

A/C.1/PV.1180

Mr. BURNS (Canada): I am sure there is not one of us in this room who is not dismayed by the fact that this morning the Soviet Union set off another and a most awesome explosion in a long series of explosions of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. We are filled with anxiety at the frightening increase to the cloud of radioactive debris that hangs over all peoples. In a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Assembly last Friday, the very deep concern which the danger of radioactive fall-out evokes throughout the world was clearly recorded. Out of its fear for the safety of this and future generations, the Assembly, on the same day, also made a specific and solemn appeal to the Soviet Union to refrain from exploding the especially fearsome 50-megaton bomb which Mr. Khrushchev had threatened would be detonated before the end of this month.

That threat has now been fulfilled with a cynical and dangerous disregard for the universal wish that mankind might be spared the consequences of such a reckless experiment. The exercise of wise judgement in the Soviet Union could have prevented this enormous wrong. As it is, nothing can be done to dispel the radioactive dust that now is finding its way over all our countries. In the circumstances I must, on behalf of the Canadian people, express abhorrence at this event and deplore the manner in which the Soviet Union has flouted the desires of all peoples and the appeal of this United Nations General Assembly.

On 7 September, addressing the Canadian House of Commons, the Secretary of State for External Affairs said:

"We must never forget that the United Nations is the best place we have in which to focus world opinion. The big question in my mind is this: have the Soviet Union gone so far that they are now preparing to ignore world opinion?"

The Soviet disdain for the solemn appeal of this Assembly poses that question in stark and grave terms. Our protest at this time is based on the conviction that the universal revulsion which this Soviet action will excite may yet serve the purpose of persuading the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to resume a position of co-operating with world opinion as expressed in and through the United Nations.

We are presently debating the Indian draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/L.283/Rev. 2. Doubts have been expressed in previous statements this morning whether, in view of what has happened, there is very much use in passing a resolution calling for an unsupported moratorium. The Canadian Government had decided before this last event to support this draft resolution, and we still intend to do so and to vote for it. In this statement which I am making, we shall give our reasons for so doing and shall also give our views on the general problem of what should be done to ensure that the testing of nuclear weapons is stopped and stays stopped. I apologize if I repeat, in order to make our position clear, things that have been said by many other delegations in their statements on this subject.

The first reason why nuclear testing should be stopped is that radioactive nuclear fall-out is a danger to health. We do not know how great a danger it is; scientific studies have not been conclusive on this point. But it is agreed that all exposure to radioactivity can affect the human body. It is further agreed that the greater the exposure, the greater the danger. Furthermore, fear of radioactive fall-out is widespread among all peoples in the world, and their fear and anxiety should be respected. This alone is sufficient reason for calling for nuclear testing to cease.