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Chairman: Mr. Ismail FAHMY
(United Arab Republic).

AGENDA ITEM 96

Conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons (*continued*)* (A/6834)

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. TOMOROWICZ (Poland): The security of the world, of all States and all individuals, renders imperative the complete elimination of nuclear armaments. Only such a solution can fully guarantee the security of the world. That is the aim of the proposals providing for complete and general disarmament.

Mr. Tchernouchtchenko (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

2. We are all agreed that general and complete disarmament is the best solution, the ultimate solution. We are all agreed, too, that this ultimate solution cannot be achieved today or in the near future. We are all fully aware of the necessity of taking steps towards disarmament without waiting for the over-all, earnestly sought-for but difficult solution of general and complete disarmament. There lies the origin, the need for and the recognition of partial measures as the most realistic approach to the solution of the problem of disarmament.

3. Poland has been and is actively engaged in those efforts towards disarmament. In our search for solutions on the basis of our particular experience we have advocated and supported disarmament through partial measures leading to the ultimate goal. Thus, the magnitude of the nuclear problem leads to the urgent necessity of its solution. Its complexity makes us search for that solution in terms of partial measures. Realism and experience point to this way as the most promising one.

4. First among such measures, in our opinion, is to ascertain that the character and dimensions of the nuclear danger, the incalculable costs which humanity would have

to bear as a result of a nuclear war, should be fully understood. One is reminded here of the words in the Secretary-General's report on the effects of the possible use of nuclear weapons:

"These general propositions . . . have been proclaimed so often that their force has all but been lost through repetition. But their reality is none the less so stark that, unless the facts on which they are based are clearly set out, it will not be possible to realize the peril in which mankind now stands." [A/6858 and Corr.1, para. 2.]

5. The invaluable contribution of this report is that it makes the facts of this stark reality available to all of us, to all mankind. It is therefore possible to undertake the first measure I mentioned on the basis of this report, in accordance with resolution 2162 A (XXI), through the widest possible dissemination of the report, making world public opinion fully realize the appalling implications of the use of nuclear weapons. We sincerely believe that this is a step which has great psychological and political importance for the efforts made towards nuclear disarmament.

6. A second platform of partial measures of nuclear disarmament is that which I would call the "containment" of nuclear weapons. There again the necessity of taking positive steps is obvious. Containment of nuclear weapons can take the form of a freeze of those weapons, regional or otherwise. Such a freeze would affect countries that either possess nuclear weapons in the area involved, and would undertake not to increase the number of such weapons, or countries that do not possess nuclear weapons and which would undertake not to enter, directly or indirectly, into possession or command of such weapons. In some specific cases it could encompass both types of countries. Proposals for such a freeze affecting Central Europe are contained in what is known as the Gomulka Plan.

7. Containment of nuclear weapons can also be achieved through the implementation of the concept of denuclearization of defined geographical zones. An effort in that direction has been undertaken by a number of Latin American countries and the idea has been accepted by African States. In Europe, where the idea first originated, the Rapacki Plan is the most far-reaching proposal for denuclearization. It also relates to an extremely sensitive part of the world.

8. Containment of nuclear weapons on a global scale, in a most important material aspect, in circumstances of undoubted urgency, is the core of the treaty on non-proliferation. That is why I am sure that I shall meet with unanimous approval when I underline the earnest need for and the importance of this particular partial measure which, in present circumstances, we could and should take towards nuclear disarmament.

* Resumed from the 1532nd meeting.

9. And now we come to the measure which can most directly contribute to lessening the danger of the use of existing nuclear arsenals even before they are disposed of through disarmament. I have in mind the convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, as proposed by the delegation of the Soviet Union [A/6834].

10. It is not the existence of nuclear weapons in itself, but the ever present danger emanating from the possibility of their being used that is weighing so ominously upon the whole world in its military, political and economic implications. Hence the renunciation by nuclear Powers of the use of nuclear weapons constitutes probably the most direct measure to free humanity from this threat.

11. I should like to make a few remarks on the Soviet proposal, as a representative of a country which is free from the burden of possessing nuclear weapons—a country which has been actively engaged in the quest for disarmament.

12. To us, undeniably the most important outcome of the adoption of the proposed convention would be the removal of the threat of nuclear annihilation. We are aware of the fact that, at present, nuclear weapons may be used. We also know that as long as they can be used we cannot be free from the threat of suffering the consequences. We cannot therefore but consider it a duty of ours to do our utmost towards the elimination of that unspeakable danger.

13. There is another aspect of the Soviet proposal to which I should like to draw the attention of this Committee and which, in the final analysis, may be of no less importance. The prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons cannot but lead to a decrease in the interest in stepping up the nuclear armaments race. This would contribute to the containment of the nuclear armaments race, at the minimum and, at the maximum, would start the process of reduction and liquidation of massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons, deprived of their value in view of the prohibition of their use. This, in turn, would bring political effects, both on the international level as well as internally, by reducing existing tensions.

