

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWELFTH SESSION

Official Records

Tuesday, 29 October 1957,  
at 3.15 p.m.

NEW YORK

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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.1/797, 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, A/C.1/L.180) (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. KREISKY (Austria) said that, in spite of the fact that the hope of agreement raised during the meetings which the sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission held in London in 1957 had ultimately proved illusory, progress had been made and the positions of the two sides were not as divergent as might appear from the discussion in the First Committee. Moreover, recent concessions made by both sides gave evidence of a willingness to compromise. Thus the Soviet Union had reduced the proposed initial period of prohibition of the use of atomic weapons to five years, the United States had stated that it would agree to include overseas military bases not lying within the initial zones of inspection in an air and ground inspection system, and the United States representative in the Committee had said (866th meeting) that his country would agree to the progressive reali-

zation of the steps outlined in the twenty-four Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.179 and Corr.1 and Add.1). The United Nations should therefore continue its efforts to promote agreement during the present session of the General Assembly.

2. Recent technological developments again proved that the technically most developed countries advanced more or less simultaneously, but it would be unfortunate if the United Nations were to accept a situation in which the armaments race was given new impetus by considerations of prestige. The Austrian State Treaty and the recent establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency had furnished evidence that the great Powers could co-operate in the cause of peace. His delegation hoped that they would co-operate in the same way to achieve an agreement on disarmament.

3. Mr. ENGEN (Norway) also noted that there had been a narrowing of the differences between the parties during the London negotiations. It was unfortunately impossible at present to speak of any lessening of international tension, which was normally looked upon as a natural condition for the reduction of armaments. However, while a lessening of tension would tend to promote the adoption of disarmament measures, it was also true that some agreement on disarmament might lead to a relaxation of tension. All members were agreed on the need for some progress in the field, but in dealing with matters which vitally affected the security of all nations, progress could be made only on the basis of maintaining a reasonable equilibrium between the parties. Because the two sides involved were so unlike each other in population, geographical situation, existing conventional armaments and even in their political systems, there was no ideal answer to the problem of mutual concessions, but it was his Government's view that the Western proposals of 29 August 1957 (DC/113, annex 5) came reasonably close to attaining a realistic equivalence. Those proposals were fair and balanced and did not represent inflexible positions. The fact that the implementation of one measure was made contingent upon the implementation of the others was to some extent unavoidable if the equilibrium between the two sides was to be maintained.

4. His Government welcomed the Western proposals as containing some initial measures of disarmament which could be implemented immediately, for it believed that such a first step towards real disarmament immediately was an urgent necessity. Some of the proposals in the memorandum by the Government of the Soviet Union (A/C.1/793) were reasonable and realistic, but his delegation had been struck by the fact that none of the six specific disarmament measures listed by the Soviet representative in the Committee (867th meeting) called for any reduction of armed forces or armaments or nuclear weapons or nuclear fuel stocks. The political measures proposed by the

Soviet delegation were undoubtedly very important, but such measures could be dealt with only in the wider context of international settlements, and without a settlement of broader political problems, such measures as the reduction of foreign forces in Germany and the elimination of foreign bases would intensify rather than reduce international tension.

5. His delegation favoured a more modest approach, which, through the achievement of some concrete limited measures of disarmament, might establish a basis for further progress. It believed that the Assembly should recognize that approach, which was embodied in the Western proposals, as the more promising one and make that clear to the Sub-Committee.

6. Norway considered that complete prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons was a measure which could be realistically contemplated only at a later stage of disarmament, for no system for the control of the elimination of existing stocks of nuclear weapons could be completely effective; and without such a completely effective system, mere declarations of good intentions would change nothing. However, his country, like the whole world, would welcome the suspension of tests of nuclear weapons because of the increasing apprehension of competent scientific opinion as to the possible effects of those tests on human beings. In that connexion, his delegation still felt that the proposal regarding the advance registration of nuclear tests which it had submitted together with Japan and Canada at the eleventh session (A/C.1/L.162/Rev.1) would contribute towards a solution of the problem and help to allay the fears of mankind until it was possible to prohibit testing altogether.

