

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SIXTH SESSION

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FIRST COMMITTEE 452nd

MEETING

Friday, 23 November 1951, at 10.30 a.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Finn MOE (Norway).

*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Carlos Blanco (Cuba), the Vice-Chairman, presided.*

## Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments (A/1943 and A/C.1/667) (*continued*)

[Item 66]\*

## International control of atomic energy: report of the Committee of Twelve (A/1922) (*continued*)

[Item 16]\*

### GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. DOIDGE (New Zealand) said that it was a cause of disappointment to his delegation that the three-Power proposals (A/C.1/667), which seemed timely and realistic, had met with the disfavour of a few Member States, the co-operation of at least one of which was indispensable.

2. The first question that would come to the mind of anyone who supported the three-Power proposal would obviously be the degree of sincerity of this proposal. His delegation felt that any representative who might have entertained doubts had been adequately answered by the sponsors. Moreover, his delegation believed that the plan was based upon experience.

3. If one would recall the Disarmament Conference held at Geneva in 1932, one would find that its failure had been fundamentally due to mutual distrust. The proposals for the exchange and verification of information had been emphasized rather at the end of the Conference. The three-Power plan now before the Committee showed the fruit of reflection on that experience and was rightly concerned that the initial steps should be taken in the right order. What the three Powers had proposed was not a partial disarmament, but a universal and continuing process of regulation, limitation and balanced reduction.

4. If the two concepts of disarmament holding the field, namely, the gradual and the dramatic, were to be set in opposition, the tripartite plan would, obviously, represent a notable example of gradualism. Though the dramatic concept might be very appealing to the people of the world who yearned for peace, the present international situation would hardly be inductive to the acceptance of that concept. Though the tripartite proposal would not offer a quick and full relief and could not even begin while aggression was still abroad, it should mark the beginning of the end of the armaments race. The USSR proposal (A/1962) for one-third reduction in arms by the leading Powers and the immediate prohibition of the atomic bomb, though appealing to uncritical minds, was still unclear about the unequivocal condition for verification. The three-Power proposal was, however, very clear about that point, which might prove itself to be the great stumbling block. Indeed, nothing in the experience of States or in the nature of things would justify his delegation in expecting that in such a vital matter as the reduction of armaments, States would trust the non-verified word of others.

5. The New Zealand delegation believed that public opinion would welcome with relief the general acceptance by the General Assembly of the tripartite plan, even if it were to be taken as a basis for further negotiations. The drama which the tripartite proposal might appear to lack and the Soviet Union proposals to offer to public opinion might be realized in other ways, for example, by the conclusion of an armistice in Korea.

6. In conclusion, Mr. Doidge suggested that the commission should not consist exclusively of the regular representatives. Indeed, it would be advisable for governments to send either their Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Ministers of Defence to the more important meetings. Since Article 28, paragraph 2 of the Charter of the United Nations contained a similar idea, his delegation believed that such a move might be applied with advantage in the proposed disarmament commission.

7. Mr. FORSYTH (Australia) said that no one could have failed to be impressed by the moderation and sincerity with which the three-Power proposal (A/C.1/667) had been

\* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

put forward. Although the Australian delegation could not agree with the conclusions of the representative of Czechoslovakia her deliberate examination of the tripartite proposal (449th meeting) seemed to hold out some promise, however limited, of readiness for discussion. On the whole, the opinion of the Committee had been highly favourable to the three-Power plan.

8. He recalled that Mr. Casey, head of the Australian delegation, had, in a plenary session,<sup>1</sup> deplored the fact that the majority of countries were being forced to divert their resources and manpower from peaceful industry to defence. Though disarmament was desirable, both for the reduction of the risk of war or for the positive ends of peace, the present international tension would not allow any State to throw its weapons away and to feel secure at the same time. The democracies could not disarm so long as war was being waged in Korea. They earnestly hoped to see fears removed and understanding and co-operation beginning to grow. Consequently, the conciliatory attitude of the three sponsors of the plan placed a great responsibility on the Soviet Union.

9. The Australian representative said that action of a pacific or co-operative nature would help to bring about the conditions in which disarmament would become possible. Disarmament could only be undertaken on the basis of certainty, of knowledge obtained through impartial and complete verification by international inspection.

10. His delegation found acceptable the proposal that disarmament be approached through a progressive system of disclosure and verification. His delegation regarded disarmament as a single problem; it supported, therefore, the recommendation to that effect made by the Committee of Twelve. Although that was the attitude which the Soviet Union Government had taken in the past, the representative of that Government had found reason to vote against the recommendation. He hoped that the USSR would find it possible to reconsider its attitude.

11. The subject of disarmament, being extremely complex, should be dealt with by the proposed disarmament commission and not by the First Committee, whose task should be to formulate directives containing broad but basic principles for the guidance of the Commission.

12. In conclusion, Mr. Forsyth stated that aggression was not altogether a matter of the level of armaments since, even if that level were lower, an aggressive government could find means of attacking its neighbours. This was recognized in the Charter of the United Nations when it sanctioned defensive arrangements among Members of the United Nations.

13. The delegation of Australia would support the three-Power proposal.

14. Mr. TSIANG (China) remarked that during his five years' experience in the United Nations not a single representative had proposed universal, total disarmament which was the complete solution, since all others were merely approaches to that ideal. The acceptance of such a proposal would not only lessen the danger of a war between the great Powers but also the danger of a war between a big Power and a small Power as well as between small Powers themselves. A one-third reduction of armaments would not yield any security to the smaller Powers.