14. The breaking of the spiral of the nuclear armaments race would create an atmosphere conducive to comprehensive disarmament, both nuclear and conventional.

15. From our point of view, the Soviet proposal offers an alternative to the policy of basing international relations upon the concepts of deterrence, retaliation and preemptive attack which, at best, create a highly deceptive—and therefore dangerous—security, and at worst may push us to the very brink of a cataclysm.

16. I have dealt with some aspects of the problem which are of particular significance to my country. There are other aspects which do not relate directly to us as a member of a defensive alliance, but they may be of special significance to other countries.

17. Nuclear armaments are a potential military weapon. They are also a potential and, unfortunately, an actual political weapon used as an instrument of intimidation and political pressure. The policy from the position of strength, as we know it, is based not only on economic power and

political influence; it is also based on military might, and enhanced by it. At the basis of this military might we find nuclear weapons. Therefore to remove the possibility of using nuclear arms, not only as military but also as political weapons, is of the greatest importance in order to ensure relations between States based not on strength, not on imposition, not on nuclear blackmail, but on co-operation and equality. This appears to be precisely the aim of the draft convention, which, in its article 2, prohibits the threat to use nuclear weapons. Therefore, without being an actual measure of disarmament, the convention would in effect ensure the fuller application of our Charter.

18. The proposed convention will make the possession of nuclear weapons less enviable. Prohibited, they will lose their importance to nuclear Powers. Altogether it could mean a downward turn of the spiral of nuclear armaments, thus diminishing the possibility of using the disparities in the military capabilities of States for political purposes.

19. May I conclude by recalling resolution 1653 (XVI), the Declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. Its main thesis is that the use of nuclear weapons is contrary to the rules of international law, constitutes a crime against mankind and civilization and is a direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations. If anything, this thesis has gained in its validity and urgency. It makes it all the more necessary for us to take the step proposed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of concluding a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons.

20. Mr. BELOKOLOS (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (*translated from Russian*): The peoples of the world are greatly perturbed by the increase in world tension. This tension and the fact that it is growing increasingly acute are the result of the attempts of imperialist States to stop the forward march of history and to repress the national aspirations of the peoples towards national independence, progress and peace.

21. This adventurous policy of the member States of NATO and of other aggressive blocs is fraught with grave dangers for the cause of general peace and security, and for the future of mankind, which is threatened by the danger of a nuclear war.

22. In the existing international situation the peoples of the world must combine their efforts and draw together to prevent the unleashing of a world war in which rocket and nuclear weapons would be used, and which, as the Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Brezhnev, emphasized in his report at the meeting commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the great October Socialist Revolution, “could lead to the death of hundreds of millions of people, to the destruction of whole countries and to the poisoning of the surface of the earth and of its atmosphere”.

23. It goes without saying that the best and most reliable way to eliminate the threat of nuclear war would be to carry out general and complete disarmament under strict international control. As we know the Committee of Eighteen which had been entrusted with the task of

reaching agreement on this problem has before it the draft treaty proposed by the Soviet Union on general and complete disarmament. This draft, the contents of which are well known, provides a good basis for an effective solution of the disarmament problem.

24. Unfortunately, the unhelpful attitude of various Western States in this matter has led disarmament negotiations into a blind alley, and the war of aggression in Viet-Nam, the criminal acts of imperialists in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world have created extremely unfavourable conditions for these negotiations.

25. In the situation which has developed and which is extremely dangerous for the cause of peace, the United Nations is in duty bound to take effective measures to avert the threat of a nuclear war. In this connexion, due note should be taken of the initiative of the Soviet Union, which has proposed the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, and which has presented a draft convention on that subject to the present session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would limit the armaments race, would definitely help to prevent the unleashing of a nuclear and rocket war and would serve to prepare the right atmosphere for the conclusion of an agreement on general and complete disarmament.

26. The question of the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons has long been ripe for a decision. Six years ago, on the initiative of Ethiopia and other African and Asian States, and with the support of the socialist and other peace-loving States, the sixteenth session of the General Assembly adopted the well-known Declaration prohibiting the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. This Declaration states that:

“(a) The use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons is contrary to the spirit, letter and aims of the United Nations and, as such, a direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations;”

and that

“(d) Any State using nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons is to be considered as violating the Charter of the United Nations, as acting contrary to the laws of humanity and as committing a crime against mankind and civilization”. [*General Assembly resolution 1653 (XVI)*.]

