

This Committee has already taken a practical step toward the actual resumption of disarmament talks by unanimously endorsing resolution A/C.1/L.299, which welcomed agreement on these principles and urged these two great nations to agree on a negotiating body.

As yet there is no agreement on how these basic principles should be translated into practice. I have no desire today to gloss over the differences. Indeed, on the important matter of verification methods, we must admit frankly that the two sides are still a long way apart. I believe such difficulties can be resolved in the course of detailed negotiations. The results which the United States and the Soviet Union were able to achieve last summer are proof that conflicting viewpoints can be brought together through careful and painstaking efforts.

The only remaining obstacle to resumed negotiations is the lack of agreement on the composition of the forum in which disarmament will actually be negotiated. To speak very frankly, I cannot for the life of me see why the problem of composition should constitute a barrier to the resumption of negotiations.

The question, after all, is a simple one. All of us surely want to devise a negotiating group which will meet two objectives: first, to give the major military powers an opportunity for detailed discussions; second, to ensure that the interest of all states in disarmament is adequately reflected.

A Practical Arrangement

At the fifteenth session of the General Assembly last year, I expressed the conviction that a group in which the two sides would face one another is a practical and effective arrangement. Our re-examination of the problem of composition in recent weeks has confirmed us in this belief. However, we are also convinced that the participation of additional countries with a fresh perspective would be of great value. It is not for me to suggest which states should fulfil this role. However, it seems clear that it would be desirable for them to be chosen from areas of the world which have not been represented on the negotiating group.

At the last session of the General Assembly, Canada advanced proposals designed to broaden the representative character of the negotiating group and to increase its effectiveness. At that time, my delegation suggested the addition to the Ten-Nation Disarmament Committee of a chairman, vice-chairman and a rapporteur -- all to come from countries other than the ten. However, strong arguments have been advanced in this debate to the effect that any additional members over and above the ten should be not officers but full participants in the work of the negotiating committee, and I agree that that would be a better plan.