15. Universal disarmament being an ideal solution had not been proposed, since our present world was not an ideal one. Consequently, the outstanding merit of the three-Power proposal (A/C.1/667) was its realistic approach to the existing international problems.

16. If we were to look at the present world situation, we would find two clear facts, namely, the political tension and the unbalanced state of armaments. Either one of those two facts were serious enough, yet both of them existed at the same time.

17. His delegation believed that the central features of the tripartite proposals were the balanced reduction of armaments and the effective prohibition of the atomic bomb through effective control. As to the balanced reduction of armaments, one would find two aims, namely, the reduction of all types of arms and armed forces necessary for defence purposes and an approximate balance of military power following reduction. Certainly, no one could question the wisdom of either of those two objectives. As to reduction, although the tripartite plan did not specify the ratio, balanced reduction could not be achieved unless based on exact information. Hence the need for disclosure and verification through a system of international inspection.

18. As to atomic weapons, the representative of China recalled that his delegation had participated in the work of the Atomic Energy Commission since its beginning. It had always maintained that there could be no effective prohibition without effective control. The system of the international control of atomic energy, approved by the General Assembly (resolution 191 (III)) with a large majority, appeared to him sound but his delegation kept an open mind.

19. Mr. C. MALIK (Lebanon) observed that the outstanding characteristic of the question under discussion was that it was the very essence of a State, in a dangerously imperfect world, to subordinate every other consideration to the need for its survival. With such issues facing the great Powers, the representatives of smaller States, which manufactured none of the main weapons under discussion, sometimes felt a certain timidity in intervening in the debate on such matters. However, the attitude of the small Powers must needs be expressed at the time of voting; further, small States would inevitably be implicated in any war between great Powers, in which indeed they stood to lose even more than the latter, since such a war could result in loss of their existence. Moreover, weapons equally as devastating as the atomic bomb could be manufactured by the chemical laboratories of most Member States, and must presumably be included in a system of disarmament which would thus be likely to effect such nations as well.

20. Though the proposals and counter proposals being put forward came from either the western Powers or the USSR, the remainder of Member States constituted a significant moral base which could not be overlooked. The small nations, the weak and the under-developed countries, obviously had the highest stake in the possibility of disarmament, because they would probably stand to gain more economically than anyone else. For those reasons, and because questions of fundamental human outlook could never be a monopoly of the great alone, his delegation would enter whole-heartedly into the debate.

21. Unfortunately, the subject under discussion must be approached on the basis of the assumption of the complete absence of confidence to which reference had already been made. There would be no disarmament unless a foolproof system of verification and inspection was instituted. Such a system involved the progressive penetration of two

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 338th meeting.

mysteries : that to which Mr. Schuman, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, had referred in plenary session <sup>2</sup> and the atomic mystery alluded to by the representative of Czechoslovakia (449th meeting). In fairness, it must be pointed out that the latter was historically a reaction to the former, which placed one-third of the world effectively out of bounds so far as the remaining two-thirds were concerned. There was no doubt that so long as the inequality of access between the two worlds lasted, any talk of disarmament must be idle.

22. Citing United States consent to include atomic weapons in the weapons to be subjected to disclosure and inspection, he considered that if that modification were matched by a corresponding one in the USSR position, a real possibility for at least a beginning of agreement would result. Since the principle of objective verification and inspection seemed indispensable, all must hope that the great Powers would agree to set up an organ which would elaborate the practical terms of a disarmament programme. Indeed, as had been noted, the points of view of the two sides seemed to be coming closer together. Who could take responsibility of thwarting that movement ?

23. Mr. Malik wished to make several observations on the text of the joint draft resolution (A/C.1/667), which, in the light of subsequent discussion, might lead to amendments or suggestions for amendments.

24. In the first place, there should be some reference, in the first paragraph of the preamble, to the crisis of confidence

in the world which underlay the problem under discussion. There should also be an appropriate formula in the text to cover the question of bacteriological weapons. The possibility of collective defence, he thought, should be explicitly formulated in the second paragraph. His fourth observation was that the question of "levels adequate for defence" would turn out to be a relative concept in that the defence of one state would be to some extent the function of that of another. If all agreed, it would thus be possible to go, in due course, on a balanced basis, even below what the criteria to be adopted would first impose. Reference to the Charter of the United Nations was, he thought, both possible and necessary in such an important document, but no such mention was to be found in the joint proposal. The sixth observation was that the problem of disarmament was envisaged by the great Powers mainly from their own point of view, which took insufficient account of the unarmed character of lesser Powers. The necessary disarmament of the strong for the sake of peace had as its counterpart the necessary arming of the weak in the same cause. Mr. Malik stated that he was thinking of the Near East in particular.

25. Finally, the representative of Lebanon would suggest the possibility of supplying a text adequate to cover the need for a truce in the kind of war not covered by the joint draft resolution (A/C.1/667), namely, that of subversion from within and the war of ideas. Stressing the fact that peace depended on the state of the spirit he pointed out that the need was now to promote an atmosphere of trust and understanding, which could only result from patient and undespairsing endeavour.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 348th meeting.