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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

**AGENDA ITEM 68**

**Question of French nuclear tests in the Sahara (A/4183, A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1, A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.241) (continued)**

**CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS**

1. Mr. CORREA (Ecuador) said that great weight should be given to principle when a complex problem affecting the fundamental interests of mankind, the anxieties of a continent and the rights and interests of a State Member of the United Nations and permanent member of the Security Council was being considered. As the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs had said at the thirteenth session (762nd plenary meeting), it was urgently necessary to give mankind the reassurance that the awful dangers inherent in the uncontrolled use of atomic energy were at an end. Hence Ecuador was against nuclear weapons tests, no matter what country conducted them or where they were held. Nuclear energy should be used for peaceful purposes only; that principle applied, not only to States that were already regarded as nuclear Powers, but also to the States that might become nuclear Powers.

2. The General Assembly's position was expressed in resolution 1252 (XIII). The three nuclear Powers had voluntarily suspended tests; it would be an extremely serious step if they resumed or if other countries began testing and thus started another nuclear test race fraught with danger for mankind. It was true that, in the absence of an agreement, tests were not legally prohibited, but the Charter of the United Nations empowered the Assembly to make recommendations on questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. In the present case, the question of principle outweighed all other considerations such as the possible harm the French test might cause or the number of explosions planned.

3. There was another principle that might be borne in mind in connexion with the question under discussion. When a group of States brought a serious problem before it, the Assembly should do everything in its power to state an opinion; the United Nations ought not to remain silent.

4. The draft resolution submitted by Italy, Peru and the United Kingdom (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1) sanc-

tioned France's right to conduct nuclear tests until it should accede to some future agreement. Thus it ran counter to the Assembly's appeal to the nuclear Powers in its resolution of the previous session, unless operative paragraph 2 of the draft was intended to urge the French Government to reconsider its position, in which case that purpose should have been made clear. There were two objections to the twenty-two-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1): it dissociated the problem of the Sahara tests from the general question of the suspension of test explosions, and it made categorical assertions concerning the dangers and risks involved which had not been adequately backed up during the debate. Consequently, five Latin-American countries had proposed amendments to the draft (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1) to provide a constructive and conciliatory text which would accord with the resolution of the preceding session and the responsibilities of the Member States and of the Assembly. That balanced and moderate text, while respecting French sovereignty and expressing a friendly attitude toward France, had to take into consideration, as France would understand, certain considerations of principle; hence, it asked the competent French authorities to weigh the reactions of world opinion.

5. Mr. LORIDAN (Belgium) said that his delegation, which had given serious consideration to the effects the proposed explosion might have on the life and health of the inhabitants of neighbouring areas, had taken note of the French representative's explanations regarding the precautions taken and his assurances that the tests would endanger no one (1043rd meeting). There was no reason to think that such precautions would be less effective than those taken by other countries during similar tests. While the USSR had not furnished information on the effects of its tests on the health of its peoples, the representatives of the United Kingdom (1044th meeting) and the United States (1046th meeting) had both confirmed the conclusions of the French Government. Belgian technicians and scientists were perfectly equipped to track the course of radio-activity in the air and of fall-out; they regularly checked the strontium content of milk and carried out tests on individuals to detect the presence of caesium-137. They had reached the conclusions announced by the representatives of France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Moreover, a group of international specialists had found the health precautions for personnel and neighbouring populations satisfactory.

6. That did not mean that his Government saw no objections to uncontrolled nuclear testing. At the thirteenth session, Belgium had co-sponsored the text which had become resolution 1252 A (XIII). But it had always felt that no discrimination could be maintained with respect to a Member State in the important domain of its security arrangements. The Assembly had never before had on its agenda an item concerning a specific,

previously-announced test and therefore had never, in that regard, adopted a resolution aimed at a specific country. In those circumstances, his delegation would vote for the three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1).

7. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) said that he would vote for the amendments submitted by the five Latin-American Powers (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1). Almost all the members of the First Committee were agreed in desiring France to reconsider its decision. Opinions differed only as to the manner of expressing the concern aroused by that country's plans. The Latin-American amendments reflected the general opposition to those tests, but were drafted in moderate terms; they did not include a single expression which the French Government might regard as impugning its dignity as a sovereign State. The debate had made it clear that France had many sincere friends who were ready to express their admiration and sympathy for it, even though they did not feel that they could share its opinion fully in the present case.

8. His delegation would support the twenty-two-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1) only if the Latin-American amendments were adopted. Moreover, it could not accept changes in those amendments. Argentina would not vote for the three-Power draft resolution, however praiseworthy the conciliatory objective of its sponsors, since it did not embrace all the aspects of the problem.

