

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Official Records

**FIRST COMMITTEE, 1252nd
MEETING**

Friday, 19 October 1962,
at 10.45 a.m.



NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Agenda item 77:</i>	
<i>The urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (continued)</i>	
<i>General debate (continued)</i>	41

Chairman: Mr. Omar Abdel Hamid ADEEL
(Sudan).

AGENDA ITEM 77

The urgent need for suspension of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests (A/5141 and Add.1, A/C.1/873) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Dato' ONG (Federation of Malaya) said that the problem of halting nuclear tests was unquestionably of the utmost urgency and deserved priority consideration by the Committee. The dangers inherent in continued testing had been pointed out year after year. Hopes for progress towards the conclusion of a test ban treaty had been shattered by the Soviet Union's violation of the moratorium and the subsequent resumption of testing by the United States. However, the present time was not one for recrimination and regrets but rather for an effort to bring about an effective ban on nuclear testing.

2. The nuclear Powers had repeatedly stated that their respective arsenals were large enough to inflict frightful devastation on any aggressor. The existence of those stockpiles raised doubts as to whether there was any military or scientific advantage in intensifying tests and, in particular, in exploding multi-megaton bombs, the dire immediate and long-term effects of which could not be foreseen.

3. The nuclear Powers must not be granted the exclusive right to determine the fate of mankind; they had no right to take actions which exposed the human race to mortal danger. A treaty effectively banning all tests must be concluded without delay. A simple moratorium, however desirable, was not adequate to ensure the effective and lasting cessation of tests. Unless an agreement was signed soon, new nuclear Powers might emerge and it would become correspondingly more difficult to arrive at a satisfactory agreement. Moreover, a nuclear test ban treaty did not have to await the conclusion of a treaty on general and complete disarmament. The latter must necessarily be brought about by stages, starting with the cessation of nuclear tests, which would not only halt the accumulation of radio-active fall-out but also act as a brake on the arms race.

4. The Federation of Malaya attached the greatest importance to the negotiations in the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament at

Geneva and hoped that they would soon be resumed with the benefit of such guidance as the General Assembly might decide to offer the Eighteen-Nation Committee. The latter's deliberations had served to clarify the opposing positions, which had been brought much closer together. In that connexion, his delegation wished to express its appreciation of the contribution made by the eight non-aligned countries.

5. At Geneva, the Western nuclear Powers had put forward a realistic and practical proposal, under which an agreement unconditionally banning tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space would be concluded, with no provision made for inspection, since the advances in detection systems had made it unnecessary in the case of explosions in those environments. Some on-site inspections remained necessary in order to ensure compliance with a treaty banning underground tests. If, for technical reasons, it was not possible to arrive at an early agreement banning that category of tests, it was to be hoped that the proposal for the banning of tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space would be given serious consideration, since it was the explosions carried out in those three environments which produced the greatest amount of radio-active fall-out.

6. Mr. NILSSON (Sweden) said that the need to halt the development and dissemination of nuclear weapons had become greater during the past year. In many countries, including Sweden, public opinion was demanding that every effort should be made to induce the nuclear Powers to reach agreement.

7. The technical basis for a test ban treaty now existed in all essential respects, and it was difficult to understand the arguments advanced against such an agreement by the two opposing sides, one of which spoke of the risks inherent in the right of inspection while the other spoke of the risks that would arise if that right did not exist. No one questioned the sincerity of the rival Powers; but they must break that vicious circle and recognize that the risks which preoccupied them were small in comparison with those which would result from doing nothing.

8. While it was true that a test ban would be only a modest preliminary step towards general and complete disarmament, its political and psychological importance would be enormous. A new climate would be created which would be conducive to progress in other areas of disarmament.

9. Referring to General Assembly resolutions 1664 (XVI) and 1665 (XVI), he said that in reply to the inquiry addressed to it by the Secretary-General pursuant to the first of those resolutions, the Swedish Government had expressed the view that States not possessing nuclear weapons were entitled to make a ban on testing a precondition for any undertaking on their part to refrain from producing, importing and

storing nuclear weapons. Thus, a test ban treaty would have the effect of greatly encouraging the non-nuclear Powers to contribute to the maintenance of the status quo.