7. However, much as it was concerned with the possible effect of nuclear tests on human health, his delegation agreed with the United Kingdom representative (869th meeting) that the continuing production of nuclear weapons represented a much greater threat to mankind than any radiation from the present tests. The prohibition of test explosions at present would in no way prevent the continued stockpiling of atomic and hydrogen bombs. Moreover, the separation of the testing problem from the essential problem of the manufacture of nuclear weapons was likely only to put off further the day when a beginning could be made in reducing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, for such an isolated suspension of tests would involve some risks for the Western Powers without any compensation. His delegation agreed with the Canadian representative in the Disarmament Commission that it was important to link the suspension of tests with the fundamentally much more important question of ending the nuclear arms race.<sup>1/</sup> The first action in disarmament should include, at the very least, the two top priority items: the suspension of tests and the cessation of production.

8. It was probably true that mere suspension of tests without cessation of production would not encourage other countries to refrain from preparations to produce their own nuclear weapons, while it was at least possible that a cessation of production by the three Powers possessing such weapons would encourage the others to refrain from such preparations. That was an important consideration in view of the urgent need to prevent any increase in the number of States capable

of producing nuclear weapons before the situation became absolutely unmanageable. For the same reason, it was almost mandatory at present to take some initial step leading to a controlled cessation of the production of nuclear weapons. His delegation therefore asked the great Powers to consider seriously the possibility of initiating even a first preliminary step with regard to the control system, which both parties agreed should accompany the suspension of tests, which would be the immediate measure to be taken under an agreement such as he urged.

9. His Government had welcomed the open-skies proposal (DC/71, annex 17) as a way of ending mutual fear and distrust, and was willing to co-operate in such an inspection system so far as Norwegian territory was concerned.

10. His delegation did not believe that it was any deficiency in the negotiation machinery which presented the main obstacle to progress in the disarmament discussions and therefore reserved its position with respect to proposals regarding the composition of the negotiating bodies. It would support the Belgian draft resolution (A/3630/Corr.1).

11. If, as the Netherlands representative had said (875th meeting), a balance of power now existed between the great military Powers of the world, his delegation felt that those great Powers must heed the demand of all mankind and take the opportunity to make progress in the field of disarmament.

12. Mr. SANDLER (Sweden) pointed out that the world was awaiting agreement on partial disarmament at a time when both the United States and the Soviet Union had reached an advanced stage in the development of nuclear weapons and carriers of those weapons. Indeed, the launching of the Soviet artificial earth satellite on 4 October 1957 marked the opening of a new era in scientific history. In many countries the conclusion had been drawn that the whole series of nuclear weapons, missiles and carriers developed by the two great Powers would remain in their armaments. The White Paper published by the United Kingdom Government on 4 April 1957,<sup>2/</sup> just after the opening of the London disarmament talks, had announced that Government's decision to base its future defence policy primarily on nuclear weapons.

13. It had been generally conceded that the policy of "all or nothing" with respect to disarmament had failed, and that agreement on a more or less extensive programme of partial disarmament must be sought. However, there was still a danger that the "all or nothing" policy would be applied even to such partial disarmament by making the adoption of any one measure conditional upon acceptance of all the other measures. For its part, Sweden found the six points enumerated in paragraph 1 of the twenty-four-Power draft resolution acceptable, but it questioned the necessity or wisdom of applying the "all or nothing" principle to them.

14. A number of measures could be agreed upon without reference to the over-all plan of partial disarmament. Sweden had been gratified to note, for example, that the Western Powers were prepared to begin a study of outer-space missiles without awaiting agreement on the other points of the twenty-four-Power

<sup>1/</sup> See Official Records of the Disarmament Commission, 63rd meeting.

<sup>2/</sup> Defence: Outline of Future Policy (London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, April 1957), Cmd. 124.

draft resolution. Such a study would have to define outer space, taking as a point of departure a relatively low altitude, and should take into account not only intercontinental missiles but those of an intermediate and even shorter range.

15. Some progress could also be made on the transfer of stocks of fissionable material from weapons to non-weapons use without awaiting agreement on other measures. In practice, such transfers had already begun under the aegis of the newly-established International Atomic Energy Agency. Obviously, when the agreement to transfer stocks was supplemented by an agreement to cease production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes under effective international control, the amounts of existing stocks transferred could be expected to increase substantially.

