

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWELFTH SESSION

Official Records

Thursday, 10 October 1957,
at 10.35 a.m.

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

Agenda item 24:

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments; conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction:

- (a) Report of the Disarmament Commission;
- (b) Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee;
- (c) Collective action to inform and enlighten the peoples of the world as to the dangers of the armaments race, and particularly as to the destructive effects of modern weapons;
- (d) Discontinuance under international control of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons

Page

5

Chairman: Mr. Djalal ABDOH (Iran).

AGENDA ITEM 24

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments; conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction (A/3630 and Corr.1, A/3657, A/3674/Rev.1, A/3685; A/C.1/793, A/C.1/L.174, A/C.1/L.175/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.176/Rev.2, A/C.1/L.177, A/C.1/L.178/Rev.1):

- (a) Report of the Disarmament Commission;
- (b) Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee;
- (c) Collective action to inform and enlighten the peoples of the world as to the dangers of the armaments race, and particularly as to the destructive effects of modern weapons;
- (d) Discontinuance under international control of tests of atomic and hydrogen weapons

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that, because of the interdependence of the four sub-items, representatives would be permitted during the general debate to refer at the same time to several of the sub-items. Moreover, some latitude would be allowed them in overlapping with the next item on the agenda, "Effects of atomic radiation", but any such digressions should be limited to the strict minimum.

2. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) emphasized that, apart from its desire to be rid of the costly burden of military preparedness, the United States' main purpose in all its efforts to work out a safe disarmament programme was to build a world in which all nations would be free of the danger of war and surprise attack, and could devote themselves to peaceful pursuits. The United States had noted with interest the sub-item proposed by Belgium (A/3630 and Corr.1)

concerning collective action to inform and enlighten the peoples of the world as to the dangers of the armaments race, and particularly as to the destructive effects of modern weapons. The terrible facts of modern warfare had been brought to the attention of the peoples of the United States through all information media. If that was done in all other countries too, the collective conscience of the United Nations might be brought to bear on the progress of the disarmament negotiations.

3. Although the results achieved by the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission at its recent London meetings had been disappointing, some progress had been made and new proposals of vital importance had been presented. The fact that the Soviet Union had rejected the new four-Power proposals of 29 August 1957 (DC/113, annex 5) without even studying them was, in itself, no cause for despair; indeed, the absence of a comprehensive analytical response from the Soviet Union left room for further progress during the current session of the General Assembly.

4. The differences between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers had been narrowed by a number of steps taken by the USSR representative at the Sub-Committee meetings. He had reaffirmed acceptance of the idea of a limited first-stage agreement on various aspects of disarmament; he had recognized the value of the "open skies" air and ground inspection plan, and had accepted the idea of beginning with agreed zones of inspection, even though those zones would still have to be defined; he had seemed willing to have a first-stage agreement without the elimination of nuclear weapons which the Soviet delegation had demanded and which he had conceded would be impossible to verify; he had agreed that, if nuclear tests were suspended, there should be a monitoring system with inspection posts inside each country in order to check on compliance; and he had indicated the Soviet Union's acceptance of the idea of international depots for the storage of arms.

5. The United States hoped that the negative position taken by the USSR representative at the end of the London meetings did not imply that his Government had altered its policy regarding those earlier advances in the negotiations.

6. The other four members of the Sub-Committee had also shown a spirit of accommodation and, in order to meet Soviet objections, had made a number of changes in their position, including the following: first, they had in the four-Power proposals presented on 29 August 1957 agreed to go beyond the discussion of a first-stage agreement and had proposed specific target-levels for a further reduction in armed forces in the second and third stages of a disarmament programme; secondly, instead of complete initial inspection, they had suggested limited inspection zones as a beginning in applying the "open skies" plan; thirdly they had

made their proposal regarding existing stocks of nuclear weapons more specific by agreeing not merely to stop adding to those stocks, but to begin immediately to reduce them by gradually transferring quantities of fissionable material from military stockpiles to peaceful uses under international supervision; fourthly, they had agreed to transfer to peaceful uses larger amounts of such material than the Soviet Union was willing to do and to negotiate the quantities to be transferred on an equitable basis; fifthly, they had agreed that, upon ratification of the first-stage disarmament programme, nuclear tests could be suspended for an initial period without waiting until the other parts of the programme were actually being enforced, and they had met the Soviet objection that a ten-month period of suspension was insufficient by agreeing to the Soviet proposal for a twenty-four month period.

7. Those forward steps proved the value of the Sub-Committee; it was a body in which serious negotiations could be conducted. The abrupt change in the USSR attitude and its rejection of the four-Power proposals before they were studied did not discredit the Sub-Committee. All that was needed for fruitful work was a spirit of reasonableness.

