

In the end, 86 of the 130 parties to the treaty participated in the conference. Since the number of participants from the Western and Socialist groups remained static, the total increase in the number of participants enhanced the proportion of the non-aligned states and thus gave them a larger voice in the proceedings. On the eve of the opening of the conference there was great uncertainty and some trepidation about its outcome. In fact a number of Western countries feared that the conference would repeat the 1980 experience and fail for a second time to agree on any final declaration.

From the beginning of the conference it was clear that the dominant issue would be the implementation of Article VI of the NPT, and in particular the disappointment and frustration of many of the non-nuclear weapon states at the lack of any progress towards a comprehensive test ban, which many regard as a prerequisite to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and as a first step towards nuclear disarmament.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, struck a keynote in his message to the conference in which he stated:

“Unless the nuclear arms race between the major powers is halted and the further spread of military nuclear capability deterred, the terrible possibility of wholesale destruction will increase yet further.”

In referring to the commitments in Article VI he said,

“In this respect, the implementation of the treaty has been largely one-sided, to the understandable concern and profound dissatisfaction of its non-nuclear weapon parties. There must be recognition of the fact that restraint on one side cannot reasonably be demanded in the face of unlimited expansion on the other.”

With few exceptions, the speakers in the general debate were critical of the nuclear powers for failing to fulfil their commitments to halt and then reverse the nuclear arms race, and they were almost unanimous in stressing the importance they attached to an end to nuclear testing and the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty. They also spoke of the need to preserve the Treaty regime by reaching a consensus document at the end of the conference.

The USSR pointed to its repeated efforts to resume negotiations for a test ban, its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing until January 1, 1986 and its offer to extend it if the United States agreed, as well as its support for a nuclear weapons freeze and nuclear disarmament. The United States repeated that a comprehensive test ban remained a long-term goal but that a test ban would not reduce the number of nuclear weapons, and that the most urgent

task was deep reductions of the existing nuclear arsenals.

Speakers from non-aligned countries repeated their long-standing demands made at the first two review conferences and added a call for a nuclear weapons freeze. They also urged early agreement at the bilateral US-USSR negotiations to prevent an arms race in outer space and to end it on earth. Mexico served notice that if the conference was unable to agree on a final declaration by consensus, it should proceed to adopt one or more resolutions by voting.

The rules of procedure of the conference called for all decisions to be taken by consensus if possible. If no consensus was obtainable, decisions could be taken by a two-thirds majority vote. Obviously if a substantial consensus could be worked out, that would be preferable as it would reflect the support of all parties. In the context of the conference, even the *threat* of a vote could adversely affect the atmosphere.

A number of speakers referred to the fact that in 1995 a conference must be called to decide on the future of the NPT and that the decision would be taken by a majority of the parties. The clear implication of these statements was that time was running out on the treaty and that it was necessary for the nuclear powers to fulfil their obligations, in particular as regards halting and reversing the nuclear arms race, if the treaty was to endure.

THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

It was agreed that after the general debate the work of the conference would be undertaken by three main committees of the whole. Committee I was to deal with the disarmament aspects of the treaty, Committee II with safeguards and Committee III with cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

While there was much discussion in Committees II and III on the safeguards against diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful to military purposes and on the entire range of questions concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, there were no insuperable obstacles to reaching agreement on these subjects.

Some difficulties were encountered when several states, in particular the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, hesitated to support a call for full-scope safeguards on all exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology to non-nuclear states. A satisfactory compromise was reached, however, whereby all non-nuclear states were urged to make a legally binding commitment to accept IAEA safeguards on all their peaceful nuclear activities, and all nuclear supplier states