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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/C.1/L.179 and Corr.1 and Add.1) (continued):

- (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. Mr. Krishna MENON (India) said that his delegation wished to reserve its position on some aspects of the item under discussion until it had heard the views of other delegations.

2. Although the subject before the Committee was called disarmament, the Committee was really discussing the problem of human survival and he appealed to all delegations to approach the matter from that angle.

3. Mindful of the primary purpose for which the United Nations had been established, the General Assembly had since 1946 adopted resolution after resolution calling for the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction. Now for the first time the Assembly had before it a draft resolution in which no reference was made to the prohibition of such weapons. He deplored the omission and could only hope that it was unintentional.

4. The first sub-item before the Committee was the report of the Disarmament Commission (A/3685). Unfortunately, for the past three years at any rate, the Disarmament Commission had not actively concerned itself with the problem of disarmament, but had in effect confined itself to transmitting to the General Assembly the reports of its Sub-Committee. It was the Sub-Committee's fourth and fifth reports (DC/112, DC/113), therefore, that would have to be considered, and responsibility in the matter of disarmament clearly lay with the Sub-Committee, the General Assembly and world public opinion. The Sub-Committee, whose establishment had originally been proposed by his delegation, ^{1/} had been set up in the hope that its members would abandon "cold war" discussions and would make every effort to achieve agreement and thus to give some relief to a world laden with the weight of armaments and threatened with atomic destruction. The nations which were not armed with atomic weapons had the right to expect some positive action from the great Powers represented on the Sub-Committee, whose responsibility it was to produce a solution. He did not think such a solution could be achieved through the adoption of the twenty-four-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.179 and Corr.1 and Add.1), if the text was not acceptable to the Soviet Union. Unless the United States and the Soviet Union were able to come to some agreement, there was no hope of disarmament, and the endorsement of the text by the General Assembly would only make negotiations in the Sub-Committee more difficult.

5. For three years the General Assembly had unanimously decided to ask the Disarmament Commission to give consideration to the draft resolutions submitted by the Indian Government. The Indian delegation had each time agreed that the matter would best be dealt with by the Commission. However, the Commission had taken no action on those texts during the first two years. In July 1956 the Indian Government had presented its case before the Commission ^{2/} and had been showered with praise; but still no action had been taken. In a world in which the great nations had great power for good and evil, they must exercise that power to save the world from destruction; they must not flinch from the necessary decisions.

6. He welcomed the general tone of the United States representative's recent statement (866th meeting) and the many points of agreement between the two sides to which it had drawn attention. Nevertheless, both that speech and other speeches by statesmen of great countries had contained remarks which he felt in duty bound to refute. Thus, it had been said that the suspension of nuclear test explosions was not disarma-

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Annexes, agenda item 23, document A/C.1/L.74.

^{2/} Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, 58th meeting.

That was true enough; but disarmament was merely a step to peace and not peace itself, and such suspension was essential for other reasons. In a speech in which the continuance of the tests had actually been advocated, it had been claimed that without tests the bombs would be even worse and that it was a sovereign right of States to make the bombs. He could only say that it was not among the prerogatives of sovereignty to destroy the world. It had been suggested that there were such things as "clean" bombs. Not only could no means of mass extermination be termed "clean", but the so-called "clean" hydrogen bombs were triggered by fission bombs of the Hiroshima type, only with twenty times the explosive power, so that each explosion produced at least as much radiation as a Hiroshima bomb. It had also been contended that the radio-active material produced by those fission bombs soon died out. The scientific evidence was, however, that the strontium-90 and other radio-active materials which were the products of fission had a half-life of twenty-nine to thirty years. It was, in his view, very wrong to suggest that the bombs that were being experimented with were innocent. Besides, the end purpose of the bombs could not but be atomic war; and that was a matter in which the many millions of people inhabiting the world had to have their say; indeed, a large majority of them were already asserting themselves even against their own Governments.