8. The United States did not agree that the prospects for agreement would be improved by expanding the existing bodies dealing with disarmament. The principle that progress towards disarmament could be achieved only by negotiation among the Powers principally involved retained its full validity. Since basic issues of national security were at stake, agreement had to be achieved first between the States which would, in the first instance, have to accept reductions and limitations of their armaments and armed forces and to submit to inspection and control. On the other hand, disarmament was not the exclusive field of competence of the great Powers; the whole world was vitally affected and many States would have to participate in some way in bringing it about. They had an opportunity to do so in the General Assembly and in the Disarmament Commission. Any State could ask for a hearing before the Disarmament Commission, a right which had been exercised in 1956.

9. The United States believed that a solution could be found to the question of tests of nuclear weapons. Like all its military defence activities, it carried out those tests for defensive purposes only: to safeguard its own security against attack and the security of the many other free countries which looked to the United States for such protection. It was convinced that, in present circumstances, it could not carry out those basic responsibilities if it were less strong than a potential attacker. Accordingly, although the United States shared the concern of other countries regarding nuclear tests, it considered that the subject should be viewed in the context of the military and technical dangers confronting the free world.

10. The report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which would come before the thirteenth session of the Assembly, could be expected to dispel many of the fears expressed concerning radiation from nuclear testing. In the meantime, while authorities differed regarding the effects of radio-active fall-out at low levels, all agreed that they were small compared with the effects of radiation from natural and man-made sources to which human beings were exposed. The present levels

of radiation exposure from fall-out due to weapons testing were extremely low. The real danger lay not in the additional radiation resulting from tests, but in the possible use of nuclear weapons.

11. It should be borne in mind that nuclear-weapons tests enabled the development of weapons with reduced fall-out so that radiation hazards in the event of war could be restricted to military targets. Thus, if the testing programme should continue at its present rate, the amount of radiation released into the atmosphere would be less in future years, and there was reason to hope, as Mr. Dulles had said (680th plenary meeting), that the necessary testing could soon be done without materially increasing levels of radio-activity at all. The United States planned to invite United Nations observers to witness a nuclear test explosion in order to demonstrate how that could be achieved. It was keenly aware of its responsibility in the matter of nuclear testing and of the anxiety which prevailed throughout the world concerning the effects of the tests. Together with France, Canada and the United Kingdom in the Sub-Committee, it had proposed an immediate suspension of tests to take effect as soon as a treaty for initial measures of disarmament was concluded.

12. A separate approach to the problem of suspending tests of nuclear weapons was impractical because it did not go to the heart of the real problem confronting the world, namely, the danger of war and the use of weapons of any kind on a mass scale. Even if all test explosions were stopped, the stockpiling of atomic and hydrogen weapons would continue. If the tests were discontinued, all efforts to reduce radio-active fall-out in those weapons would also be discontinued, and those being stockpiled would contain far larger amounts of radio-activity than they would have otherwise. Finally, additional nations, even without nuclear tests, would be manufacturing their own nuclear weapons using techniques already known. It was clear that a more comprehensive approach was imperative.

13. The United States would not conduct nuclear-weapons tests if it did not have to. Its people would never consent to the continuing burden of defensive preparations unless they felt it had to be borne as the price of liberty. The only way to relieve nations of that burden and to allay the fears of atomic radiation was to remove the necessity for nuclear tests and suspend the tests at the same time. That meant that at least a beginning had to be made in removing the danger of an all-out nuclear war, and that was precisely the essence of the proposals made to the Soviet Union by the four Powers on 29 August 1957 in London.

14. Renewing the United States offer to the Soviet Union, he summarized the four-Power proposals made in the Sub-Committee.

15. First, all production of fissionable material for war purposes should be stopped and all new production should be devoted to peaceful purposes. That programme would begin as soon as an inspection system was in existence to ensure that it was carried out. A start should then be made on transferring fissionable materials from weapons stockpiles to peaceful uses, again under international supervision. That was the only realistic way of first stopping, and then reversing, the trend toward growing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The problem might become entirely unmanageable as more and more countries began to produce nuclear weapons.

16. Secondly, nuclear tests should be suspended immediately after a treaty for first-stage disarmament was concluded, and the suspension should be followed by the establishment of an agreed monitoring and inspection system.

17. Thirdly, there should be a reduction of armed forces and armaments. The troop limit for the United States and the Soviet Union in the first stage would be 2.5 million men. Assuming that first reduction was satisfactorily achieved and that progress was made towards reducing world tensions, a reduction to 2.1 million would be made in the second stage, and a reduction to 1.7 million in the third stage. Armaments should be reduced by establishing storage depots for specified and agreed modern armaments of land, sea and air, which would be deposited under international supervision. The United States was prepared to negotiate at any time on the types and quantities of arms to be placed in those depots.

