



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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STATEMENT ON DISARMAMENT

Statement made on October 22, 1954, by the Canadian Permanent Representative, Mr. David M. Johnson, in the First Committee of the ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Note: The text of the Five Power Resolution on Disarmament tabled by the Committee is given at the end of Mr. Johnson's statement.

I wish to thank you and the Committee for allowing me to speak at this time, though I had not put down my name to intervene further in the general debate. The reason why I have asked for the floor is to inform the committee of a development which will, I think, have some bearing on the course of our further deliberations.

On October 13 the Honourable Paul Martin, Minister of National Health and Welfare of Canada and Acting Chairman of the Canadian Delegation, tabled a draft resolution setting out the line of procedure and providing the framework, which seemed to us best calculated to allow detailed negotiations on disarmament to continue, after the debate in the General Assembly and this Committee had done what it could to clarify the general principles and to bring out the main areas of agreement and disagreement. Though very conscious of the all important principles in which the viewpoint of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and ourselves on the one hand, and the views of the Government of the U.S.S.R. on the other still remain divergent, we hoped that at least on this matter of the next step for continuing negotiations, we could all agree. Mr. Martin therefore appealed to the Delegations of the other four members of the Disarmament Commission's sub-committee to join with us by becoming co-sponsors of our resolution. Naturally he had given advance copies of his draft resolution to the leaders of each of these four delegations with notice of his hope that they would become co-sponsors.

We were greatly heartened that the delegations of France, the United Kingdom and the United States accepted our appeal and agreed to become co-sponsors. Though Mr. Vyshinsky, the distinguished representative of the Soviet Union, was not immediately able to agree, we were encouraged that he at once promised, on behalf of his delegation, a sympathetic study of Mr. Martin's suggestions.

As I think every delegate knows, Mr. Vyshinsky later that day handed us a list of four suggested changes in the terms of our draft resolution, and told us that if

we could accept, these changes he would become co-sponsor with us.

Since by then the delegations of France, United Kingdom, United States were co-sponsors with us of the draft resolution, my Delegation naturally consulted with them on the Soviet Union's suggestions. We and our three associates gave them jointly the same careful and sympathetic study which I am sure that the Soviet Delegation had given our original proposals. Two of the four Soviet suggestions, which related respectively to the title and to paragraph 1(c), we found ourselves able to accept as they stood. The two others, relating to paragraph 1(a) and to paragraph 2, we were able to accept in part, but not in their entirety.

On October 18, Mr. Martin met Mr. Vyshinsky. He discussed the situation with him, and put forward certain compromise suggestions, designed to reconcile, as far as possible, our respective views. The Representative of the U.S.S.R. naturally wished time to study these compromise suggestions and to consult his Government.

At this point I should say that in the series of meetings and discussions which the Canadian Delegation has had with the leader of the Delegation of the Soviet Union on this matter, we have acted at the request of the representatives of France, the United Kingdom and United States as their spokesman and on their behalf as well as on behalf of Canada.

On the night of October 19, the leader of the Soviet Delegation called on Mr. Martin to give him his Government's reply. He told us that he appreciated the changes we had made to meet his point of view, and on one of the points where we could not accept his original suggestions, he was prepared to accept the compromise suggestions which we had made. One point of difference however remained; relating to the terms of reference which would be given to the Disarmament Commission. Here the Soviet Delegation put forward a still further suggestion. The gap on these procedural points, was narrowing but was not closed.

On the morning of October 20, after further consultation with our co-sponsors the Representatives of the United States, United Kingdom and France, Mr. Martin called on Mr. Vyshinsky to outline our conclusions. At the previous meetings, we had explored a number of possible alternatives in the effort to reach agreement. At this meeting, a final effort was made to bring us together on a procedure, so that provision could be made within the framework of the Disarmament Commission to get on with the substantive problem of negotiation. I am happy to inform the Committee that Mr. Vyshinsky informed me this morning that his Delegation is now prepared to join with those of the other four members of the Disarmament Commission's sub-committee in co-sponsoring the resolution with the revisions which had been jointly worked out.

I have therefore asked the Secretary of this Committee to have a revised version of our draft resolution circulated in the names of the Delegations of Canada, France, the U.S.S.R., the United Kingdom and the United States.

In Mr. Martin's statement of October 13, he explained to the Committee the general principles in the procedure which it envisaged. None of these general principles has been changed in the revised text and therefore there is no need for me to take up the Committee's time in describing them again. I should however like to comment briefly on the four revisions.

The first change, which related only to the title, is self-explanatory. It refers to agenda items 20 and 68, instead of only 20, and spells out the title of this item as well as that of the earlier one.

The second revision concerns paragraph 1(a), which originally read "The regulation, limitation, and major balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments"; and in this there are two changes.

First, the word "balanced" has been omitted, and secondly the word "conventional" has been inserted before "armaments".

As to the omission of the word "balanced", this does not of course represent any change at all in the basic concept which we had in mind. It seems clear however that in this particular context the draft is improved by omitting the adjective, since it could be open to ambiguities and indeed to very divergent interpretations, which were not only not intended but as our debate has shown, have given rise to understandable but wholly needless difficulties on the part of certain delegations.