27. Thus the United Nations has proclaimed that nuclear weapons are outlawed since they threaten mankind—not only the present generation but future generations as well. This Declaration of the United Nations expresses the firm will of the peoples of the world to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons, and all States are requested to act in strict conformity with this document. In the international situation that has now arisen it is extremely important to transform the recommendations made in the Declaration into a legal instrument and to conclude the convention proposed by the Soviet Union.

28. Speaking in support of the initiative of Ethiopia, which voted in favour of this Declaration and now supports the proposal of the Soviet Union for the conclusion of a

convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons, the Government of the Ukrainian SSR has always been guided by the fact that the atomic bomb is not a conventional weapon but a most destructive and dangerous weapon of mass annihilation. This conclusion is irrefutable. It is based on many statements made by scientists and specialists, and also on the recent report of the Secretary-General on the effects of the possible use of nuclear weapons [*A/6858*].

29. Once this obvious fact is recognized, urgent measures must be taken to protect the security of all peoples. May we remind the Committee that since mankind started to look for ways of alleviating the suffering caused by war, differences have always been drawn between various types of weapons. Thus in the Declaration of St. Petersburg of 1868 the use of certain types of shells was prohibited. Article 22 of the Hague Convention of 1899 states quite clearly:

“Armed forces taking part in war have no unlimited right to use means of warfare.”

30. The main principle of these and other generally accepted international documents tends to make a distinction between certain types of weapons which are more dangerous, more destructive and likely to inflict undue suffering on people. If States at the end of the last century were already able to agree on the prohibition of certain types of weapons inflicting undue suffering on human beings, it is all the more important to agree on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction which can literally reduce to ashes vast areas of the earth. The peoples of all countries of our planet, without exception, are vitally interested in the solution of this problem because the use of nuclear weapons in the event of war would not only sow death and destruction on the territories of the belligerent countries, but would also inflict untold suffering on people living in the farthest corners of the earth.

31. As proof of what I am saying, may I refer to the report of the Secretary-General, which I have already mentioned, on the effects of the possible use of nuclear weapons [*A/6858, para. 1*] which states:

“Were such weapons ever to be used in numbers, hundreds of millions of people might be killed, and civilization as we know it, as well as organized community life, would inevitably come to an end in the countries involved in the conflict. Many of those who survived the immediate destruction as well as others in countries outside the area of conflict, would be exposed to widely-spreading radio-active contamination, and would suffer from long-term effects of irradiation and transmit, to their offspring, a genetic burden which would become manifest in the disabilities of later generations.”

32. This is a very serious warning which, in the interest of the security of the whole of mankind of today and of the future, we have no right to ignore. That is why it is essential to conclude, as speedily as possible, a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons, since such a measure would to a large extent reduce the danger of the outbreak of thermo-nuclear war.

33. The prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would also contribute to the solution of other disarmament

problems, including some of the so-called partial measures. The absence of any prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons only serves to attract those who wish to acquire those weapons for themselves. If we succeeded in agreeing to the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons that would weaken the ardour of some States wishing to gain access to them in one way or another.

34. What is required in order to settle the problem of the prohibition of nuclear weapons? First, there must of course be a sincere desire on the part of the nuclear and all other States to take such a measure. At previous sessions and at the present session of the General Assembly as well as at meetings of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee and at other international conferences, many statements have been made on the inadmissibility of unleashing nuclear war and on the need to take all possible steps to prevent it. The time has come for all States—and, of course, above all, the nuclear Powers—to prove, not only by words but by deeds, their decision not to tolerate the unleashing of thermo-nuclear war. The sincerity of the statements of all States that they wish to prevent a nuclear catastrophe is being verified today by their attitude towards the solution of the problem of the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. The solution to that problem proposed by the Soviet Union is extremely simple, since it does not require any kind of supervision. At the same time, the historical significance of such a solution would be appraised at its true worth not only now but by future generations.

35. What is it that has prevented the General Assembly and the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee from solving this problem up till now? One reason can be found in the unwillingness of the Western Powers to agree on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. The most obvious illustration of their refusal is the fact that at the sixteenth session of the United Nations General Assembly they voted against the Declaration prohibiting the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. The NATO Powers continue to take such a position today, both in the General Assembly and in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, opposing in every possible way any solution of this important and urgent problem. We have often heard the arguments of the United States delegation, repeated with persistence that could be put to better purpose.

36. Those arguments were perhaps advanced most clearly five years ago in a letter from the Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, dated 30 June 1962,¹ and were again put forward by the United States representative in our Committee on 20 November of this year. At that time the United States declared, and continues to affirm today, that the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would be, supposedly, an “illusory” measure, devoid of any practical significance. To confirm that conclusion the United States alleges that the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would not be respected, since it cannot be ensured.