9. Mr. THORS (Iceland) reminded the Committee of the resolutions adopted by the Assembly at its two preceding sessions (1148 (XII) and 1252 (XIII)). Those resolutions, for which his delegation had voted, declared the Assembly's firm policy that all nuclear tests should be discontinued. During the debate on general and complete disarmament, Iceland had said (1035th meeting) what great importance it attached to the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests.

10. The prestige of France had no bearing on the matter; the question was simply whether the United Nations intended to maintain its previous policy or whether it was willing to reverse its attitude. Such a reversal would have serious consequences and would cause great disappointment to world public opinion, particularly to the African countries. Only by confirming its desire to have all nuclear tests banned everywhere would the Committee be true to the spirit of the decision it had taken (1042nd meeting) on the subject of general and complete disarmament. The policy of the United Nations should be firm and unequivocal. Hence his delegation might have considered voting in favour of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution. Nevertheless, it would vote for the amendments submitted by the five Latin-American countries because they were an expression of moderation and conciliation and yet satisfied the essential requirement of asking France to reconsider its decision.

11. Mr. WINIEWICZ (Poland) said that he would vote for the twenty-two-Power draft resolution. His choice could be explained by the feelings of sympathy and solidarity which Poland had towards the peoples of Africa, who were making rapid progress towards independence, and by its desire both to support their legitimate interests and to see close and friendly relations between France and the new States of the African continent. Poland, which was linked to the

French people by traditional ties of friendship, was fully aware of the contribution which France had made to the heritage of humanity. It was that contribution, not the successful explosion of an atomic bomb, which must determine France's real position in the world. The Sahara experiment could only cause France to lose the friendship of the African States, which was indispensable for the maintenance of peace in that area and therefore in conformity with the aspirations of all peoples whose common interests were served by the improvement of international relations. To encourage that relaxation of tension, no step should be taken that might prejudice the Geneva negotiations on the permanent cessation of nuclear tests. Nations should think, not of what they would lose by refraining from carrying out the tests, but of what they would gain if the explosions were discontinued. His delegation hoped that the First Committee would adopt a resolution which would strongly emphasize the need for avoiding any action likely to aggravate the international situation and make the solution of the disarmament problem more difficult.

12. Mr. URQUIA (El Salvador) explained that in their amendments (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1), the five countries of Latin America had considered it desirable, in the interests of peace and harmony among States, to make some slight changes in the twenty-two-Power draft (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1) while preserving its substance. As amended by them, the African-Asian draft would represent a constructive contribution to the General Assembly's work, without causing the slightest prejudice to France, whose rights and interests were recognized and whose contribution to culture and civilization was undeniable.

13. Although inspired by the best intentions, the three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1) did not reflect the real spirit of the discussion. His delegation, therefore, was unable to support it. As it had already observed, the alarm which had been caused in Asia and Africa by a natural force still imperfectly known to science must be borne in mind.

14. The representative of France had said that after the vote on that question his country would have known the joy of the support of well-tried friends. In the present case, however, it was not a question of friendship. The vast majority of the Members of the Assembly felt not only admiration and respect for France but also affection and gratitude. Countries could not be asked, however, to give up their convictions and principles in the name of friendship.

15. Mr. RIFA'I (Jordan) said that his delegation, in assisting in the preparation of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution, had taken three facts into consideration: the deep anxiety aroused throughout the world by the nuclear tests; the alarm caused in Africa and elsewhere as the result of France's decision to carry out nuclear tests in the Sahara and the dangers to which Africa was exposed by those tests; and the responsibility which devolved upon the Members of the United Nations in that matter. Since the item dealt with a specific case and since the testing was to take place in a fixed area surrounded by inhabited territories, the authors of the draft resolution had considered it necessary to urge France to refrain from carrying out that particular test. They earnestly hoped that their draft would be supported by a great majority of the members of the Committee.

16. The amendments proposed by the five delegations of Latin America did not serve the purposes of the twenty-two-Power draft. The reference to General Assembly resolution 1252 (XIII) was irrelevant and, moreover, did not propose any effective remedy for the present situation. In addition, it was not enough to express a hope in the operative part: if it was left to the French Government to reconsider its decision, it would be free to follow the Assembly's recommendations or not.

17. The three-Power draft resolution was not a proper response to the feelings expressed by the members of the Committee or to the objections voiced by public opinion to France's decision. Moreover, it appeared to endorse the French experiments until such a time as arrangements could be worked out to suspend the tests and it failed to specify which views, among the opposing ones expressed in the Committee, France should take into account. His delegation, therefore, would vote against that draft.