16. With regard to the cessation of production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes—which the Swedish Government would consider as a step forward of primary importance—the Soviet Union had objected that that would not prevent the continued production of nuclear weapons from existing stocks of materials. Its rejection of the proposal for cessation of production on those grounds, which were undeniable, was another example of the fatal "all or nothing" policy. The Soviet Union could, however, advance the more valid argument that it would prefer to wait before agreeing to the cessation of production until it knew what obligations it would have to assume with respect to international control. To meet that objection, a group of experts should be set up immediately to work out the necessary system of inspection.

17. Agreement on the reduction of armed forces was hardly possible without the co-operation of mainland China. Yet, the four-Power proposals of 29 August 1957 omitted any reference to that great Power. Sweden hoped that mainland China would soon be represented in the United Nations, where it could express its views on the subject. Sweden also attached great importance to the proposal for an exchange of lists of armaments to be placed in storage depots.<sup>3/</sup> Greater security would be achieved by a reduction in armaments, particularly naval and air, than by a reduction of armed forces. An effort by the military experts of all the Powers concerned to reduce those conventional armaments could be made independently; it need not await agreement on the other disarmament measures proposed. So far as armed forces were concerned, he said that world opinion had been somewhat puzzled to find that, while the reduction of armed forces discussed at the London talks would bring the United Kingdom's armed forces down to 750,000, the United Kingdom Government had unilaterally decided to cut its armed forces to almost half that figure.

18. If the great Powers could agree on an open inspection system with ground and aerial components to guard against the possibility of surprise attack, such a system could be put into operation as a separate measure. Establishment of an aerial inspection system for one or more appropriate zones, strengthened by the existence of ground inspection posts as suggested by the Soviet Union (DC/71, annex 15), would cause something of a revolution in present thinking regarding armaments. On the other hand, Sweden did not share the Soviet view that there would be no military value in

setting up an inspection system for an Arctic zone. Such a system was intimately connected with disarmament and could be expected to yield important and favourable results.

19. It was admittedly for the Powers conducting nuclear tests to agree among themselves on the pre-eminent question of the suspension of nuclear tests. Sweden continued to feel that a temporary moratorium would be extremely valuable: it would allow time for a thorough study of the dangers of tests and would constitute a first step towards the gradual elimination of nuclear weapons. It was gratifying to note that the Sub-Committee had considered the question of a moratorium as an essential element of its work. It would be desirable to deal with the question of banning tests as a separate matter.

20. When Sweden had recommended a moratorium on tests at the eleventh session (824th meeting), that suggestion was linked with the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. Since the report of that committee was expected in 1958, one could not know now what conclusions the Committee would reach. It seemed certain, however, that research on the subject would have to continue even after the report was submitted. To suspend tests only until the report had been examined would, in any case, constitute too short a moratorium to be of the desired effect. The duration of the suspension should be at least two years, since it required almost a year to prepare a new series of tests. He could not agree with the argument that a test suspension did not constitute a measure of disarmament.

21. It was evident that the prospects for a gradual and balanced elimination of nuclear weapons would diminish as more and more States came into possession of those weapons. As Mr. Moch the representative of France, had pointed out (DC/113, annex 7), it was already inaccurate to say that there were only three States manufacturing fissionable material for weapons purposes; certainly, by the time agreement had been reached to cease such production and transfer existing stocks to peaceful uses, the number would have increased. That probability strongly influenced the defence policy of States, as had been shown by a recent statement by the Defence Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany. For its part, Sweden had hitherto been directing all its programmes for the use of atomic energy to peaceful purposes.

22. Furthermore, even if science succeeded in developing a so-called "clean bomb", there was no guarantee that all countries would restrict their manufacture to such bombs and it might perhaps be more difficult to detect illegal tests of nuclear weapons, tests which might be even more dangerous than those already carried out. Progress towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons could not be made by including those of a so-called "defensive" tactical nature with conventional armaments, and there was no guarantee that a country against which tactical or "defensive" nuclear weapons were used would not retaliate with even more destructive nuclear weapons.

23. The Swedish delegation had seriously reflected on the possibility that a continuation of nuclear tests might have the effect of accelerating progress in the peaceful uses of atomic energy. It had been influenced by the recent announcement that plutonium could be

<sup>3/</sup> See document DC/SC.1/PV.125.

used for peaceful purposes whereas it had formerly been usable only for military ends. Moreover, his delegation was acutely aware now that the technology of controlled fusion might be achieved without test explosions and that such controlled fusion might be applied to the production of new types of hydrogen bombs, also without resort to the explosion of fissionable materials. In that event, as Mr. Moch had pointed out in the Sub-Committee,<sup>4/</sup> the possibility might be ruled out of controlling future production of nuclear materials for military purposes.