7. According to the United States representative, all leading medical and genetic authorities were agreed that the effects of radio-active fall-out at low levels were small compared with the effects of radiation from other sources. That might be described as a lay opinion provided by official scientists to bolster their Government's policy. Authoritative scientific opinion - in the United States itself as well as in other countries - took quite a different view of the matter. Thus, Professor Charles C. Price of the University of Pennsylvania, in a letter published in The New York Times on 10 October 1957 had expressed concern about the distortion of information on nuclear weapons tests furnished to the people and the concealment from them of the fact that the overwhelming majority of informed scientists - more than one hundred to one - agreed on the gravity of radiation hazards; he had criticized the United States and the Soviet Union for not agreeing on the discontinuance of nuclear tests; he had remarked that the great majority of scientists felt that an inspected nuclear test ban was entirely feasible and had stated that the people of the United States should be informed that their Government was flatly opposed to a nuclear ban, and why.

8. It had been claimed that, because human beings were normally exposed to radiation, a little more would not hurt. But the Committee on Genetic Effects of Atomic Radiation of the United States National Academy of Sciences had stated in its report that any radiation dose, however small, could induce some mutations, that there was no safe dose or safe rate of radiation, and that, genetic damage being cumulative, the total dose was what counted.^{3/}

^{3/} See United States Congress, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Special Subcommittee on Radiation, Hearings... on the Nature of Radioactive Fallout and its Effects on Man, Eighty-fifth Congress, First Session (Washington, Government Printing Office 1957), part 2, pp. 1838-1839.

9. The peoples of Asia were more susceptible to radiation than peoples in other parts of the world because many of them subsisted on vegetable food-stuffs, in which no secondary process of absorption had taken place. According to the Director of the Geochemical Laboratory of the Meteorological Institute at Tokyo, the contamination of rice and milk, Japan's staple diet, was increasing so rapidly as a result of the fall-out that in another ten years most of the food in Japan would be unfit for human consumption. If tests continued at the rate of the past three years, there was tragedy ahead, not only for Japan, but for the whole world.

10. In refutation of the claim that opinions such as those he had cited were minority views, he remarked that over 2,000 United States scientists had signed appeals that the nuclear tests should be stopped.

11. Professor J. Parisot, the President of the Ninth World Health Assembly, had pointed out that inadequate attention was being paid by doctors and hygienists to possible pollution of the world's atmosphere as a result of those tests, and had said that the tests might one day prove costly not only in terms of money but also in terms of the world's human resources. In 1957, the World Health Organization (WHO) had published a study entitled Effect of Radiation on Human Heredity, which stated *inter alia* that about twenty times the dose due to the average natural radiation had been discovered in the thyroid of growing cattle, a fact that was to be attributed mainly to atomic bomb tests.

12. Despite reassuring statements about "harmless strontium-90", careful studies by WHO and other bodies showed that it was impossible to judge the biological significance of tests of nuclear weapons. Professor Arthur Holly Compton of Chicago University had stated: "Though the level of radiation from atomic explosions may be extremely low and harmless to people now living, it is sure to affect to a greater or less extent unborn generations."^{4/} The Committee had no right to subscribe to anything affecting unborn generations.

13. There was a growing body of opinion in various parliaments favouring the suspension of atomic explosions. Professor Alexander Haddow, Director of the Chester Beatty Research Institute of the Royal Cancer Hospital in the United Kingdom, had said that the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union had all been guilty of understating the hazards of radiation from atomic explosions to the genetic future of humanity. There was no justification, in the Professor's opinion, for British and American statements that genetical damage from nuclear tests to date was exceedingly small. If there were even one case of an incurable disease such as leukemia as a result of nuclear tests, the Committee should bear the collective responsibility.

14. He noted that there was general scientific agreement that the smallest amount of external radiation was harmful because it increased mutation of the genes; great differences of opinion existed, however, in the matter of a threshold or safe level of internal radiation from such isotopes as strontium-90 that could cause leukemia and bone cancer. Moreover, all

^{4/} Arthur Holly Compton, Atomic Quest (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 307.

the available evidence related only to the present rate of bomb explosions. Three years ago only two countries had been exploding bombs, but now a third country had been added and others might join their number in the forthcoming year.

15. After quoting the "Statement on Strontium Hazards", issued in April 1957, by the Radiation Hazards Committee of the United Kingdom Atomic Scientists' Association, which pointed to the damage that might result to the present generation from strontium-90, he noted that, according to advice available to the Government of India, radio-active substance had a half-life of some twenty-nine to thirty years. The report of the Radiation Hazards Committee gave most disturbing figures on the possible number of bone cancers which might result from the Bikini explosion in March 1954 and the bombs exploded to date by the Russians, the British and the Americans. Those figures, disquieting as they were, might be an underestimate since they made no allowance for the radiation dose in children before or after birth. It was significant that children were known to take up much larger quantities of strontium than adults and the likelihood of producing radiation damage in them was probably much greater for the same amount of radiation.