18. Mr. BRUCAN (Romania) thought that the twenty-two-Power proposal was in keeping with the spirit and letter of the draft resolution adopted on general and complete disarmament. The French nuclear tests in the Sahara were incompatible with that draft resolution, and its principal authors, the Soviet and United States delegations, should endeavour to ensure respect for it. The draft resolution which the Committee would adopt should properly reflect the views which had been expressed during the discussion. A large majority of representatives, however, had spoken against the nuclear tests in the Sahara.

19. His delegation regretted that during the general debate the authors of the amendments (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1) had not set forth the reasons which had prompted them to change substantially the character of the twenty-two-Power draft. It might be asked, for example, why they proposed an ambiguous text instead of simply requesting France to refrain from carrying out nuclear tests.

20. A resolution should be based, above all, on the arguments which had been exchanged, and the conclusion to be drawn from the Committee's discussions was that the idea of undertaking tests in the Sahara stood condemned.

21. With respect to the three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1), that text asked the Committee to accept the reassurances given by the representative of France with regard to the possibility of hazards to the health of the peoples. Scientists themselves, however, were not in agreement on that point. The Committee could not, therefore, make a definite decision about such a controversial scientific question. With respect to the operative part, it amounted to evading the issue and trying to render a service to France which the President of that country, General de Gaulle, himself refused to accept. Consequently the three-Power draft seemed pointless.

22. Those opposed to France's decision were not motivated by fear. The peoples of Africa and Asia had shown indomitable courage on many occasions. As for the socialist countries, they strongly opposed that test because they were conscious of their responsibilities towards their peoples and towards mankind as a whole. Romania, therefore, would vote for the twenty-two-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1), which

expressed strong disapproval of the proposed nuclear experiment.

23. Mr. WEI (China) said that he understood the alarm which France's decision was causing in Africa. However, the reassurances given by the representative of France respecting the precautions which would be taken had been confirmed by the data available to his delegation, and, in particular, by the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/3838) and by the experience of the United Kingdom and the United States.

24. The crux of the problem lay in the lack of agreement on the subject of nuclear disarmament. As his delegation had pointed out at the preceding session (958th meeting), it would not be possible to prevent the successive rise of new nuclear Powers if the production of fissionable materials and nuclear weapons should be continued.

25. With respect to the hazards of the tests, the present nuclear Powers had already agreed in principle, during the Geneva negotiations, that explosions for peaceful purposes would be allowed in the future. Those Powers, including the Soviet Union, must be of the opinion, therefore, that nuclear explosions under carefully prescribed conditions would not be detrimental to human health and safety. It was still necessary that precautions should always be taken and, in particular, that the permissible doses for both workers and the public should be taken into account.

26. His delegation hoped that the French Government would note the general concern which had been expressed by the Committee's members. All nations would welcome any decision by France which would enable them to place more hope in a favourable outcome of the disarmament negotiations. For that reason, China would vote for the amendments submitted by the Latin-American delegations (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1) to the twenty-two-Power draft.

27. Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon) said that operative paragraph 1 of the three-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.239 and Add.1) was pointless because it was already clear from a recent statement by President de Gaulle that France would not associate itself with the arrangements for the cessation of nuclear weapons tests. Operative paragraph 2 was also useless because the French representative had shown no inclination to take into account the grave concern of the African peoples and of world opinion.

28. The wording of the Latin-American amendments to the preamble of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution was such that a choice had to be made between the two. The Lebanese delegation, while considering the Latin-American amendments to be acceptable, would be unable to vote in their favour, because in so doing it would be forced to vote against the original draft resolution, which it had co-sponsored. In addition, his delegation could not support the proposed new operative paragraph as it would eliminate operative paragraph 1 of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution, which expressed grave concern over the intention of the French Government, and the Committee would be left expressing the vain hope that the Government of France would reconsider its decision. The Assembly should request France to refrain from carrying out nuclear tests and from reversing the trend of history, which was towards agreement for the permanent cessation of nuclear tests and the final elimination of

nuclear weapons through general and complete disarmament.

29. Mr. AIKEN (Ireland) said that there was an urgent need for international agreement to limit the number of countries having nuclear weapons to test, otherwise any country could claim that it was bound by no international agreement not to carry out such tests.