37. We cannot accept such reasoning. The best guarantee of respect for an agreement is the interest of the parties in seeing that it is respected. In the past we have already had

the prohibition of the use of weapons of mass destruction, and the results of that prohibition were successful. We have in mind the Geneva Protocol Prohibiting the Use of Chemical and Bacteriological Weapons, which has always been respected by the signatories. Among the few States refusing to accept the obligation of the Geneva Protocol not to use chemical and bacteriological weapons are the United States, which probably to this day considers that document illusory. However, experience has shown how wrong such reasoning can be.

38. The existence of the Geneva Protocol definitely helped to ensure that even during the years of violent fighting in the Second World War, the belligerents did not resort to poisonous substances to create epidemics artificially, despite the fact that they did possess sufficient stocks of those types of weapons at the time.

39. But if it proved possible to prevent the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons, why cannot the same be done with respect to an even more terrible weapon—the nuclear armaments of today, which, were they to be used, would indiscriminately kill hundreds of millions of people, with no distinction between the front lines and the rear, or between soldiers and civilians? Such a danger must unquestionably be prevented.

40. With regard to nuclear weapons, it seems that the United States wishes to retain its freedom of action. The refusal of the United States and other Western Powers to agree to the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons clearly shows that they wish to continue to rely on nuclear weapons in pursuing their aggressive policy against the national liberation movements of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

41. It would hardly seem necessary to have to prove that States assume international obligations in order to abide by them; that is axiomatic. And if one openly approaches an agreement with the allegation that it will prove “illusory”, it will be generally impossible to conclude any international treaty or any international convention.

42. Western delegations have also alleged that the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons would not in itself give rise to a climate of confidence. But, one may ask, in conditions where there is no prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, is there more trust and more tranquillity? Is it not obvious that the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons or the assumption by the nuclear Powers of the obligation not to be the first to use those weapons would, in fact, help to establish international trust? Such a measure would confirm that the parties do not nurture any aggressive designs against each other and do not intend to unleash a nuclear war. That is why we are deeply convinced that the conclusion of a convention prohibiting the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons would contribute to an easing of international tensions and to the creation of an atmosphere of confidence among States, which in turn would create favourable conditions for negotiations on general and complete disarmament.

43. There is another unfounded argument of the Western countries, according to which the prohibition of the use of

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 26, document A/5174, annex II.*

nuclear weapons would not do away with the threat of nuclear war which can be achieved only through general and complete disarmament; therefore, we are told, there is no need for agreement on this matter. This was also mentioned by the representative of the United States at the 1532nd meeting. Indeed, the carrying through of general and complete disarmament, as we have already had occasion to stress, would be the best and most reliable way of averting the threat of a nuclear war. But what weight can we attach to this argument of the American side when after many years of negotiations on this problem the United States of America has shown to the whole world that it does not wish to see the problem of general and complete disarmament solved. The United States representatives have to refer to the problem of general and complete disarmament only in order to try to evade any consideration or solution of the problem of the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

44. Further, in the General Assembly and in the Eighteen-Nation Committee many partial measures are under discussion, such as the problem of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the representatives of the United States do not refuse to discuss these matters merely because—as is the case in the present discussion—these measures do not fully do away with the threat of a nuclear war. It is generally recognized that, before general and complete disarmament comes about, efforts must be made to take steps which would improve the international climate and, in this connexion, the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons could very well be the measure which would contribute to the solution of the problem of nuclear disarmament.

45. The peoples of the world expect from us a solution to this important problem of our time whose goal is to prevent the unleashing of a rocket and nuclear war and to free mankind from insensate destruction of lives and heavy suffering as a result of the use of these weapons of mass destruction. The policy of the accomplished fact has always been a dangerous policy and we should today, before it is

too late, achieve the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and, to this effect, to conclude an appropriate convention, the draft of which has been presented to the present session of the General Assembly of the United Nations by the delegation of the Soviet Union.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

46. The CHAIRMAN (*translated from Russian*): If no other representative wishes to speak today we shall have to adjourn the meeting. But first I should like to remind delegations of the Committee's programme of work for the following week which was mentioned yesterday by the Chairman of the Committee and which we approved.

47. There will be no meeting tomorrow of the First Committee but at 10 a.m. in the Economic and Social Council chamber there will be a meeting of the unofficial working group which will continue its work on the item proposed by Malta.

48. On Friday there will be two meetings of the First Committee. In the morning, as we have already agreed, the Committee will resume its consideration of a resolution tabled on item 91, "Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America". There will be a vote on this resolution. After we conclude our consideration of this matter the Committee will continue its consideration of item 96, "Conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons", proposed by the USSR.

49. In this connexion, I should like to mention that any representative who wishes to take part in the general debate should put his name down with the Secretary of the Committee as soon as possible. The list of speakers will be closed at 6 p.m. on Friday.

50. If there are no further remarks I shall adjourn the meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.