10. Since the remaining obstacles to the conclusion of an agreement were probably smaller than those which had already been overcome, there were grounds for cautious optimism. It was to be noted that neither of the two nuclear blocs insisted any longer on the creation of special machinery to control tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space. The United States offer to conclude an immediate agreement banning all tests in those three environments should be greeted with satisfaction. If the United States proposal could not lead at once to practical results, that was because there was still disagreement on the question of controlling underground tests. The Soviet Union demanded a moratorium on such tests, with no right of inspection, pending the conclusion of a definitive agreement, while the United States would not agree to an uncontrolled moratorium.

11. A large section of public opinion in the United States favoured inspection; in a democratic country, the Government had to take account of the state of public opinion, which in the present instance was influenced by the fact that underground tests could not be positively detected and identified from a distance with the instruments now available. The United States Government was also concerned lest a concession on the question of control should serve as a precedent for similar concessions in connexion with actual disarmament.

12. The United States demanded guarantees of a certain type; however, guarantees of a different kind were possible as a result of the negotiations held thus far. A suspension of underground tests would be fundamentally different in nature from the de facto moratorium in force from 1958 to 1961, which had not entailed an internationally binding commitment by the parties.

13. While the Soviet Union's violation of the moratorium had been a regrettable action, world condemnation would have been even stronger if a formal treaty banning tests had been in existence.

14. Even a control system based on the right, rather than the obligation, of a suspected party to invite inspection would provide certain guarantees. As Mr. Kuznetsov, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, had pointed out at Geneva, any State suspected of having violated the agreement would find itself under strong political pressure to furnish full information and invite on-site inspection in order to free it from suspicion.

15. The Soviet Union's reluctance to grant other States the right to carry out inspections in its territory also reflected the fear of setting a precedent. The Soviet Union apparently regarded secrecy with respect to its defence establishment as an extremely important factor in the existing balance between the great Powers. It should be pointed out, however, that excessive concern with secrecy might complicate efforts to achieve a relaxation of tension.

16. Exchanges of information between different countries, without regard to ideological and national frontiers, were a prerequisite for progress in the present-day world. Military secrets were tending to become less important and to have a shorter life-

span. The cause of peace was not served by erecting walls of distrust and secrecy around matters which might in fact be well known to all countries. An effort must be made to find means of giving practical expression to the idea of an open world.

17. In order to resolve the remaining differences of opinion concerning control, the moratorium on testing could be made provisional and of limited duration, pending, among other things, further advances in seismological instrumentation. Guarantees could also be provided against abuse of the obligation to permit inspection. An agreement of that kind would be in line with the memorandum presented at Geneva on 16 April 1962 by the eight non-aligned countries,^{1/} which he hoped would receive the support of the General Assembly. He urged the nuclear Powers to take a positive attitude towards proposals made by countries which did not possess nuclear weapons. The General Assembly should also make an urgent appeal to the nuclear Powers to reach early agreement. The end of the present test series would probably be a propitious moment for the conclusion of an agreement.

18. Mr. MOD (Hungary) regretted that despite the expressed wishes of world public opinion, no agreement on the banning of nuclear tests had yet been reached. The reason was that the Western Powers had from the beginning insisted on the necessity of setting up an international control system including on-site inspections, exaggerating the difficulties involved in order the better to use them for their own purposes. Despite their statements that without control and inspection there was no guarantee against secret testing, in 1960 a Belgian laboratory had already detected all nuclear explosions carried out in the atmosphere. Now that they had been forced to admit that tests in outer space, in the atmosphere and under water could be detected by national means, the Western Powers were now pursuing the same policy in regard to underground tests. The fact was that underground tests could also be detected by existing national means, as had been proved by the underground explosion set off in the Sahara in May 1962, which had been detected by sixty-five observation posts located in practically every part of the world. Moreover, if a test ban agreement was reached, the present network of posts could be considerably extended by improved international co-operation. Thus there existed even now the technical and scientific conditions making such an agreement possible, without any necessity of creating a system of international control and on-site inspection.

