international agreement prohibiting underground nuclear weapon tests would be a major step towards the limitation of the arms race and would facilitate further measures for nuclear disarmament.
25. The discussions which have taken place on that subject, here and in the United Nations, have shed abundant light on the problem and have shown not only the urgent need to solve it but also the possibilities available for doing so.
26. The progress of science in the field of seismic detection and in the identification of underground explosions confirms that it is possible to overcome the difficulty of verification by having recourse to national means of detection.

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27. The threat of nuclear war hanging over the world to-day must not make us forget that another danger, equally serious and no less horrible, lies in wait for mankind. It is the danger represented by chemical and bacteriological weapons. Despite the secrecy surrounding all activities in this field, everyone knows that attempts are being made to take advantage of the progress of science - once again - to manufacture ever more deadly chemical and bacteriological weapons. If certain reports in the Press are to be believed, there already exist stocks of gases for military use capable of annihilating the population of the world several times over.

28. The position of the Bulgarian delegation in this regard is well known: chemical and bacteriological arms must be excluded from military arsenals by virtue of the international instrument known as the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the validity of which has been confirmed by the United Nations.

29. We await with the greatest interest the report that is being prepared by a group of experts in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2454A (XXIII) (ENDC/237), and we are convinced that that report will enable the Committee to reaffirm the value of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 for the prohibition of chemical and bacteriological weapons and to strengthen it by the accession to it of those countries which have not yet done so.

30. A problem to which our Committee has already assigned an important place is that of the prohibition of the use for military purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor. This is a question which, for understandable reasons, has come to the forefront of current problems. As was shown by the discussion in the Ad Hoc Committee, of which my country is a member, and by resolutions of the last session of the General Assembly, the interest which all countries have in this problem has several aspects. But there is one which dominates all others. It is the urgent need to reach an agreement on the demilitarization of those areas, which cover 70 per cent of the surface of the globe. This is an absolutely essential condition for the use for peaceful purposes of this environment, which holds great promise for all mankind and for international co-operation in this field.

31. Hence, before it is too late, we must start work on the preparation of an international agreement to prohibit the militarization of the sea-bed and the ocean floor. The aim to be achieved is clear. We must demilitarize, under the terms of such an agreement, the largest possible part of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, excluding as narrow a coastal area as possible.

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32. We express in that connexion our satisfaction at the submission, by the delegation of the Soviet Union, of a draft treaty on the prohibition of the use for military purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the sub-soil thereof (ENDC/240).

In the opinion of my delegation, that draft approaches the problem in a clear, practical and effective manner and proposes a solution capable of meeting the particular interests of all countries as well as the general interests of the international community.

33. Those are only some of the problems which appear on our agenda, and the discussion of which has been recommended by the General Assembly. We thought it necessary to highlight them in view of their scope and present-day interest. However, in doing so, we in no way wished to minimize the importance of other questions such as the elimination of foreign bases, the establishment of nuclear-free zones - of the significance of which we were reminded by the representative of Mexico - and others.

34. We are convinced that those questions will also be raised and discussed in due course, and if we have suggested an order of priority in regard to problems such as the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, the cessation of underground nuclear weapon tests, the prohibition of chemical and biological weapons and the demilitarization of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, we have done so because we believe that the solution of those problems cannot and must not be delayed any longer; and also because they are problems which absolutely must be solved in order to open the way to other disarmament measures and to make progress towards what remains the objective set before our Committee, namely, general and complete disarmament.

The Conference decided to issue the following communiqué:

"The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament today held its 398th plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the chairmanship of Mr. Afework Zelleke, Representative of Ethiopia.

"A statement was made by the representative of Bulgaria.

"The next meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 1 April 1969, at 10.30 a.m."

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.