24. The Soviet Union's position on the crucial question of ceasing future production of fissionable materials would probably determine the degree of progress towards a disarmament agreement. Sweden favoured technical studies in order to push forward in disarmament in both fields of weapons; moreover, it had no objections to the six measures in the twenty-four-Power draft resolution, which, if implemented, would constitute continuing progress. However, in view of the deadlock, it was the considered view of the Swedish delegation that the Assembly should press for separate agreement and action on two major measures: the temporary suspension of nuclear tests and the establishment of an open inspection system to guard against the possibility of surprise attack.

25. Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) said that the discussion of the important question of disarmament was really a discussion of the fate of mankind. In so vital an issue the small and middle-sized countries had the right and also the duty to exert their moderating influence and to prevail upon the great Powers to negotiate in a spirit of mutual compromise and understanding.

26. He believed that if the great Powers were more flexible in their negotiations, it might be possible to conclude agreements leading to the adoption of concrete disarmament measures. It was significant that resolution 808 (IX), adopted by the General Assembly in 1954, represented agreement on three basic points for a co-ordinated programme of disarmament of such a nature that no State would have cause to fear that its security was endangered. That agreement on the ultimate goals of disarmament had been followed by a second agreement among the great Powers to proceed to the adoption of partial disarmament measures. Over-optimism was, however, unjustified because, despite the agreement in principle, not a single concrete disarmament measure had yet been agreed upon. The only truly constructive solution was to review the methods used in an attempt to achieve greater effectiveness. While, without doubt, there had been progress in the work of the Sub-Committee, it had frankly to be admitted that that progress was far from what had been anticipated.

27. He agreed that the basic principles of resolution 808 (IX) were still in effect for all Members of the United Nations, despite the unfortunate omission from the draft resolution of the twenty-four Powers of any reference to prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

28. He concurred in the view of other representatives that the importance of international methods in the field of disarmament should not be underestimated. In a matter as vital as the survival of mankind, the

United Nations was in duty bound to try any additional procedures which might possibly supplement existing procedures. The Chairman of the Mexican delegation had therefore suggested (699th plenary meeting) that the General Assembly should consider the appropriateness of designating a United Nations commissioner for disarmament, a statesman enjoying international prestige to be named by the General Assembly on the unanimous recommendation of the members of the Sub-Committee. That official would serve as a mediator assisting the members of the Sub-Committee in their negotiations, maintaining constant contact with them and submitting privately for their consideration any proposals considered helpful in conciliating divergent views and in smoothing the way toward agreement. As the debate progressed, the Mexican delegation became increasingly convinced that it would be not only useful but urgent for the General Assembly to designate a commissioner on disarmament who could represent the Assembly and help the great Powers in the gradual solution of a problem which could not be within the exclusive competence of the great Powers despite their primary responsibility in the matter.

29. In that connexion, he emphatically rejected the idea that negotiations among the great Powers should be deferred. On the contrary, the General Assembly must press for continued discussions in search of agreement. Only constant and uninterrupted negotiations, and not votes or hopes, could produce concrete and effective results in disarmament. It was obvious that without the help of small and middle-sized nations the great Powers would not be able to reach agreement.

30. The Mexican suggestion for the designation of a United Nations commissioner for disarmament was not intended to replace or alter existing organs, instruments or practices in the field of disarmament, but only to increase the possibility of negotiation and agreement among the great Powers. Nor was that proposal in any way dependent on the composition or structure of the Disarmament Commission or its Sub-Committee.

31. Although that suggestion had been favourably received by many delegations, the Mexican delegation did not intend to submit a formal proposal so long as the great Powers were not prepared to formulate the unanimous recommendation required in that suggestion, which contained many constructive elements worthy of study, though time might be required for the ripening of the idea.

