

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/5104
12 March 1962

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 9 MARCH 1962 FROM THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE
UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On the instructions of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom I have the honour to transmit the text of three messages about the forthcoming Disarmament Conference addressed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan, to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Khrushchev. The letter of 7 February was sent jointly by Mr. Macmillan and the President of the United States, Mr. Kennedy.

I would request you to have these messages circulated as an official United Nations document for the information of Members.

(Signed) C.T. CROWE
Deputy Permanent Representative of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to the United Nations

Text of Mr. Macmillan's and President Kennedy's message
of 7 February 1962, to Mr. Khrushchev

1. We are taking the unusual step of addressing this message to you in order to express our own views, as well as to solicit yours, on what we can jointly do to increase the prospects of success at the new disarmament negotiations which will begin in Geneva in March.
2. We are convinced that a supreme effort must be made and the three of us must accept a common measure of personal obligation to seek every avenue to restrain and reverse the mounting arms race. Unless some means can be found to make at least a start in controlling the quickening arms competition, events may take their own course and erupt in a disaster which will afflict all peoples, those of the Soviet Union as well as of the United Kingdom and the United States.
3. Disarmament negotiations in the past have been sporadic and frequently interrupted. Indeed, there has been no sustained effort to come to grips with this problem at the conference table since the three months of meetings ending in June of 1960, over a year and a half ago. Before that, no real negotiations on the problem of general disarmament had taken place since negotiations came to an end in September 1957.
4. It should be clear to all of us that we can no longer afford to take a passive view of these negotiations. They must not be allowed to drift into failure. Accordingly, we propose that we three accept a personal responsibility for directing the part to be played by our representatives in the forthcoming talks, and that we agree beforehand that our representatives will remain at the conference table until concrete results have been achieved, however long this may take.
5. We propose that our negotiators seek progress on three levels. First, they should be instructed to work out a programme of general and complete disarmament which could serve as the basis for the negotiation of an implementing treaty or treaties. Our negotiators could thus build upon the common ground which was found in the bilateral talks between the United States and the USSR which took place this summer, and which were reflected in the statement of agreed principles of 20 September 1961. Secondly, our negotiators should attempt to ascertain the

widest measure of disarmament which would be implemented at the earliest possible time while still continuing their maximum efforts to achieve agreement on those other aspects which present more difficulty. Thirdly, our negotiators should try to isolate and identify initial measures of disarmament which could, if put into effect without delay, materially improve international security and the prospects for further disarmament progress. We do not believe that these triple objectives need conflict with one another and an equal measure of urgency should be attached to each.

6. As a symbol of the importance which we jointly attach to these negotiations, we propose that we be represented at the outset of the disarmament conference by the Foreign Ministers of our three countries, who would declare their readiness to return to participate personally in the negotiations as the progress made by our permanent representatives warrants. We assume, in this case, the Foreign Ministers of other States as well will wish to attend. The status and progress of the conference should, in addition, be the subject of more frequent communications among the three of us. In order to give impetus to the opening of the disarmament negotiations, we could consider having the Foreign Ministers of our three countries convene at Geneva in advance of the opening of the Conference to concert our plans.

7. At this time in our history, disarmament is the most urgent and the most complex issue we face. The threatening nature of modern armaments is so appalling that we cannot regard this problem as a routine one or as an issue which may be useful primarily for the scoring of propaganda victories. The failure in the nuclear test conference, which looked so hopeful and to the success of which we attached such a high priority in the spring of 1961, constitutes a discouraging background for our new efforts. However, we must be resolved to overcome this recent setback, with its immediate consequences, and forego fruitless attempts to apportion blame. Our renewed effort must be to seek and find ways in which the competition between us, which will surely persist for the foreseeable future, can be pursued on a less dangerous level. We must view the forthcoming disarmament meetings as an opportunity and a challenge which time and history may not once again allow us.

8. We would welcome an early expression of your views.

Text of Mr. Macmillan's reply of 14 February 1962, to
Mr. Khrushchev's letter of 10 February 1962

