

that the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee might undertake the study of various proposals made for a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. The Meeting gave particularly strong support to one of the recommendations made by the Conference of Non-Nuclear Weapon States (whose distinguished President was present at this Meeting) and repeated by the General Assembly of the United Nations to the Governments of the United States and the Soviet Union, that they should at an early date begin their bilateral discussions on the limitation of offensive strategic nuclear weapon delivery systems and systems of defence against ballistic missiles.

19. The Meeting stressed again that effective disarmament must cover non-nuclear as well as nuclear weapons. In this connection the Heads of Government drew attention to the urgent need for action to deal with the threat presented by chemical and biological weapons and welcomed the British proposal to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee for a new convention prohibiting microbiological methods of warfare. They looked forward to the report on chemical and biological weapons which the Secretary-General of the United Nations had been requested to prepare; they hoped that this would make a valuable contribution to the consideration of arms control measures to deal with these weapons.

20. Heads of Government recalled that at their Meeting in September 1966 they had stressed that while there was still time it was imperative to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. A step towards this goal was taken with the opening for signature of the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons. In so far as the Treaty achieved this objective, most Heads of Government welcomed it. However, some Heads of Government had reservations on certain aspects of the Treaty including its effectiveness and the reliability of security guarantees for non-nuclear weapon states. It was recognised that the Non-Proliferation Treaty would not fulfil all the hopes set upon it unless progress could also be made by the nuclear powers towards effective measures of nuclear disarmament. It was also recognised that member states which were subjected to attack or threat of attack by either nuclear or non-nuclear weapons had the right to the protection afforded to them under the United Nations Charter.

21. The Meeting heard a statement by Britain on the progress of the remaining

British dependencies towards self-government or independence. Twenty such dependencies were now left—many of them very small islands—and there had been recent constitutional advances in sixteen. It noted that in the case of British Honduras, the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar, the British Government stood ready to hold discussions with interested neighbouring countries, consonant with its basic principle, which was enshrined in the United Nations Charter, that the interests and wishes of the inhabitants must be paramount.

22. The Prime Minister of Malta drew the attention of other Heads of Government to the situation arising from the rapidly increasing technological capacity to exploit the immense resources of the sea bed, which constitutes nearly three-quarters of the surface of the earth. They considered that the area of the sea bed and ocean floor beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, for which a precise definition should be sought, should be accorded a special legal status as part of the common heritage of mankind, and as such should be reserved for peaceful purposes and for the orderly exploration and exploitation of its great resources, by such appropriate international machinery as is agreed acting for the common benefit of all States, irrespective of their geographical location, and taking into special consideration the interests and needs of the developing countries.

23. The Meeting welcomed the initiative of the Government of Malta which led to the appointment in December 1968 by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a Committee on the peaceful uses of the sea bed and the ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, and declared its support for the committee's work.

Rhodesia

24. The Meeting had a full discussion on the problem of Rhodesia. Heads of Government agreed that there were several reasons why Rhodesia was so important in Commonwealth consultations. The legal authority and the responsibility for the terms on which it would be brought to independence rested with Britain, a Commonwealth member. The attempts of Commonwealth countries adjacent to Rhodesia to establish non-racial societies and prosperous economies were jeopardised by the growing threat of race conflict within the region. But the overriding reason was that problems such as this involved principles