19. The compromise solution proposed by the eight uncommitted countries was a touchstone by which the real desire of the parties to put an end to testing could be judged. The Soviet Union had from the first accepted the memorandum of 16 April 1962 as a basis for further discussions; the United States, on the other hand, had accepted it after much hesitation, only as one of the bases for discussion and only for tests carried out in outer space, in the atmosphere and under water. Thus, the United States accepted only three-quarters of the uncommitted countries' proposals. It was therefore wrong to assert, as some had done, that the United States and Soviet positions were almost identical, particularly as the Soviet Union had also accepted the Mexican proposal for a

^{1/} Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, Supplement for January 1961 to December 1962, document DC/203, annex I, sect. J.

cessation of all tests by 1 January 1963. What had to be ascertained was whether the United States really wanted to stop testing and whether the acceptance of only three-quarters of the uncommitted countries' proposals constituted any progress. The President of the United States had declared that in certain cases his country would have to take the initiative in resorting to nuclear war, and clearly those who intended to use nuclear weapons had no desire to put an end to testing. It was for that reason that the United States had up to the present time rejected any reasonable Soviet proposal which took account of mutual security.

20. It was obvious that a ban on tests in certain environments only would not eliminate the danger posed by the improvement of nuclear weapons; tests would continue under cover of a sham agreement. As the Burmese representative had pointed out, so long as underground tests continued it would be difficult to end other tests, and any agreement prohibiting tests in three environments only would be precarious and short-lived. The delegations which had responded favourably to the United States proposals were considering only the radiation danger; the greatest danger, however, was that of a nuclear war, and that danger could be removed only by banning tests in all environments without exception.

21. The United States maintained that underground tests could not be detected with sufficient certainty. But even in 1958, experts had stated that 90 per cent of underground tests could be detected, and science had made considerable advances since that time. Moreover, a scientist acting as an adviser to the United States Government had stated that all the explosions set off in Nevada and New Mexico, even those below one kiloton, could have been detected with almost complete certainty by an observation network established under a nuclear test ban agreement. It was also known, from a secret report prepared by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, that earthquakes could be distinguished from nuclear explosions and that the latter could be localized to within a tenth of a mile; but those facts were so little known that it had been possible to distort them completely at Geneva. Thus, contrary to the thesis invented by the United States, the obstacles to an immediate nuclear test ban were not of a technical nature. For that reason, the meeting of experts proposed by the Italian and Austrian delegations would not facilitate the conclusion of an agreement; on the contrary, it would impede it by encouraging the continuance of tests.

22. The General Assembly would be taking a considerable step forward if, in addition to adopting a resolution banning nuclear tests in outer space, in the atmosphere and under water, it declared itself, in accordance with the Mexican proposal, in favour of a cessation of underground tests by 1 January 1963 pending the conclusion of an agreement on the subject. Admittedly, a test ban agreement would not in itself avert the danger of nuclear war, and the main aim was still general and complete disarmament. However, such an agreement would prevent the development of still more powerful weapons and would have a favourable effect on negotiations for general and complete disarmament. His delegation would therefore support any provision which would facilitate the conclusion of such an agreement, and it was convinced that if all countries combined their well intentioned efforts the General Assembly would be able to settle the matter at its present session.

23. Mr. BITSIOS (Greece) said that the participation of eight uncommitted States had had a beneficial effect on the Geneva discussions, and that the nuclear Powers had made considerable concessions. All that appeared necessary to make an agreement possible was that the parties concerned should demonstrate a little more goodwill. That being so, the General Assembly could play a decisive role: it should examine the arguments which were delaying the cessation of nuclear tests and, having formed its opinion, should throw all its weight behind that opinion so that negotiations, when resumed, would achieve positive results in the shortest time possible.

24. In his delegation's view there were only two possible solutions. One of them, the total prohibition of nuclear testing, would have the advantage of settling the matter once and for all and make it possible for all efforts to be concentrated on the complex problem of general and complete disarmament. In the existing circumstances and in view of the unilateral termination of the voluntary moratorium of 1958-1961, the leaders of countries possessing the supreme weapon had no right to risk the security of their people on the basis of a mere declaration. They could rely only on their instruments, and if those instruments were still not sufficiently sensitive for the task, they could not be blamed for insisting on effective means of control at least for unidentifiable events. Moreover, in view of the limitations which would surround the proposed system of control with regard to the number of visits, the extent of the territory inspected and the composition, equipment and freedom of movement of the international control teams, it was difficult to understand the opposition aroused by such a condition. Even if any slight risk of espionage existed, it could be eliminated by technical arrangements; in any event, mankind had the right, in view of the mortal dangers threatening it, to ask the nuclear Powers to assume that insignificant risk.

