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Chairman: Mr. Károly CSATORDAY (Hungary).

AGENDA ITEM 95

Question of convening a world disarmament conference
(continued) (A/5992, A/C.1/L.340/Rev.1)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (continued) (A/C.1/L.340/REV.1)

1. Mr. MISKE (Mauritania) said that disarmament raised such a host of complex and varied problems that the human mind was naturally tempted to reduce it to one of its most important and striking aspects, nuclear weapons, and the initial reaction to the question of disarmament was usually a gesture of helplessness and resignation indicative of a desire for disarmament but a realization that only the great nuclear Powers were competent to discuss it realistically. That view required some qualification. While it was true that the nuclear Powers, which bore an overwhelming responsibility in the matter of disarmament, could, if they succeeded in reaching agreement, play a decisive role, there was little reason to hope, in the present state of affairs, that a conference attended by those Powers exclusively could be held. Moreover, even if, by some miracle, the present nuclear Powers did reach an agreement, there could be no certainty that they would also reach general and complete disarmament because, even apart from the question of conventional armaments, there was always the risk that some countries which were not parties to the agreement would become nuclear Powers. The Treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, signed at Moscow on 5 August 1963, was a useful lesson in that regard.

2. Furthermore, it was unlikely that there could be any definitive list of the countries which would be nuclear Powers at the time of the conference, since the date had not yet been fixed. It was now clear that any country at a certain stage of industrial and scientific development could, if it was willing to make the necessary sacrifices, become a nuclear Power. It would therefore be the path of prudence to consider that all developed countries, and even some under-developed countries, were at least potentially nuclear Powers.

3. Disarmament was of concern to everyone, first, because all countries wished, as the Nigerian representative had said (1374th meeting), to survive and to carry out their development programmes free from the menace of a nuclear conflagration and, secondly, because disarmament held out the hope that, as His Holiness the Pope had said, at least part of the savings which could be realized by reducing armaments might be used for the benefit of the developing countries.

4. It was difficult for people living in prosperous countries, where the only threat to life was war or accident, to imagine that whole continents were engaged in a daily war against starvation. That was why disarmament, the supreme desire of the citizens of the developed countries, was only half the goal of the developing countries. The Soviet Union and the United States could one day decide that they would stop the armaments race; but the developing countries could not do away with hunger by decree. It was therefore in the interest of the developed countries themselves to do all they could, to eliminate hunger, which was a two-edged weapon: it not only killed its victims, but it also posed a threat to others since those who had nothing to lose could be terrifying antagonists.

5. However, the selfishness and pride of men, and hence of States, were so great that it might take a long time even to begin to carry out the enterprise of human solidarity whose urgency and necessity were so obvious to all. It was significant that so far, despite all the appeals whole-heartedly endorsed by the entire world, no country had yet taken the initiative of stating that it would voluntarily curtail its war plans and make the sums thus saved available to the United Nations for the purpose of developing the less privileged regions of the world.

6. He therefore appealed to all to make the imaginative leap he had described and to try to understand that, for the developing countries, the two aspects of the problem—the right of men to life and their right to happiness and dignity—were inseparable.

7. A world disarmament conference would complement the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, since it could release the resources necessary for a serious and effective world development programme. That would, progressively and almost automatically, bring about a salutary equilibrium since a reduction in the implements of war would bring about a corresponding reduction in that other weapon of mass destruction, hunger.

8. Some representatives feared that a world disarmament conference would be a source of demagogic emulation between the great Powers; but emulation in

reducing armaments would be desirable and even beneficial, and world public opinion could play a decisive role. That was the reason for the hopes which the developing countries placed in the world disarmament conference.

9. The conference should not only provide a forum where all of the Powers without whom general disarmament was impossible could meet, but it should also further the real and final aim of disarmament. While those two factors taken together would not necessarily ensure the success of the conference, they gave grounds for the hope that the difficulties inherent in the preparation of such a conference could be tackled with reasonable optimism.

10. The sponsors of the forty-three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.340/Rev.1) were aware of those difficulties, and in drafting their text they had left certain provisions deliberately vague. The first essential was to reach agreement in principle and to recommend a very flexible procedure, leaving the door open for the future and having confidence in the good will of those who had initiated the enterprise. In any case, there was nothing to be lost by being confident. The conference could not be held at all unless the obstacles and the difficulties that had been mentioned were solved or overcome.

11. In conclusion, he suggested that the vote on the draft resolution should be deferred until the next meeting to afford additional time for the consultations now in progress.

