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Official Records

**FIRST COMMITTEE, 1285th
MEETING**

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CONTENTS

Agenda item 26:

Question of convening a conference for the purpose of signing a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons: report of the Secretary-General

General debate. 201

Chairman: Mr. Omar Abdel Hamid ADEEL (Sudan).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Question of convening a conference for the purpose of signing a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons: report of the Secretary-General (A/5174 and Add.1)

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Mr. GEBRE-EGZY (Ethiopia) said that the question of prohibiting the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons had been raised for the first time by his delegation at the thirteenth session of the General Assembly.^{1/} The Ethiopian delegation had raised the matter again at the fifteenth session and had introduced a draft resolution which had finally been adopted by the General Assembly at its sixteenth session as resolution 1653 (XVI). The use of nuclear weapons was contrary to the aims of the United Nations and to the principles of the Charter, and the United Nations must carry out its responsibilities with regard to disarmament. The considerations which had prompted his delegation in 1958 to propose the signing of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons were still valid, and the United Nations would be helping the great Powers to advance towards disarmament if it adopted a convention on the subject along the lines of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. That would not be an innovation; there were a number of instances in the past where international communities had made declarations and signed conventions to deal with similar situations.

^{1/} See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, First Committee, 955th meeting.*

2. The conference envisaged in resolution 1653 (XVI) would in no sense interfere with the negotiations on disarmament; indeed, the signing and implementation of a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons would limit the scope of the arms race. Once the security and peace of the world no longer depended on the balance of terror, a process would be initiated in which the nuclear Powers would reduce their arms expenditure, the membership of the "nuclear club" would be restricted, and existing nuclear stockpiles could more readily be converted to uses serving the interests of mankind and of civilization; there would also be an improvement in the political atmosphere and in relations between States.

3. Certain criticisms had been directed at the idea embodied in General Assembly resolution 1653 (XVI). It had been contended by some that the objective of the resolution could not be achieved by prohibiting nuclear weapons but only by completely eliminating all weapons of mass destruction; his delegation supported that idea, which was not at variance with the objective of the resolution but was a logical corollary of it. It had also been objected that the signing of a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons would destroy the balance of power. However, international security could not be maintained by a balance of power based on terror. Furthermore, given the anticipated spread of nuclear weapons, the elimination of weapons of mass destruction seemed to be the only way of preventing the annihilation of the human race.

4. With regard to the Secretary-General's report (A/5174 and Add.1), he was pleased to note that a great majority of States were in favour of convening a conference. Even those who had raised objections did not deny the usefulness of the proposed conference, but feared that it would interfere with disarmament negotiations or questioned the effectiveness of the type of convention proposed. But the conference was not intended to replace negotiations on general and complete disarmament; on the contrary, it would help to bring about early agreement on that difficult problem. Furthermore, while it was true that a convention of the type envisaged would impose only moral obligations, it should be borne in mind that all international agreements and even the Charter of the United Nations rested partly on moral compulsion. His delegation fully supported the idea of convening a conference for the purpose of signing the convention envisaged in resolution 1653 (XVI), and would in due course submit a draft resolution with that end in view.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.