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PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE FOURTEENTH REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: ITEM PROPOSED BY IRELAND

THE PREVENTION OF THE WIDER DISSEMINATION  
OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Letter dated 15 June 1959 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland  
to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from the Government of Ireland, I have the honour to request the inclusion of the following item on the provisional agenda of the fourteenth regular session of the General Assembly:

"The prevention of the wider dissemination of  
nuclear weapons".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, I enclose an explanatory memorandum on this question.

(Signed) F.H. BOLAND  
Permanent Representative of Ireland

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

In the course of the thirteen session of the General Assembly, the Irish delegation drew attention to the dangers to world peace involved in the spread of nuclear weapons and to the urgent need for an international agreement which would ensure that the present nuclear Powers would remain the sole possessors of such weapons. During the general debate in the Assembly, the Chairman of the Irish delegation, Mr. Frank Aiken, Minister for External Affairs, proposed that the present nuclear Powers should undertake not to supply nuclear weapons to any other country, and that the Assembly should then adopt a resolution calling on all other States to refrain from manufacturing or acquiring such weapons. This resolution could be followed by a convention in which these States would bind themselves not merely to renounce nuclear weapons, but to accept United Nations supervision of their nuclear development for peaceful purposes. It was recognized that special arrangements would have to be made to secure the adherence of non-Member States to the proposed convention.

The Chairman of the Irish delegation subsequently submitted a draft resolution<sup>1/</sup> on this subject during the debate in the First Committee on disarmament questions. The text of the draft resolution was as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"1. Recognizing that the aim of the United Nations in the field of disarmament is an effective general agreement on the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction which will provide for the cessation of the production of such weapons, the destruction of existing stocks and the progressive limitation of conventional armaments,

"2. Recognizing further that the danger now exists that an increase in the number of States possessing nuclear weapons may occur aggravating international tension and the difficulty of maintaining world peace and thus rendering more difficult the attainment of the general disarmament agreement envisaged in paragraph 1,

"3. Decides to establish an ad hoc Committee to study the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons, and recommend to the fourteenth session of the General Assembly appropriate measures for averting these dangers."

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<sup>1/</sup> A/C.1/L.206.

In introducing this draft resolution to the First Committee, Mr. Aiken explained that it was conceived as a step towards the restriction of nuclear weapons, leading eventually to their abolition. He also pointed out that the existing nuclear stalemate would cease to apply once nuclear weapons begin to come into the possession of smaller countries. Nothing except international measures to prevent the dissemination of such weapons could prevent them from coming ultimately into the possession of small States or even of revolutionary organizations. The use of nuclear weapons by a small State or revolutionary group could lead to the outbreak of a general war with disastrous consequences for the future of mankind. In this connexion, the Chairman of the Irish delegation expressed the view that measures to prevent the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons could not await a comprehensive disarmament settlement, since many years may have to elapse before any such settlement could be achieved. Indeed, the failure to check the dissemination of nuclear weapons during the long period of general disarmament negotiations might in itself render these negotiations fruitless.

At the conclusion of the debate on the disarmament resolutions before the First Committee, the Irish representative asked for a separate roll-call vote on paragraph 2 of the Irish draft resolution, i.e. the paragraph which would have the General Assembly recognize the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons. The result of the vote was 37 to none, with 44 abstentions. The representative of Ireland expressed his satisfaction that no negative votes were cast against the paragraph and that the recognition of the danger of the wider distribution of nuclear weapons was unopposed. Mr. Aiken subsequently withdrew the draft resolution as a whole, indicating that he did not wish to insist on any particular method of dealing with the generally acknowledged danger, but expressing the hope that the reconstituted Disarmament Commission would deal with it as one of its first items. He realized that most Governments had not had sufficient time to study the matter fully since the introduction of the Irish draft resolution.

In the light of the recognition of the dangers involved in the wider distribution of nuclear weapons implied in the vote of the First Committee at the thirteenth session of the General Assembly, and of subsequent developments, the Irish Government believes that it will be the wish of the General Assembly to give further consideration to this important and urgent question at its fourteenth

session in the hope that effective and generally acceptable means of dealing with it may be found. To this end, Ireland requests that the item entitled "The prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons" be placed upon the provisional agenda of the fourteenth session of the General Assembly and will submit a draft resolution to the Assembly for its consideration in due course.

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