32. In the general debate in the General Assembly (699th plenary meeting), the Mexican delegation had presented a second suggestion, namely that during the present session a procedure of private meetings might be employed similar to the method employed at the sixth session in December 1951, when the four great Powers met privately in a Sub-Committee of the First Committee presided over by the President of the General Assembly. He hoped that the members of the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission would state their views on the possibility of such a procedure at the end of the general debate. If that procedure should be considered inappropriate, other measures should now be sought. The Committee might wish to give consideration to the suggestion of the Ecuadorian delegation (882nd meeting) for a working party of the First Committee. In that case, it might be advisable to

<sup>4/</sup> See document DC/SC.1/PV.131.

limit the number of members by including all States sponsoring individual draft resolutions and a reasonable proportion of the twenty-four States sponsoring the joint draft resolution including, of course the four members of the Sub-Committee. The Chairman of such a working party might well be the Chairman of the First Committee, and its work might be expedited by the presence and co-operation of the Secretary-General.

33. The Mexican delegation considered it immaterial which of the many possible procedures was employed in the present circumstance. It was, however, essential to avoid inertia on so vital an issue. Negotiation was the only hope of reaching ultimate agreement.

34. Turning to the question of tests of nuclear weapons, he noted that the suspension of such tests as the first step toward a final cessation would be a source of relief to all of mankind, particularly in the areas closest to the testing grounds of the great Powers. In view of the fact that all parties seemed in agreement that those tests could be suspended, he hoped that, before the end of the current session of the General Assembly, some progress might be made in achieving that goal. His delegation concurred in the general concern regarding the danger of continuing the tests of nuclear weapons.

35. He could not, however, agree with the position expressed (877th meeting) by the representative of France in that regard. It was significant that the number of eminent scientists who had expressed alarm at the dangers of tests to future generations had now risen to several thousand, while the scientists tending to minimize the dangers represented a rather small minority. The study of the complicated question of disarmament and the consideration of the possible effects of radiation clearly showed the limitations of science and the extent of human ignorance in many matters. It was however certain that, biologically speaking, there could be no possible benefit to present or future generations from the tests of nuclear weapons. Moreover it was also known that radioactive fall-out caused by those explosions produced harmful biological and genetic effects. Furthermore the greatest danger stemmed, not from exposure to radio-activity caused by the tests, but from indirect absorption of substances which might have harmful genetic effects. The only point of doubt was the evaluation of the magnitude of harm. The Committee must certainly give most serious consideration to that matter.

36. It was important to note that neither party was completely right or completely wrong and that, with sincere effort, agreement on disarmament could be reached.

37. Mr. LOUTFI (Egypt) said that, although in his delegation's view it was primarily the responsibility of the great Powers to reach a solution of the disarmament problem, it was also the duty of the smaller

Powers to express their views and to assist in finding a solution, for there was no doubt that their opinion and world opinion in general would influence the great Powers.

38. Some progress had been made towards agreement in principle during the London negotiations, but the total results achieved had been slight. It was true that there was a lack of confidence between nations, and particularly between the great Powers; however, that fact should not lead to the adoption of a negative position on the question of disarmament. Any agreement, however modest, would help to improve the situation. But solutions which the great Powers felt would impair their security could not be recommended to them; nor would it be useful to obtain a mere majority for any one set of disarmament proposals, as that method might lead to greater intransigence on both sides. For that reason, his delegation welcomed the Canadian representative's statement (878th meeting) that his Government considered that the twenty-four-Power draft resolution could be improved. It would be very dangerous for the cause of disarmament if the States involved stiffened their positions and refused to accept any modification of their proposals.

39. His Government had joined in the appeal to the great Powers made at the African-Asian Conference held at Bandung in 1955 to cease the testing of nuclear weapons. Although opinion differed as to the danger of those tests, the least that could be said was that scientists were divided on the matter. Consequently, a way must be sought to put an end to the tests.

40. It was true that the suspension of the tests would not in itself completely dispose of the dangers of nuclear weapons, but it would be a great step forward and might lead to other steps. His delegation would comment on the draft resolutions submitted on that subject at a later stage, but wished to state that it would do everything in its power to help find a solution to the problem.

41. His delegation considered that an enlargement of the Sub-Committee would allow fuller expression of the interest of the smaller Powers in the matter and might help the great Powers to reach a solution. It would therefore give sympathetic consideration to any proposal to enlarge the Sub-Committee. It also viewed with interest the Belgian draft resolution.

42. It remained his Government's belief that all agreements on disarmament must be based on an adequate system of control; as a first step, however, such a system might be established on a limited basis.

43. In conclusion, he appealed to the great Powers to show greater flexibility and to refrain from the revival of old controversies. The adoption of extreme positions by either side could not advance the cause of disarmament.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.