16 Scientists testifying before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy of the United States Congress in May and June 1957 had said that there was no such thing as a "safe dose" of radiation, and that the genetic damage caused by radiation might have been underestimated. According to those scientists, the damage to reproductive cells would be passed on to future generations in the form of harmful mutations which would persist for hundreds of years.

17. While it was true that the great Powers had appointed a committee on radiation, to study the evidence of radiation, those Powers had not suspended explosions. The Government of India maintained its position that there was no insurmountable obstacle to the suspension of those explosions. For the last three years, that Government had done its utmost in all quarters to achieve that end. Suspension should not be regarded as a matter of party politics.

18. The representative of the United Kingdom had told the Committee, at its meeting, that there was no conceivable chance, in any foreseeable future, of instituting a system of controls so detailed and extensive that it could account for all existing weapons. Part of that speech seemed to suggest that the difficulty of control and the difficulty of detecting explosions were equally great. While it was possible to have secret explosions, it was well known that there were new methods of detection by sound. It was legitimate to assume that evasions would be attempted, but surely a method of detection could be found. That was why the Indian delegation had advanced its proposal for a tripartite agreement, a method which had proved successful in Korea and, to a limited extent, in Indo-China. According to the Indian draft resolution (A/C.1/L.176/Rev.2), which would be explained later, each of the two differing sides in the case would appoint scientific technicians and uncommitted individuals in the field to find methods of detection. To demand assurance that suspension should be properly observed by all concerned was

legitimate, for it was actually a sine qua non of suspension.

19. The United States had expressed willingness to suspend tests for twenty-four months subject to given. If such a suspension were possible, there was nothing to prevent a standstill agreement. Suspension of tests of all the terrible weapons of mass destruction including bombs, missiles and all related weapons would make humanity safer and would constitute one step towards disarmament.

20. While he disagreed with the United Kingdom representative in the essentials of his statement, he viewed with optimism any step towards disarmament which would create a new spirit and to a certain extent set up machinery for inspection and mutual understanding. If the General Assembly at its present session did no more than request the great Powers to suspend nuclear test explosions, to inform the Secretary-General of their willingness to do so, and to proceed immediately to the establishment of a tripartite body to prevent evasion and establish a system of inspection, a great advance would have been made and disarmament would have begun in the true sense.

21. The Indian draft resolution was in no way inimical to the twenty-four-Power draft. However, any draft resolution adopted by the Committee which did not represent agreement had very little value in the present state of the world. If the Committee endorsed a decision adopted by part of the Disarmament Commission, it would become a party to the impediment to progress on disarmament and would in a sense be contributing to a deadlock instead of resolving one. In the view of the Indian delegation, the twenty-four-Power draft resolution, like the USSR draft resolution (A/C.1/L.175/Rev.1), should go back to the Disarmament Commission.

22. With regard to the main problem of disarmament, the differences, unfortunately, appeared to be between the two sides as such. The issue was the cut-off date for manufacture. The Indian Government was fully committed to prohibition of manufacture. No nuclear material should be used for the manufacture of weapons. Tripartite bodies should also take up the question of the cut-off date, for if it were possible to stop manufacture, it would also be possible to stop use. If industrial use of atomic energy continued to develop, large quantities of material which could be used in explosives would be available. Human ingenuity being what it was, there would be limitless opportunities for clandestine manufacture. If it was possible effectively to stop manufacturing atomic weapons, the only possible solution was also to abandon use and thus to abandon atomic war.

23. For ten years, since the dawn of the atomic age, no agreement had been reached. Now, in the new inter-planetary age, the time for co-operation had certainly come. He appealed for one step in that direction in the matter of the manufacture of new nuclear weapons, the entire question of use and the question of conventional arms. Admittedly tripartite agreements were difficult to achieve, but he hoped they would be attempted.

24. India was aware that atomic destruction was not the only form of destruction. It did not want to separate conventional weapons from any other weapons. It would make the necessary contribution towards any form of disarmament that might take place in the world.