30. Apart from the choice of site for the experiment, his delegation's principal objection to the proposed French test was that it was taking place above ground, as any nuclear tests carried out in the atmosphere must add to the general radiation level in the world. The Irish delegation therefore understood the anxiety expressed by the countries of Africa, and without wishing to exaggerate the danger of the tests, he noted that the experts had already had to alter their estimates. The Members of the United Nations should avoid unnecessarily contaminating the world's atmosphere. His Government therefore appealed to France, if the test was really to take place, to carry it out underground.

31. Sir Claude COREA (Ceylon) said, in reply to a comment made by the French representative at the previous meeting, that the test of friendship among nations and even among individuals could not be based on a vote cast in regard to any particular matter. If certain delegations voted against the French position, France should not see in that an indication of animosity against itself, as it has become abundantly clear in the course of the debate that the members of the Committee held France in the highest esteem.

32. The main point was whether, if agreement was reached on the cessation of tests, the French Government would be willing to subscribe to it or would insist on continuing its tests. At the previous meeting the French representative had replied to that question by quoting the statement made on 10 November by President de Gaulle. It was regrettable that that statement gave the impression that the present debate was considered excessively and artificially emotional. In fact a large number of speakers had tried to speak without giving rein to their emotions. On the other hand, any emotion on the part of the countries bordering on the Sahara, which might feel themselves endangered, was perfectly comprehensible. For its part, the Ceylon delegation was distressed at France's intention, which was inimical to the best interests of the peoples of the world.

33. The passage which the French representative had quoted further on in his speech from the statement made by President de Gaulle placed the United Nations in a very awkward position. It seemed plain that whatever the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests might do, only an international agreement to ban nuclear armaments completely would cause France to give up its atomic test.

34. Contrary to the view of President de Gaulle, the United Nations sought no quarrel with France. It had simply expressed the view that the proposed French nuclear explosion was dangerous to humanity and that the test should not be proceeded with, particularly at a time when there was hope that an end could be put to nuclear tests by international agreement.

35. His delegation had for its part stated (1049th meeting) that France, like any sovereign Power, had a legitimate right to explode a bomb. Its only dispute with France arose from the fact that France was ignoring the appeals made to it by the Members of

the United Nations, many of whom were admirers and friends of France. The moment was certainly inopportune for undertaking the nuclear tests concerned. According to the latest news, the work of the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests was proceeding favourably and had just made a great step forward as the Soviet Union had now agreed to the appointment of an expert group to examine the question of underground tests.

36. The attitude of France gave the impression that the current negotiations were pursuing a vain objective and that the only thing that counted was the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear arms. All the existing stocks of nuclear arms would undoubtedly have to be destroyed, but that could not be done in a day. It was useless starting anywhere but at the beginning: by forbidding the tests and in that way stopping the improvement of nuclear weapons and the growth of their destructive power. Once agreement had been reached on the banning of tests, the nuclear Powers could take the next step in disarmament and consider the cessation of manufacture; they could then go a step further and decide to destroy their stockpiles.

37. If France persisted in its intention not to remain in a position of inferiority, an attitude which his delegation could well understand, the Government of the United States could perhaps consider changing its policy immediately in some way, so that all nuclear information could be supplied to France. In addition, as France was one of the few countries in the world which had atomic power plants and used nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it should not need to have the destructive power of the bomb to be recognized as a nuclear Power. It should be possible to admit France to the "nuclear club" so as to take advantage of its experience, knowledge and ability. It should be possible to consider inviting France to take part in the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Tests. France might reject such a suggestion at the present time but some acceptable solution must be found.

38. Among the proposals before the Committee were the amendments of the five Latin-American countries (A/C.1/L.240/Rev.1) to the twenty-two-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.238/Rev.1) and the sub-amendments submitted by Ghana and Indonesia (A/C.1/L.241). The intention of the sponsors of the amendments seemed to be that the twenty-two-Power draft resolution should be so drafted as to receive as many favourable votes as possible. Since the sub-amendments made many modifications to the preamble of the African-Asian draft resolution, it might now be possible to reach agreement on the preamble.

39. As to the operative part, there were still very clear divergencies of view. In that connexion, it might be as well to recall General Assembly resolution 1148 (XII) and 1252 (XIII). In addition, as it was clear from the French statement (1051st meeting) that unless there was nuclear disarmament France would carry out its test, there seemed to be no point in expressing the hope that the French Government would reconsider its decision. Would it not be possible for the General Assembly to request France to refrain from such tests?

40. It should be possible to reconcile the twenty-two-Power draft with the Latin-American amendments and thus find a formula likely to elicit some larger measure of agreement on so important an item.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.