25. However, the negotiations for an agreement on the banning of nuclear tests in all environments were at present meeting obstacles which might delay their conclusion. Time was pressing; and just as it had rightly been decided to isolate the question of nuclear tests on the ground that it was more urgent and easier to resolve, and that its solution would contribute to an agreement on general disarmament by reducing tension and promoting trust, so, similarly, the best course would be to accept, for the time being, the second solution: an agreement to ban tests producing radio-active fall-out, which would remove the most serious and immediate danger. Such an agreement, far from legalizing underground explosions, would meet the pressing appeals of the people of the world, would clear the way for technical discussions on methods of detecting underground tests and would constitute a decisive step toward disarmament. In the absence of such an agreement, the negotiations could be renewed only in an atmosphere of discouragement and pessimism.

26. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the debate in the First Committee would produce a clearly formulated resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority of members, stressing the desirability of an immediate and unconditional agreement banning tests in the three environments in which the question of controls no longer presented any scientific, technical or juridical problems. With re-

gard to underground tests, the Committee should recommend that the nuclear Powers should at once begin technical consultations with a view to eliminating the existing difficulties and facilitating the negotiation of an agreement.

27. Mr. PALAMARCHUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the statements made in the United Nations reflected the feeling of millions of people who wanted a final end to nuclear tests. Like the USSR, the Ukrainian delegation advocated the immediate cessation of all tests as a first step on the road to general and complete disarmament; international confidence would thereby be strengthened and pollution of the atmosphere by radio-active fall-out would be ended.

28. The representative of the United States had maintained that the problem of control was the chief obstacle to an agreement. That was merely camouflage. In reality, the attitude of the Western Powers was shown by their reluctance to sign an agreement banning nuclear tests, accounted for by their desire to retain complete freedom to devise and improve weapons of mass destruction. At the twelfth session of the General Assembly, the United Kingdom delegation had not only disputed the urgency and importance of stopping nuclear tests but had also maintained that the cessation of testing was not a disarmament measure. Yet at the current session the United Kingdom representative had declared (1250th meeting) that the cessation of tests would be a major step towards disarmament. Because of that reversal, the Western Powers were now able to assert that international inspection—in practice an essential condition for general and complete disarmament—must be established in connexion with any ban on nuclear tests. It was common knowledge, however, that nuclear explosions could be identified by means of national detection devices, as the United Kingdom representative had himself admitted in regard to explosions in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. The Western Powers' evasion of the question of underground tests was due solely to the United States' anxiety to continue them, for—as the United States representative had said on 17 August 1962 at the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament—it regarded them as important for the development of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the representatives of many States, including Burma, Ceylon, Iraq and Mali, had supported the banning of tests in all environments, stressing that the cessation of tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water would not end the arms race: weapons of mass destruction would be qualitatively improved.

29. Yet a solution could be found if it was genuinely desired. If the United States and the United Kingdom were not prepared to agree to ban tests in all environments, a treaty could be concluded banning tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, the parties agreeing to continue negotiations on the banning of underground tests and to refrain from such tests until an agreement on the matter had been concluded. The Western Powers did not want that solution because the suspension would not be subject to control. Under present conditions, however, all nuclear tests, including underground tests, were recorded by a large number of States. During the 1958-1961 moratorium there had been no more international control than existed today; yet all countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom,

had been certain that no secret nuclear tests were being carried out. Today, with improved national means of detection, the Western Powers were claiming that they could no longer be so certain. The only logical deduction to be made from that attitude was that those Powers intended to continue underground tests so as to improve their nuclear equipment.

