



Statement No. 97

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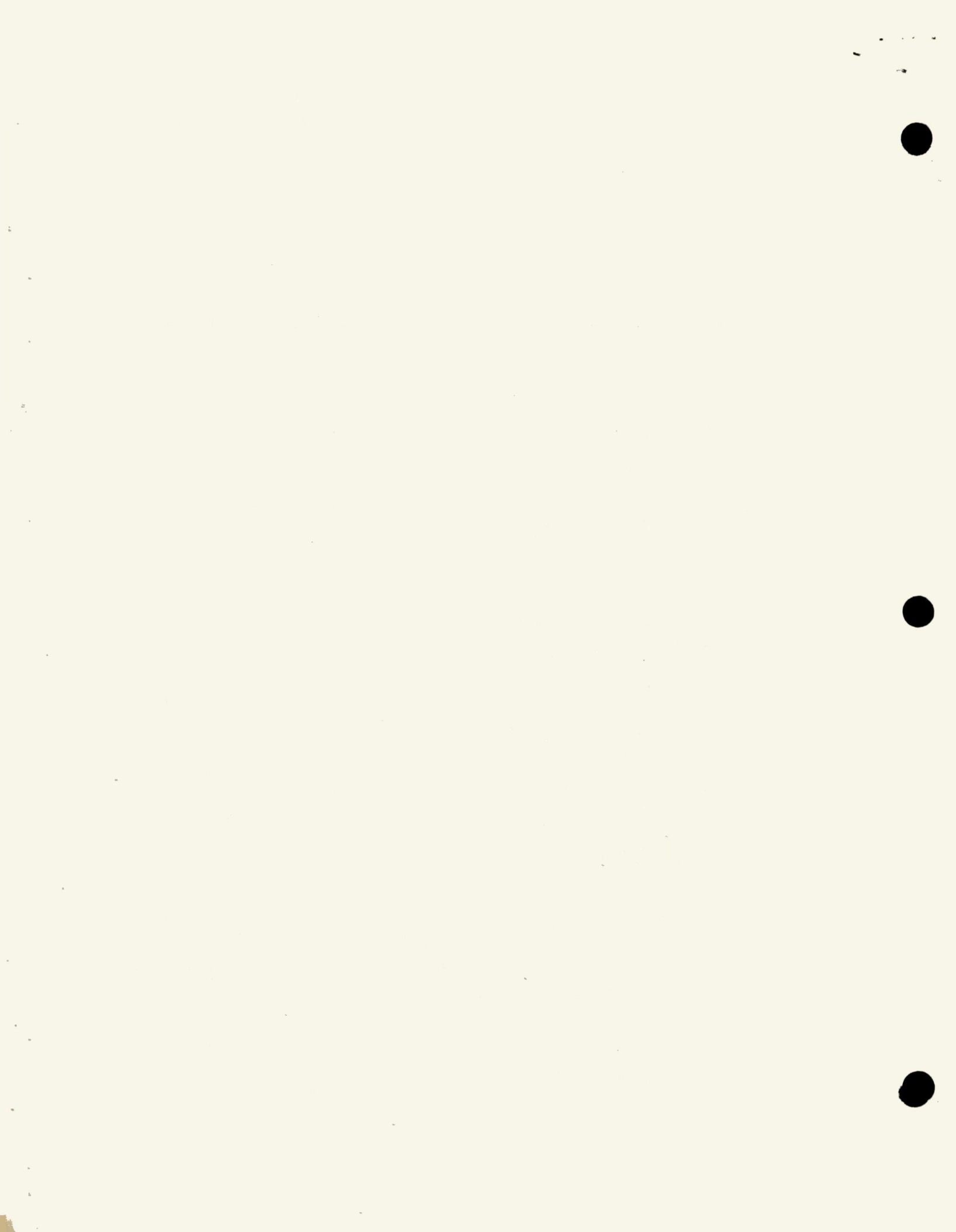
Prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons

Statement in Explanation of Vote made on
Resolution A/C.1/L.409, by General E.L.M.
Burns, on Monday, December 4, 1967

The Canadian delegation joins you and other delegations in expressing condolences to the delegation of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and through them to their Government and people, on the death of their distinguished leader, Mr. Koslov, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian Republic.

In a statement made at our meeting of the 28th of November the Canadian delegation explained that we did not agree with the arguments as set out in the U.S.S.R. memorandum, document A/6834, and the draft Convention attached thereto. However, the resolution we have just voted upon only urges all States to examine the question of the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and "such other proposals as may be made on this subject". Furthermore the resolution urges all States (in terms somewhat unclear in the English text) to undertake negotiations respecting the matter in one of several different ways.

We are not happy about the wording of two of the operative paragraphs. Operative paragraph 1, as worded, expresses convictions which we cannot fully share. We think that the word "conviction" is too strong. In the present circumstances we do not think that the Convention is either essential or urgent. And in the second operative paragraph there is a



reference to resolution 1653 (XVI) which we voted against in 1961.

Incidentally, the representative of the Soviet Union, in our meeting of 30 November, referred to the argument that the Canadian delegation made at the time against holding a conference for the purpose of developing a Convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons. To set the record straight I should like to quote from the statement I made in Plenary on the 24 November 1961 as follows:

"We have reason to be hopeful that an agreement will soon be reached concerning the resumption of general disarmament negotiations in an appropriate negotiating forum. My delegation feels that it is of great importance that this Assembly take no action which might in any way hamper the success of these resumed negotiations..."

In the same statement I said that:

"In the light of recent developments to which I referred, our doubts about the wisdom of adopting this draft resolution (A/C.1/L292) have been reinforced. For example, it appears to my delegation that the convening of a special conference, envisaged in operative paragraph 2 of this draft resolution would be ill-advised in present circumstances. Action to assemble a world conference to sign a convention of doubtful utility might very well detract from the effort to negotiate binding disarmament agreements which are the only finally effective means of dealing with the threat of nuclear weapons."

We still believe that the argument which we advanced at that time was valid.

In spite of the above considerations Canada, because of her long-standing and continued concern with all questions relating to disarmament, did not feel that she would be justified in rejecting outright the "urgings" of a substantial majority of the members of the United Nations. Therefore we abstained on the draft resolution, just voted upon by this Committee.

We had a further reason not to vote against the resolution. This is that in discussions on non-proliferation in the ENDC and in this Committee, many delegations have voiced the view that States which



are not nuclear powers and which are expected to pledge themselves not to acquire nuclear weapons should be given an assurance that the nuclear powers will not use nuclear weapons against them. The Canadian delegation has much sympathy with this argument. An assurance such as that sought by many non-nuclear States might be considered in a sense as a partial prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, and hence to be related to the subject of the resolution just voted upon.