18. Fourthly, in order to prevent surprise attack, the four Powers urged the adoption of an "open skies" ground and air inspection system. Inspection could begin in areas where safeguarding against surprise attack was of greatest importance. In addition, the four Powers reaffirmed the "open skies" proposal, originally made by Mr. Eisenhower, the President of the United States, at the Conference of the Heads of Government of the four great Powers, held at Geneva in 1955 (DC/71, annex 17), which would embrace the entire territory of the United States and the entire territory of the Soviet Union, as well as territory in Canada and important areas in Europe. The four Powers were also prepared to include areas in the free world where military bases were located, provided they secured the consent of the States concerned.

19. Finally, the four Powers sought agreement on control of outer-space missiles. The world had an opportunity to harness those missiles for peace; it must not miss that chance as it had missed the opportunity of placing atomic energy under international control. Unfortunately, the plan presented by the United States in 1946 for the international control of atomic energy^{1/} had not been accepted; if it had been, it might have spared the world a decade of anxiety. The four Powers proposed that a technical committee should be established to work out an inspection system which would ensure the use of outer space exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes. If there was general agreement to conduct such a study on a multilateral basis, the United States was prepared to participate without awaiting the conclusion of negotiations on the other substantive proposals.

20. The four Powers were prepared, moreover, to begin the entire first-stage disarmament programme without any political conditions. It was their intention that the first part of the programme to be given effect would be the suspension of nuclear tests. The relevant inspection system should be in operation before the end of the first year of suspension.

21. No country which genuinely worked for peace could object to any of the four-Power proposals. The Soviet Union could bring nuclear tests to a halt if it wanted to; it could also remove the dangers of surprise attack and

nuclear war. The aim of the United States was to strengthen, and not to impair, the security of the Soviet Union, and it trusted that the Soviet Union believed that. It was in the interest of the Soviet Union to dispel distrust of its motives. War did not respect ideologies. All the peoples of the world, and in particular, those of the small nations, were looking towards the Soviet Union to consider the alternatives facing the world. Just as it had changed its position on the atoms-for-peace plan, originally proposed by President Eisenhower in the General Assembly in 1953 (470th plenary meeting), and on the "open-skies" plan, the Soviet Union could shift its position once more to safeguard its security and its self-interest. The four Western Powers were not insisting that all their proposals should be implemented at once. An agreement that they should be carried out in acceptable stages was enough to set the whole disarmament programme in motion, and its first achievement would be the discontinuance of nuclear tests.

22. Mr. MATSUDAIRA (Japan) said that it was the Japanese people's sincere desire to spare the peoples of the world from the mass destruction which it knew by experience would result from the use of nuclear weapons. That desire had been reflected in resolutions of the Diet and in appeals from local governmental bodies and many private organizations in Japan calling for international control of atomic energy, limitation of its use to peaceful purposes and prohibition of the testing, manufacture and use of atomic and hydrogen bombs.

23. Efforts to solve the problem of atomic weapons should be the major concern not only of the great military Powers but of all nations, large or small, armed or unarmed. Modern nuclear weapons, when used or even tested, knew no national frontiers.

24. As a peacetime problem the effects of the radiation resulting from nuclear test explosions could not be ignored. The Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had not yet reached any conclusions on those effects, and scientific opinion was divided on the matter. However, in the absence of scientific proof to the contrary, it seemed only reasonable to assume that as long as nuclear tests were continued, the cumulative radio-activity might reach proportions dangerous to human health and have effects beyond the power of science to circumvent or cure.

25. Those were the sentiments which had prompted Japan to submit its draft resolution (A/C.1/L.174), which was intended to bring about the early conclusion of a disarmament agreement and the suspension of nuclear test explosions, and upon which he would now elaborate.

26. His delegation had noted that, during the recent meetings of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission in London, the Powers concerned had held discussions of unprecedented importance. Various proposals had been presented in an effort to narrow the differences between them, among them a plan proposed by Japan (DC/112, annex 3) regarding the detection and inspection, as well as the registration and control, of nuclear tests. The hopes that the Sub-Committee would at last make progress in reaching an agreement had been dashed when, in the final stages of the discussion, the Western Powers and the Soviet Union had reached a deadlock.

^{1/} Official Records of the Atomic Energy Commission, First Year, No. 1, 1st meeting, pp. 10-13.

