

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

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DISARMAMENT

Text of a statement on November 4, 1954, in a plenary meeting of the ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, by the Acting Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, Mr. Paul Martin, on agenda items 20 and 68 - Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments: Report of the Disarmament Commission; and Conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction.

Note: The text of a five-power resolution on this subject (U.N. Doc. A/C.1/752/Rev.2) which was adopted unanimously by the First Committee on October 27, 1954 and in plenary session on November 4, 1954, is given in Statements and Speeches No. 54/46.

The adoption of a unanimous resolution in the United Nations on a major political issue is in itself a significant event. If, as I believe and fully expect, the General Assembly now confirms the unanimous vote of the First Committee of October 27 on the draft resolution on disarmament (Document A/C.1/754) we shall all have good reason for satisfaction -- satisfaction at having secured the agreement of all members of the United Nations on a resolution which will provide an agreed procedure and an agreed framework for the negotiations in the Five-Power Sub-Committee which is to be re-established by the Disarmament Commission.

This resolution is no longer the Canadian resolution nor the Five-Power resolution -- it is the First Committee's Resolution and will shortly I hope be the Assembly's Resolution. As such it would not be appropriate for me to try to evaluate its importance or review the efforts of many delegations during the past weeks which led to the measure of agreement this resolution now represents. If I may, however, I should like to express the thanks and appreciation of my Delegation for the ready response and co-operation which our initiative was accorded, in the first stage by France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union and later all members of the First Committee and to all for the cooperation which ultimately was given to our discussions.

The adoption of this resolution is but one stage in a continuing process -- a process which began with the very first resolution of the General Assembly on January 24, 1946 -- also adopted unanimously -- establishing an Atomic Energy Commission, the partial forerunner of the Disarmament Commission.

Between these two resolutions lie almost nine years of disagreements and successive deadlocks. As we look back on these years, however, and in particular as we review the past year, there has been without question a narrowing of the gap between the positions of the principal powers involved. That the gap remains wide and deep no one would, I think, deny.

To minimize the remaining gap in a mood of wishful optimism would be as irresponsible as to ignore the fact that headway has been made.

We shall, in the weeks and months ahead, have every chance to find out just how far we have gone towards agreement and how far we have yet to go. We shall have, I believe, the best conditions in the Disarmament Commission's Sub-Committee for finding out in private what further abridgement of the gap may yet be attainable. We must allow sufficient time for those who have indicated they wish to do so to present their views to the Disarmament Commission. The members of the Sub-Committee will also need time for digestion of four weeks of debate in which important and valuable suggestions were made by delegations which have not been participating in the work of the Sub-Committee.

It is, however, the hope of my government that there will be no needless delay in pressing on with the vital task the Assembly is entrusting to the Sub-Committee. The unanimous adoption of the procedure and general terms of reference for these talks will get them off on the right foot with the best possible chance of success in what is bound to be a very difficult and perhaps lengthy series of negotiations.

I am particularly glad that this unanimous resolution should have been achieved at this session of the General Assembly. In these days when there is an uneasy feeling that the United Nations is too often being by-passed on important questions, it is some encouragement to know that in one corner of a big problem negotiations inside the United Nations have proved successful.

All of us now have a great opportunity to make a constructive contribution in the cause of peace. I venture with great respect to say, let none of us fail to grasp this opportunity.



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