12. Mr. RAFAEL (Israel) said that, as his delegation understood it, the sponsors of the draft resolution had had three objectives in mind in submitting their draft: they wished to give renewed impetus to the cause of disarmament, to establish a world-wide forum for all countries desirous of making a sincere contribution to the solution of the problem of disarmament, and to convene around the negotiating table the main military Powers, and in particular the five nuclear Powers. His delegation subscribed to all three objectives.

13. Over the years, the debates on disarmament in the United Nations had produced growing consent on general principles and an increasing insight into the difficulty of reaching agreement on practical measures. Only through negotiations on the substance could results be achieved. Although the United Nations might have made slow progress, it had not lacked zeal or ingenuity. In embarking upon a new venture in the field of disarmament, it should keep in mind the interrelation between the international political situation and the prospects of disarmament, and should seek not to impair in any way the progress of the disarmament negotiations in the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament at Geneva, but to give them new momentum.

14. With regard to operative paragraph 2, which dealt with the need for preparatory consultations, the debate had already shown how important it was for the success of the conference that all the technical and procedural details should be planned and that all the political aspects involved should be explored with care and responsibility. The draft resolution left open the question of who was to conduct those consultations.

In his delegation's view, a proliferation of international task forces was neither healthy nor useful; the Committee should rely upon the existing organs of the United Nations or on bodies which were already active in the field of disarmament, such as the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

15. The idea of bringing the five main military Powers together for the purpose of negotiations was sound and necessary, and the debate had shown that that idea was supported not only by the nuclear Powers which were Members of the United Nations, but also by nearly all other countries. The United States representative had stated at the 1376th meeting that, if substantial progress was to be made, Communist China must, at an appropriate stage, participate directly in the process of negotiation. The United Nations should by all means try to facilitate the attainment of that objective.

16. One of the main purposes of the preparatory consultations should be to bring about negotiations in which the five nuclear Powers would be given an opportunity to make a decisive contribution to the cause of disarmament. While that appeared to be the underlying idea of the Saudi Arabian amendments (A/C.1/L.344/Rev.1), his delegation felt that the proposal was somewhat premature and too far-reaching. The idea could be included in the draft resolution by the insertion of the words "in particular the five nuclear Powers" in operative paragraph 2.

17. With regard to operative paragraph 1, both the sponsors of the draft resolution and the Second Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cairo in October 1964, had acknowledged that the United Nations bore the primary responsibility for disarmament. Any support of United Nations principles and purposes expressed by an international conference merited the appreciation of the United Nations, it being understood that such conferences were not designed to take over functions belonging to the Organization, in which all Member States could make their contribution to the solution of current problems.

18. The Cairo Conference had also proposed the holding of special conferences for the conclusion of special agreements on certain measures of disarmament. That suggestion suited certain ideas of his delegation on regional disarmament which it had advanced in previous debates and which it would express in greater detail in connexion with agenda item 28. He suggested that those responsible for the conduct of the preparatory consultations referred to in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution should also explore the possibility of holding such a special conference on regional disarmament.

19. With those comments, his delegation supported the draft resolution because it shared its basic objectives and because it felt that nothing should remain undone that could advance the cause of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. In conclusion, he hoped that the work of the world disarmament conference would be facilitated by the achievements of the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

20. Mr. PACHARIYANGKUN (Thailand) said that disarmament involved the vital interests and the very survival of mankind, since the fear of an annihilating war was being aggravated by increasing international tension and by the arms race. It was therefore the duty of all nations to study and contribute to the solution of the problem of disarmament. The world conference would provide a universal forum for the exchange of views in order to bring nearer the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. Universal attendance alone would not ensure the success of the conference; it was also necessary for the participants to display positive intentions, willingness to co-operate and a sincere desire for peace. The conference should be attended by all nuclear and potential nuclear Powers, including those nuclear Powers which had so far refused to take part in disarmament discussions.

21. The preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution were acceptable and reflected the primary responsibility of the United Nations for the solution of disarmament problems. However, his delegation shared the misgivings which had been expressed about operative paragraph 2. It was not clear who would conduct the consultations, how the preparatory committee would be formed or what steps it would take for the convening of the conference. Although his delegation realized that the text was deliberately vague, in order to allow the participation of non-members of the United Nations, it thought that the composition and terms of reference of the preparatory committee should have been clarified.

22. Thailand was not in principle opposed to the idea of universal participation in the conference and it therefore had no objection to the idea of inviting the People's Republic of China to participate. The conference would test the desire for peace of all countries, including the People's Republic of China.