27. Although the London talks had failed to bring about an agreement, the Powers concerned had considerably narrowed the differences between them. They had agreed in principle on the need to suspend nuclear tests, if only temporarily, and on the need to combine the suspension of such tests with the establishment of an adequate system of control and inspection. The disagreement had arisen with regard to whether the suspension of tests should be made a separate issue divorced from all the other aspects of disarmament, or whether it should be part of a general programme covering, among other things, the prohibition of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the reduction of the stockpiles of such weapons, the prevention of surprise attack and the control of guided missiles. His delegation could not unreservedly agree to any proposal for the suspension of nuclear tests which was not related to a parallel effort to achieve agreement on the other aspects of disarmament. It appreciated the merits of the approach embodied in the Western proposals, which, while providing for the suspension of nuclear tests, encompassed all aspects of the disarmament problem. However, a general agreement of the kind envisaged by the Western Powers would require protracted negotiation, with a consequent delay in the suspension of tests. The urgency of the problem allowed of no delay. His delegation believed that it was the task of the twelfth session of the Assembly to try to find a practical and realistic solution which would expedite the disarmament negotiations and at the same time bring about the suspension of tests.

28. It was the duty of the United Nations and of all its Members to see that no effort was spared to reach a solution of the disarmament problem. His delegation, in presenting its draft resolution, was acting in conformity with its obligations under the Charter and in full consonance with the final communique of the African-Asian Conference held at Bandung in 1955, in which Japan, together with the other Asian and African countries, had pledged itself, pending the total prohibition of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, to appeal to all the Powers concerned to reach agreement to suspend experiments with such weapons, and had declared that universal disarmament was an absolute necessity for the preservation of peace.

29. In its draft resolution, his delegation had given full consideration to the international situation and had carefully weighed the positions of the Powers concerned with respect to the problem of nuclear weapons, particularly since the suspension of tests, even if only for a brief period, might affect their national security. Noting the issue which had brought the London talks to an impasse, but being convinced at the same time that the suspension of tests was an urgent necessity, his delegation was proposing that parallel efforts should be made to expedite agreement on the unsettled points regarding initial measures of disarmament and to suspend nuclear test explosions.

30. After reading out the draft resolution, he pointed out that it embraced the two steps desired by world opinion, that is, the early conclusion of a disarmament agreement and the suspension of nuclear tests. It reduced the problems involved to their simplest terms and suggested a new approach that would facilitate the efforts of the Powers concerned to reach an agreement.

31. There was nothing dramatic in the draft reso-

lution. It merely asked that the General Assembly should call upon the Powers concerned to reconcile their differences regarding the suspension of nuclear tests and to establish a system of control and inspection when an agreement in principle had been reached. What was new in the draft was that it called for a partial disarmament settlement and for a moratorium on tests which would last for no more than one year, during which time negotiations were to be conducted to reach an agreement on the prompt installation of the supervision and inspection system.

32. His delegation would find it difficult to understand opposition to such a brief suspension. Here again it should be emphasized that the draft resolution was intended as a practical and realistic measure.

33. If an agreement was reached on the initial stages of disarmament before the convening of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly, the suspension of tests would be continued under that agreement without the need for any new resolution by the Assembly. If, on the other hand, no agreement was reached by that time, the Assembly would be free to discuss the matter again and decide whether or not to continue the suspension of tests, taking due account of the progress which had meanwhile been made in the disarmament negotiations and of the political atmosphere prevailing at the time.

34. His delegation hoped that the explanation he had just given showed how disarmament negotiations and the tentative suspension of tests could proceed side by side. The all-important disarmament negotiations must go on whether nuclear tests were suspended or not. But since the suspension of tests was also important to all the nations of the world, there was no reason why those negotiations should not be carried on while the tests were suspended. The atmosphere in which negotiations would be conducted would be much less strained as a result of the suspension. Furthermore, the suspension of tests involved only a relatively simple system of supervision.

35. No agreement or resolution relating to nuclear weapons would be of any avail unless all the Powers possessing nuclear weapons adhered to it. The Japanese draft resolution had been submitted with the hope that it would serve as a bridge to span the narrow gap which now existed between those Powers. His delegation believed that its draft resolution offered a key to the eventual settlement of the disarmament problem - a first-stage plan on which general agreement might be reached.

36. It was impossible to exaggerate the urgent need to find some reasonable solution to the problem of nuclear tests, primarily because of the widespread and deeply-rooted apprehension as to their effects on man and his environment. His delegation believed that the time had come when the United Nations must act with sustained vigour to eliminate the greatest danger mankind had ever confronted. If it could not be eliminated at one stroke, then an attempt should be made to eliminate it in stages. His delegation earnestly hoped that the Committee and the General Assembly would adopt its draft resolution and by so doing spur the disarmament negotiations to new progress.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.