In accordance with the Indian draft resolution (A/C.1/L.178/Rev.1), he hoped the United States and its friends on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and its friends on the other, might find it possible to discuss the practicability of cut-off dates for use and manufacture of nuclear weapons and of inspection and control for conventional arms. The Sub-Committee had unfortunately split into two camps and therefore had not been able to achieve the purpose for which it had been conceived. The Indian draft would not supersede or displace existing machinery which dealt with main principles. What was necessary was to create confidence now by establishing machinery to work out a practical course of action. The fact that evasions might occur in no way nullified the need for machinery for enforcement.

25. His delegation had no intention of engaging in polemics; it had wished to make an appeal to the Committee and particularly to the great Powers, since only they could save the world from the dangers of atomic and thermo-nuclear warfare and since co-operation between them, in the dawning interplanetary age, was more essential than ever.

26. Peace might entail some risks; but the overwhelming majority of the world's people were willing to take them. Man had no right to set in motion forces over which he had no control. In Asia, and particularly in Japan and India, there was unanimity in that regard. On 13 October 1957, the Prime Ministers of those two countries had declared that the suspension of nuclear tests must be the first step towards the creation of conditions in which the prohibition of the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons and disarmament in other fields might become possible, and they had recalled the unanimous appeal of the nations represented at the African-Asian Conference held at Bandung in 1955 for the discontinuance of nuclear test explosions and for the achievement of disarmament. He could only reiterate that appeal.

27. The time had come for the great Powers to prove their greatness by deed. If the General Assembly, with the support of the United States and the Soviet Union, adopted a resolution calling for the discontinuance of nuclear tests, it would make a decisive step towards disarmament and earn the gratitude of the entire world.

28. Mr. NOBLE (United Kingdom) said that his statement at the 869th meeting seemed to have been misinterpreted. The Indian representative had made it appear that he had said that there was no conceivable chance of effective control over the suspension of tests, whereas he had, in fact, been referring only to the Soviet proposal for the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons themselves. The principle of a suspension of tests under effective international control had been accepted by all members of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission, including the United Kingdom, although the exact nature of such control had still to be worked out, which was why the United Kingdom had urged the establishment of a working party to study the problem without delay.

29. Mr. COOPER (Liberia) said that, with the invention of nuclear weapons, rockets and other means of mass destruction, disarmament was no longer the concern of Governments only, but of mankind in general. His delegation therefore supported the Belgian draft resolution (A/3630/Corr.1) which sought to en-

lighten the people of the world in that respect. Furthermore, in a modern war the field of action would not be confined to the great Powers possessing nuclear weapons but would affect the lives of all peoples in all countries, great or small.

30. After ten years of discussion the world had still not come to any decision on disarmament. The great Powers had constantly stressed the point that their Governments and people all desired the same thing: world disarmament. Nevertheless, as long as the propaganda war continued and the interests of the great Powers clashed, any disarmament proposals made by one side would be rejected by the other.

31. The representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union alike had proclaimed their readiness to begin a first-phase disarmament programme without imposing any political conditions whatsoever. In fact, however, each proposal was linked to some political consideration or situation, whether it was the abolition of Western bases in Europe or elsewhere, the unification of Germany or the tense situation prevailing in the Middle East. Until a solution was found to those questions, the discussions on disarmament would be fruitless. What was alarming to the smaller nations was that the friction among the great Powers arose from their political and economic interests in other distant and virtually unarmed countries, which, owing to their helplessness, were compelled to join pacts or conclude defensive arrangements with some great Power and thereby became pawns in the political game; it was an illusion for the smaller nations to believe that neutrality meant peace and security.