23. Careful and thorough preparation was essential to the success of the conference. At the same time, the Eighteen-Nation Committee, which was playing an important and useful role, should not relax its efforts. The activities of that Committee and the work of the conference should be complementary.

24. Mr. AZNAR (Spain) said that the principles formulated in the preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution could not fail to win universal support, but that the operative part gave rise to doubt and hesitation. A world conference would undoubtedly be most beneficial to the cause of disarmament, but it was not certain whether a conference of the type envisaged would achieve the desired goal.

25. It had been said that the convening of a world disarmament conference would be difficult outside the United Nations and impossible within the Organization's jurisdiction. There had been a tendency in recent times to remove the problems and conflicts of most concern to mankind from the sphere of influence of the United Nations. If the problem of disarmament were to suffer the same fate, the prestige and authority of the Organization would be severely damaged. Despite the technical difficulties involved, every effort should be made not to renounce the jurisdiction of the United Nations.

26. His delegation was in principle in favour of the convening of a world disarmament conference and would vote for the draft resolution, although it was not sure whether the text would really achieve results. If the conference was to fulfil the hopes of the world, it should not be a forum for political rhetoric and unlimited discussion; the content and scope of the agenda should be clearly defined.

27. It was to be hoped that the method of work and debate would be carefully planned. To that end, the willingness of the nuclear Powers should be mobilized, the experience of the Eighteen-Nation Committee should be used and the opinion and co-operation of technical circles should be sought. Everything should be done to show the anxious world that the convening of the world disarmament conference would be a real step forward and not a prelude to more disillusionment, frustration and disappointment.

28. Mr. LEKIC (Yugoslavia) said that the debate had revealed a strong conviction that a conference to which all countries would be invited should be held at the earliest possible date. The co-operative spirit and readiness to make an active contribution displayed during the debate were an important positive factor. It was to be hoped that the same spirit would prevail during the forthcoming phase of consultations and preparations for the conference.

29. The draft resolution, of which Yugoslavia was a sponsor, understandably did not provide answers to certain questions about arrangements for the conference. The opinions expressed on some of those questions would undoubtedly help the preparatory committee in its work. The Yugoslav delegation was convinced that the questions would be solved through broad constructive efforts and the readiness of countries to make a maximum contribution to the success of the conference. It would be unrealistic and premature to try to answer all questions at that stage; it would be easier to find answers by common agreement when concrete preparations were undertaken.

30. The preparatory committee should be widely representative; the nuclear Powers, as well as countries from various geographical regions and political groupings, should take an active part in preparations from the outset. The question of who would conduct the consultations for the purpose of establishing the preparatory committee should cause no difficulty or concern. The draft resolution clearly stated that the consultations would be conducted with all countries. It would certainly not be too difficult to find an acceptable way of organizing the consultations. Any country wishing to do so would be able to contribute to an agreed solution of the problem.

31. The sponsors of the draft resolution were aware of the relationship between the United Nations and a world disarmament conference. That was why they had emphasized the continuing interest and responsibility of the United Nations in connexion with the solution of the disarmament problem. At the same time, they realized the need to facilitate the participation in the conference of all countries, including those which were not Members of the United Nations. An understanding of that situation, such as had been displayed by most delegations, was essential if progress was to be made.

32. The draft resolution was a delicately balanced text and the sponsors therefore hoped that the Saudi Arabian delegation would not insist on a vote on its amendments (A/C.1/L.344/Rev.1). They also hoped that the delegations which had reservations would be able to support the draft, since their reservations would be taken into account by the preparatory committee.

33. Mr. JOHNSON (Liberia) said that his delegation, as a sponsor of the draft resolution, could not support the Saudi Arabian amendments (A/C.1/L.344/Rev.1). To enter into polemics involving technicalities, foreseen and unforeseen, would be rather premature and would cause difficulties that would hinder the First Committee's work and frustrate the good offices of the Secretary-General and other parties who were seeking a world disarmament conference in the interest of all humanity. The draft resolution provided a practical starting-point for progressing step by step towards the final goal of general and complete disarmament.

34. Mr. FEDORENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted with satisfaction that many delegations had agreed with the views which he had expressed at the 1375th meeting and had pointed out that the Saudi Arabian amendments were unnecessary. While his Government had no objection, in principle, to a discussion of disarmament problems between the five major nuclear Powers, it considered that the convening of a world disarmament conference would be rendered more difficult if such discussions, and the other steps called for by Saudi Arabia, were made a prior condition. In the interest of all States, the revised draft resolution should be adopted as it stood as soon as possible.

