

I now wish to turn to one particular aspect of the armament question which has become a cause of considerable concern and anxiety to many people. I refer to the effects of atomic radiation and particularly to the possible consequences of nuclear test explosions. In his statement in the general debate at the beginning of this session of the Assembly, the Foreign Minister of Norway proposed that there should be established some system of United Nations registration of nuclear test explosions. In the present debate in the Political Committee we have heard with serious concern and with sympathy the moving remarks of the distinguished representative of Japan. The representative of the United Kingdom also touched on this matter. He suggested that the disarmament sub-committee investigate the possibility of agreeing on the limitation of nuclear test explosions either as part of a disarmament plan or separately. We also have before us the proposal tabled by the representative of the U.S.S.R. calling for a cessation of tests of these weapons.

The Canadian Delegation included some comments on this question in our statement in Plenary in the general debate on December 5, and our position remains as set forth in that statement. While it may not be realistic to propose an immediate ban on all such tests, nevertheless we are of the opinion, after weighing the best scientific evidence available to us - which is by no means complete or conclusive - that the United Nations must give close and serious consideration to the whole question of nuclear tests. Last year the General Assembly established a scientific committee on the effects of atomic radiation, the duty of which is to keep under close observation the whole problem of the levels of radiation and possible effects on man and his environment. We look to this committee, as it accumulates the data supplied to it and makes its analysis and assessments, to serve an important role. It could be the source of objective and valid scientific conclusions which could aid all concerned in avoiding decisions or action which might prove harmful.

In any agreement on nuclear tests we must be guided by two considerations: first, the necessity of securing authoritative, accurate information on the effects of such tests, scientifically and objectively determined; and second, the requirement to give reasonable satisfaction to the needs of defence in a dangerously divided world!

In our earlier statement to the Assembly, which I have mentioned, we expressed the hope that the countries concerned might be able to agree on some annual or periodic limit on the volume of radioactivity to be generated by test explosions. One of the recommendations of the proposed draft resolution of which I have just spoken is that the Disarmament Commission and its sub-committee give prompt attention to the whole problem of measures for cessation or limitation of nuclear test explosions.