32. It was quite clear that, owing to suspicion and fear, neither side would be prepared to relinquish or submit to control any weapon or weapons it considered essential to its national security and safety. As the USSR representative had stated at the 867th meeting, it was a waste of time to consider the question of control separately from the question of achieving the necessary confidence in international relations. The USSR representative had stressed the need to develop economic relations as a means of removing the artificial barriers between nations. But economic relations too, must be based on confidence and there were other barriers, such as the absence of the free exchange of ideas, restrictions on foreign visitors, interference in the internal affairs of other countries, the suppression of human rights and freedom of speech, the denial of self-determination and independence to dependent peoples, the exploitation of the resources of underdeveloped people, the overthrow of legalized and established Governments by the introduction of subversive elements, the venomous attacks through the Press and radio by one country against another, and the threat to the independence of sovereign States by physical force in the form of rockets and nuclear weapons. When such causes of fear and mistrust were removed, international confidence would become possible. Until such confidence was restored, no nation would be prepared to commit suicide by accepting a simple declaration on the banning and control of nuclear weapons and the reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments without any foolproof guarantee. In an atomic war one such mistake would be fatal and final.

33. All Governments complained of the bitter hardships their people must endure because of high taxation and the allotment of the greater part of their natural

resources to armaments. While it was true that those resources could be better utilized to raise the standard of living of all peoples, under prevailing world conditions sacrifices were inevitable if mankind was to survive.

34. His delegation had agreed to be one of the sponsors of the twenty-four-Power draft resolution not because the Soviet proposals were impractical, but rather because it felt that the draft resolution formed the best basis for negotiation and conciliation. There could be no perfect solution to disarmament unless nations were prepared to set aside personal gain and political prestige. It was therefore gratifying to note that there had been a narrowing of differences between the parties. The twenty-four-Power draft resolution would not jeopardize the interests of any country, provided no political or economic strings were attached to its provisions.

35. Commenting on paragraph 1 (a) of the draft resolution, he said that a simple declaration barring the testing of nuclear weapons without control would do little to curb mankind's fears. It might be true, as the Indian representative had contended, that the fall-out from the test of nuclear weapons could have a deadly effect on the health of the people of the world and might eventually mean their complete extinction, but exactly the same result would be achieved, and far more rapidly, if there were not some guarantee that nuclear weapons would not be used.

36. The question had originally been, which should come first: the destruction of the bomb or the setting up of an international commission for inspection and control? With the passing of time and the discovery of more fearsome weapons, the argument was no longer confined to the question of prohibition; it now involved the use of such weapons for defensive purposes. It would be difficult in any ensuing conflict to decide who had been the aggressor, when both sides claimed that they held such weapons solely for defensive purposes. In any event the statements of both parties threatening the use of nuclear weapons in any coming war would indicate that neither side was at present prepared to outlaw nuclear weapons or to refrain from using them in any major hostility. Indeed some of the arguments advanced by certain States would indicate that Governments were at times less concerned with the misery and destruction that might be caused by nuclear weapons than with the power and prestige they conferred on those who had them.

37. The initial disarmament talks which had aimed at

the complete prohibition of all atomic weapons had failed, but the opportunity was now open to begin with the partial or limited control of nuclear weapons. It was on those lines that paragraph 1 (b) of the draft resolution called for the cessation of production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes and the complete devotion of future production of fissionable materials to non-weapons purposes under effective international control. As for the argument that many nations in possession of large stocks of fissionable materials could still manufacture nuclear weapons, paragraph 1 (c) of the draft resolution must be read in conjunction with paragraph 1 (a). In any disarmament agreement those two clauses must be applied simultaneously.

38. He was happy to note that both sides had agreed in principle on the reduction of armed forces and armaments but that would be useless if a solution was not found for the control and limitation of nuclear weapons. Indeed many nations had realized that great armies with conventional weapons would be of no material advantage in a nuclear war and had already reduced their forces by a substantial amount without waiting for a convention to that effect.

39. The Soviet Union representative had extensively criticized the proposal on aerial inspection, referred to in paragraph 1 (e). It had never been thought that aerial inspection alone would stop a surprise attack; and that was why the twenty-four Powers also proposed ground inspection.

40. In his rapid strides to discover the secrets of nature man was continually finding new implements which he first sought to employ for the purpose of destruction. In his search for more knowledge, he had now passed beyond his own world into regions unknown. It was to be feared that without moral restraint or control such delving into the unknown might prove disastrous. It was for that reason that paragraph 1 (f) of the draft resolution called for a joint study of an inspection system designed to ensure that the sending of objects into outer space would be exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes.

41. His delegation did not consider that any useful purpose would be served by enlarging the Disarmament Commission or its Sub-Committee. It was not a question of numbers, but rather of the weight of those numbers. That had been clearly shown in the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.