35. Mr. PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan) observed that he had not participated in the general debate on the item under discussion, because Afghanistan had sufficiently endorsed the idea of a world disarmament conference at Cairo and in the Disarmament Commission. His delegation was prepared to give its full support to the revised draft resolution in its existing form, and he joined previous speakers in appealing to the Saudi Arabian delegation to withdraw its amendments. If that delegation felt unable to do so, its point of view, and that of other delegations which had expressed doubts about the draft resolution, might be accommodated by replacing the words "for the convening of" in operative paragraph 2 by "with a view to convening", and by adding the words "particularly the appropriate time for the convening of the conference as soon as possible" at the end of operative paragraph 3. If those changes were unacceptable to the sponsors of the draft resolution, his delegation would not press for them, but would vote in favour of the revised text as it stood.

36. Mr. COULIBALY (Mali) said that, while the intentions underlying the Saudi Arabian amendments were laudable, the proposals they contained were somewhat premature at the present stage, setting forth a whole series of steps which might be taken under the terms of operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. The need for negotiations and consultations at all levels, and especially between the five

major nuclear Powers, was generally recognized, but the sole responsibility for convening a world disarmament conference should not be left to those five Powers; moreover, it was undesirable to make the holding of such a conference subject to any prior conditions. The new operative paragraph 2 proposed by Saudi Arabia appeared to issue an instruction to the five major nuclear Powers, one of which, the People's Republic of China, was not a Member of the United Nations. Because of the complexity of the problem, the sponsors of the revised draft resolution had deliberately worded operative paragraph 2 in very general terms, and he appealed to the representative of Saudi Arabia not to press his amendments to a vote, since their adoption would deprive the draft resolution of much of its flexibility. He also hoped that delegations which had expressed some concern regarding the effect of the adoption of the draft resolution on the work of the Eighteen-Nation Committee would refrain from submitting any amendments, since there would be no conflict between the continuation of that Committee's work and the convening of a world disarmament conference.

37. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) remarked that he had not expected the Soviet Union to support his amendments, since a text sponsored by forty-three delegations would obviously carry more weight with a major Power than one submitted by a single representative who had sought to offer something constructive for the benefit of the Committee. He, for his part, did not regard any text as sacrosanct simply because it was sponsored by a large number of delegations, in view of the tendency of many delegations to join in sponsoring, without thorough examination, texts which had in fact been drafted by a very small number of delegations.

38. He had taken care to explain at the preceding meeting that the use of the word "prelude" in his revised amendments did not mean that the informal meetings between the major Powers were a condition for the convening of a world conference, and he regretted that members of the Committee persisted in placing their own interpretation on certain expressions. There was not one word in the amendments that was not based on the desire to foster practical results, and he had submitted them because of certain contingencies which might cause difficulties unless the ambiguity surrounding the text of the draft resolution was eliminated. For instance, if the war in the Far East continued, one major Power might become desperate and strike a blow which would upset the balance of power, and as a result the smaller nations might find themselves divided into certain spheres of influence; again, one of the major Powers, fearing that the balance of power would be upset, might make its peace with another major Power against a third. In either event, a world disarmament conference would be simply a platform for diatribe, the smaller nations would suffer, and the situation would be worse than ever.

39. The two constructive suggestions made by the representative of Afghanistan had evoked no reaction, simply because the forty-three sponsors of the draft resolution had manifested what he would term gregarious solidarity, which had been the bane of the United

Nations and had led many of its organs to vote politically, rather than on grounds of equity, justice and common sense.

40. He had made it clear, in introducing his amendments, that he was not opposed to the convening of a world disarmament conference, but was simply attempting to give certain terms of reference to the preparatory committee, the manner of whose constitution was not indicated in the draft resolution; even if it was to be "widely representative", it would no doubt be guided by the very small number of countries that had actually prepared the draft resolution on a course which they might sincerely consider to be the best, but which would not necessarily lead to a solution.

41. He would heed the appeals to withdraw his amendments only on condition that both the original and the revised texts of the amendments appeared in extenso in the Committee's report, in the hope that they would provide guidelines for the preparatory committee, which he hoped would not be too unwieldy. If his offer was set aside, as the Afghan suggestions had been, he would insist that the amendments should be voted on, in order that, although doomed to defeat, they might be on record.

42. Mr. MISKE (Mauritania) moved the adjournment of the meeting, under rule 119 of the rules of procedure.

The motion was adopted.

The meeting rose at 5.5 p.m.