30. The Western delegations had further declared that, since the last moratorium had failed, they could not attach any value to suspension without control. The Soviet Union's proposal, however, had nothing to do with that moratorium, which had not been based on any international agreement but only on unilateral assurances. Under that proposal, the nuclear Powers would conclude an agreement containing precise international obligations which they would solemnly undertake to respect.

31. Other possibilities of agreement were set forth in the memorandum of 16 April 1962 submitted by the eight uncommitted countries at Geneva. The Soviet Union had agreed to the establishment of an international commission composed of experts from neutral countries, which would examine data received from national observation posts and could be invited by the States signing the agreement to visit their respective territories in case of suspicious events. The Western Powers at first had shown no interest in the memorandum but had later accepted it as "a basis for negotiation". They in fact intended to maintain their own position as defined, for example, in the memoranda they had submitted to the First Committee on 11 October (A/C.1/873), in which it was stated that no scientific technique had been found which would permit the identification of underground nuclear explosions without on-site inspection, and they sought to divest the neutral countries' memorandum of all substance.

32. While that shilly-shallying was going on the situation was deteriorating. Eminent scientists had calculated that the world's "nuclear destruction potential" was at present 250,000 megatons, or about 80 tons per person. It was therefore essential to stop the death race. The General Assembly could not confine itself to expressing pious intentions and the vague hope that the Geneva negotiations would be renewed. It was the Assembly's duty to study most carefully the proposal put forward at the 1153rd plenary meeting of the Assembly by the representative of Mexico, urgently requiring the nuclear Powers to end nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapon tests in all environments not later than 1 January 1963 and to resume negotiations without delay with a view to reaching agreement on the final prohibition of all such tests.

33. Mr. MBOYO (Congo, Leopoldville) associated himself with all who had expressed the wish for an immediate cessation of nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests and for the suspension of such tests pending the conclusion of international agreements. He noted that the United States and the Soviet Union were both advocating the cessation and suspension of tests but that their positions differed in regard to the necessary control measures. The conflicting views of the two Powers had already moved closer to each other, and he hoped that that trend would become more pronounced. Tests would not be stopped by rigidly insisting on the condition that on-site inspections should be carried out; on the other hand, the complete cessation of nuclear tests could never be achieved

until there was the guarantee of sufficiently effective control to ensure that no test would take place in the future. Such control was in the interest of the Organization and of Member States.

34. What mattered was to have a world without war and the first step towards building that better world would be to suspend and ban nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests. It was imperative that man should not be allowed to work his own destruction. He thought it relevant to mention that the possible devastation of atomic bomb explosions was often foreseen in relation to Europe or America but hardly ever in relation to Asia or Africa; yet it was precisely the Asian and African States which protested most vigorously against nuclear experiments. Those States therefore had the most disinterested view of the situation and their opposition to nuclear and thermo-nuclear tests anywhere in the world was in the interests of all mankind. As his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs had said at the sixteenth session of the General Assembly (1035th plenary meeting), the first step the United Nations must take was to ban the testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons and to bring about the destruction of all existing stocks. The great Powers must therefore be persuaded by the moral force of the United Nations and the international co-operation it could stimulate to arrive at a "rapprochement" and an agreement on the suspension of weapons of world destruction. The United

States, the Soviet Union, and the countries following in their footsteps would not lose face by heeding the appeals made to them to do so.

35. His delegation supported the proposal put forward by the representative of Mexico at the 1153rd plenary meeting of the General Assembly, but wondered whether the deadline of 1 January 1963 could not be advanced. The majority of members were in favour of an immediate suspension of tests and the suggested interval of two and a half months would seem to indicate that the United Nations did not attach the requisite importance to the problem. The sole consideration in fixing the deadline should be that of the time necessary for consultation and for putting the decisions into effect. It was therefore to be hoped that the United States and the Soviet Union would agree that tests should be stopped at once or would at least propose a date earlier than 1 January 1963. That would make it possible to work more effectively for a world treaty on the prohibition of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapon tests. That was the only kind of agreement consistent with the aims set by the United Nations. However, the possibility of partial agreements should not be overlooked, for in such matters no effort should be spared. Lastly, the Eighteen-Nation Committee should be more energetic and organize its work better so as to make more rapid progress.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.