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Sixteenth session

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE SIXTEENTH REGULAR  
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: ITEM PROPOSED BY IRELAND

THE PREVENTION OF THE WIDER DISSEMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Letter dated 16 August 1961 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i.  
of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the  
Secretary-General

The Prevention of the Wider Dissemination  
of Nuclear Weapons

On the instructions of the Government of Ireland I have the honour to request that a supplementary item should be placed on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly entitled "The prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons." It will be recalled that the Government of Ireland requested the inscription of a similar item at the last session of the General Assembly.

I enclose herewith an explanatory memorandum regarding the proposed item in accordance with rules 14 and 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

(Signed) T.F. O'SULLIVAN  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Explanatory Memorandum

1. In the course of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth regular sessions of the General Assembly, the Irish delegation drew attention to the dangers to world peace involved in the spread of nuclear weapons and to the urgent need for international agreement which would ensure that the existing nuclear Powers would remain the sole possessors of such weapons.

2. At the thirteenth session, the Chairman of the Irish delegation, Mr. Frank Aiken, Minister for External Affairs, submitted for the First Committee's consideration a draft resolution which in its first preambular paragraph called for recognition by the Assembly of the danger inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons and in its operative part proposed the establishment of an ad hoc Committee to study the question and make appropriate recommendations to the fourteenth session. Mr. Aiken stressed that his main objective was to help prevent matters getting worse through the spread of nuclear weapons while efforts were being made in disarmament and other conferences and negotiations to relieve world tension and improve international relations.

3. Mr. Aiken asked for a separate vote on the first preambular paragraph, the result of which was 37 votes in favour, none against, and 44 abstentions and, after expressing his satisfaction that the danger had been formally recognized without a single negative vote, he withdrew the draft resolution as a whole. In doing so he indicated that he did not wish to insist on any particular method of dealing with the generally acknowledged danger and expressed the hope that the result would encourage the nuclear Powers to negotiate an agreement among themselves not to give nuclear weapons to non-nuclear Powers.

4. During the fourteenth session, the question of the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons was inscribed as a separate item on the Assembly's agenda at the request of Ireland. As a result of the debate a resolution, 1380 (XIV) of 20 November 1959, was adopted by 70 votes to none, with 12 abstentions, which suggested that the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee should consider appropriate means including the feasibility of an international agreement, subject to inspection and control, whereby the Powers producing nuclear weapons would refrain from handing over the control of such weapons to any nation not possessing them

and whereby the Powers not possessing such weapons would refrain from manufacturing them and invited the Committee to include the results of its deliberations in its report to the Disarmament Commission.

5. As the Disarmament Committee suspended its discussions before it dealt with the resolution, the Irish Government requested that the item be included on the agenda of the fifteenth session. After debating the item the General Assembly adopted the following resolution (1576 (XV)) on 20 December 1960 by 68 votes to none, with 26 abstentions.

"The General Assembly,

"Recalling its resolution 1380 (XIV) of 20 November 1959,

"Recognizing the urgent danger that now exists that an increase in the number of States possessing nuclear weapons may occur, aggravating international tension and the difficulty of maintaining world peace, and thus rendering more difficult the attainment of general disarmament agreement,

"Noting with regret that the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament did not find it possible to consider this problem, which was referred to it by General Assembly resolution 1380 (XIV),

"Believing in the necessity of an international agreement, subject to inspection and control, whereby the Powers producing nuclear weapons would refrain from relinquishing control of such weapons to any nation not possessing them and whereby Powers not possessing such weapons would refrain from manufacturing them,

"Believing further that, pending the conclusion of such an international agreement, it is desirable that temporary and voluntary measures be taken to avoid the aggravation of this danger,

"1. Calls upon all Governments to make every effort to achieve permanent agreement on the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons;

"2. Calls upon Powers producing such weapons, as a temporary and voluntary measure pending the negotiation of such a permanent agreement, to refrain from relinquishing control of such weapons to any nation not possessing them and from transmitting to it the information necessary for their manufacture;

"3. Calls upon Powers not possessing such weapons, on a similar temporary and voluntary basis, to refrain from manufacturing these weapons and from otherwise attempting to acquire them."

6. Since the passing of this resolution no apparent progress has been made in the negotiation of an international agreement to restrict the spread of nuclear weapons. The Irish Government, convinced that this matter is one of the greatest importance and urgency, hopes that the General Assembly will consider the matter again with a view to securing the fulfilment of the objectives outlined in its previous resolutions. To this end the Irish delegation requests that the item "The prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons" be placed upon the provisional agenda of the sixteenth session.

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