1. I have to thank you for your message of 10 February in which you replied to the message which the President of the United States of America and I had sent you on 7 February about the important question of disarmament.
2. I was gratified to see that you had been thinking along similar lines as ourselves about the forthcoming Conference at Geneva and were willing to take a direct personal interest in the negotiations.
3. I for my part am ready to intervene personally at any stage of the Conference when it appears that such action can be of positive value towards achieving a successful result.
4. But I must be frank and say that the procedure proposed in our message of 7 February is the one which in our considered view is the best designed to give a practical start to the work of the Conference. As you say in your message there exists today a better basis than has existed hitherto for successful work by the Disarmament Conference. But there still remain, as you also say, wide differences between the Soviet and Western positions. My thought was and remains that some attempt should first be made to explore these differences in detail and to search for means of overcoming them.
5. Of course I shall take a close personal interest in the negotiations from the first. I am not so much concerned with routine procedures and arguments as with results. Much clarifying work has to be done in the first stages before it is possible to review the situation and the possibilities for agreement in broad outline. It will be necessary to do this in any case before 1 June, when the Conference will have to report to the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations.
6. I therefore agree with you that, as President Kennedy and I suggested in our message of 7 February, the Heads of Government should take a direct personal interest in the work of the Conference. I feel, however, that a meeting between them will be more likely to be practicable and fruitful when the main problems have been clarified and some progress has been made. Meanwhile I think that meetings at the Foreign Ministers level would be the best instrument for achieving progress at the opening stages.

in their territory. They likewise withheld their support from the resolution providing for Africa to be declared a denuclearized zone.

The Soviet Union, for its own part, will continue to do everything, as it has in the past, to promote the implementation of measures aimed at the establishment of favourable conditions for the practical solution of the major problem of our times - general and complete disarmament under strict international control.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) A. GROMYKO
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the USSR

10 March 1962

7. A special responsibility for the success of the Conference clearly devolves on our Governments as nuclear Powers and it was for this reason that the President and I suggested to you that the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, United States and USSR might meet in advance of the Conference in order to concert plans for its work. I trust that you will give your most serious consideration to this suggestion and that it will be acceptable to the Soviet Government.

Text of Mr. Macmillan's reply of 26 February 1962 to
Mr. Khrushchev's message of 22 February 1962

I have now been able to study very carefully your message of 22 February, for which I thank you. The main proposal in your letter is that made in your previous message, to which I had also given careful study. It really is that the best way of making progress in the vital matter of disarmament would be for the eighteen nation committee to be inaugurated by a meeting of the heads of the member governments concerned. Of course I see your purpose that this would call the attention of the world to the vital importance of disarmament. But in a sense the world is quite conscious of this. What it most of all is longing for is some practical progress. I still feel that the plan which President Kennedy and I put forward, is the best method for reaching what we all want.

Perhaps I might try to set out my thoughts again for I fear that there are one or two points which you may have misunderstood.

I have already assumed as British Prime Minister direct responsibility for the British contributions to the Geneva discussions. As I told you in my letter of 14 February, I am also very ready to take part personally in these negotiations, when it seems that the presence of heads of government can be of positive value. Two situations might arise in which this method might be fruitful. The first is if the conference is making satisfactory and definite progress. In such a case a meeting of the heads of government might well serve to consolidate what had been achieved and to make a further step towards an actual agreement.

The second situation is one in which certain major and clear points of disagreement have emerged which threaten to hold up further progress. In that case the heads of government should perhaps meet in order to try to break the deadlock.

It seems to me that either of these situations may arise fairly soon after the work of the committee begins but not before the positions of all the participating governments have been clearly set out. It is when the main problems and difficulties have been thus exposed that we shall know the points upon which we ought to concentrate our efforts.

I hope you will not mind my pointing out that some of your arguments really confirm this view of the best method of making progress. For example, you say that the differences between your position and ours are already abundantly clear. It is, alas, clear that there are great differences, but I do not think that their exact scope is easily defined. Let me take, for example, the way in which you state the Western position on the vital problem of control or verification. In our view verification or weapons destroyed is not in itself a sufficient safeguard against the possible retention or manufacture of weapons above the level which has been agreed for retention. This is only an example. There are others. What I am anxious about is that before we address ourselves to such problems face to face we should really be sure of all the facts and have the differences clearly defined. You should fully understand our position and we should fully understand yours.

I am convinced from reading your message several times over that unless there is a detailed discussion of these extremely complicated questions the differences between us will not emerge in a precise form. That is the first essential towards their solution. I hope therefore I can persuade you that the best method will be that preliminary discussions should be conducted by the Foreign Ministers of the governments concerned and that we should reserve the use of the heads of government for the kind of situation which I have described. In this connexion, may I urge you to look again with sympathy at our proposal to which you have not directly replied that the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, United States of America and USSR should meet a few days in advance of the conference. This will give them a chance of going over the field for which these three countries have a special responsibility - that is, the whole nuclear problem.

You will not, Mr. Chairman, think it discourteous of me if I do not enter into the rather more polemical parts of your message. I do not believe that we will make progress by imputations as to motives. It is very easy to make charges and countercharges. That is propaganda, not progress. Once more, I would like to express the hope that on this vital question of disarmament, so important to the future of mankind, we can set about our task in a practical spirit, for that is what the world is looking for. In this spirit President Kennedy and I put forward our plan and I hope that you will reconsider it from this point of view. I repeat that I remain ready for personal participation at the right time.