The consideration which we had in mind originally when we included the phrase "balanced reductions" is not that the reductions should be proportionate - that was an old Soviet proposal which we had always rejected - but that the overall effect of the reductions should be equitable and should not create an imbalance which could threaten any nation's security.

The programme as a whole must of course cover not only forces in all the main areas of the world, but must deal with all services and all types of weapons. This whole programme, to be effective, must clearly be "such that no state would have cause to feel that its security would be endangered". This principle had already been written in to the concluding section of paragraph 1, which naturally refers to each aspect of the paragraph, including those set out in sub-paragraphs a, b, and c. It seems to us therefore that there was not only no necessity to retain the adjective "balanced" in sub-paragraph 1(a) but that there was definite advantage in deleting it. We therefore decided to make this deletion.

It is surely obvious that a satisfactory disarmament programme must be a balanced programme - balanced geographically, and balanced as between various types of force and weapons - so that the overall effect of the programme will be such that it will not upset the security of any part of the world, but will rather increase the real security of all nations, and result in a very substantial reduction in the overall burden of armaments.

Naturally such a reduction will free substantial human resources for more productive purposes, so that they

may be used to increase the economic development and productivity of peoples everywhere. But I need hardly expatiate in this forum on this self-evident fact.

The other change in sub-paragraph 1(a) is the insertion of the adjective "conventional" before the word "armaments", so that it reads "the regulations, limitation and major reduction of ...all conventional armaments", instead of merely "all armaments." Here again, there is no change in substance from what we had intended, but I admit that the wording is improved as our earlier draft seems to have been ambiguous. It has, of course, always been our intention that, as part of a comprehensive disarmament programme, all nuclear weapons should be prohibited. This point has, in any case, always been clear from the terms of sub-paragraph 1(b) of the original draft resolution. When in our earlier draft we left out the qualification "conventional" in sub-paragraph 1(a) it was anticipated that "the regulation ... of all armaments" would cover the total prohibition of nuclear weapons, and incidentally also the total prohibition of other weapons of mass destruction, in the bacteriological and chemical field. The word "reduction" would apply to conventional weapons, but "regulation" is of course applicable to all weapons.

But I admit that despite the clear statement of sub-paragraph 1(b) some delegations misconstrued the reference in 1(a) to "all armaments", and my Delegation, together with that of France, the United Kingdom and the United States has, therefore, been happy to accede to Mr. Vyshinsky's suggestion that the reference there should be explicitly to conventional armaments and to conventional armaments alone, leaving sub-paragraph 1(b) to cover our intention to prohibit weapons of mass destruction of every type.

Before I come to the third revision which concerns sub-paragraph 1(c), I should like to make one more observation on sub-paragraph 1(a). It has been suggested that it might be preferable to omit the reference to "regulation and limitation" of armed forces and armaments so that this sub-paragraph would refer only to major reductions. This, as Delegates will remember, is what was done in the Anglo-French memorandum of June 11, 1954. Nevertheless, it has seemed to us desirable to retain the reference not only to reductions but to the regulation and limitation of armed forces and conventional weapons.

The point is, I think, more than academic. Only a day or so ago my distinguished friend the Representative of India expressed his Delegation's concern lest reference to major reductions of all armed forces and all conventional armaments imply that every country, however low its present level of forces may be, should be expected to lower them further. This of course is not necessarily the case. The important point is that the levels of all forces, and all conventional armaments, be subject to international regulation, and to agreed limitations, and that the overall effect of these regulations and limitations will be a major reduction in the present level of world armaments which weighs so heavily on the resources of mankind. The intention is obviously that those countries now most heavily armed should accept major reductions in the levels of their forces and weapons, but we must recognize that some countries may not be armed at all, and some countries may have the minimum required to maintain internal order.

Obviously our general language must not preclude a sympathetic and realistic agreed solution for exceptional cases.

I might also mention that the goal of the international regulation of armed forces and armaments is specifically enshrined in our Charter itself. I refer, of course, to Article 26.

I come now to the third revision, which affects the text of sub-paragraph 1(c). Here the reference to regulation and limitation is omitted, at the request of the Soviet Delegation. It has seemed to us that, provided these important points are covered in sub-paragraph 1(a), and the over-riding principle of common sense and security remains embedded in the final phrase at the end of the paragraph 1, it is unnecessary to repeat here reference to regulation and limitation. Our Soviet colleague wished this reference omitted here; the Delegations of France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada preferred it in; but since, in the judgment of these four delegations, there could be no substantive danger involved, as all parts of the programme envisaged, in any case form a single coordinated whole, we accepted the omission here in order to reach agreement with our Soviet colleague.

Perhaps the most important of the revisions concerns operative paragraph 2. As we originally drafted it, the paragraph referred explicitly to the Anglo-French proposals alone, stating that they had been accepted by the Government of the Soviet Union as a basis for a disarmament convention. It then went on to refer in general terms to "other proposals within the Commission's terms of reference". This would, of course, cover the Soviet draft resolution of October 8, (Document A/C.1/750) as well as the United States working paper of May 25, 1954, and any other proposals that have been or may be submitted. The Soviet Delegation, however, asked that there be included a specific reference to the Soviet proposals, which as you know, Mr. Chairman, cover a number of points which, in our view and that of the other co-sponsors, differ quite substantially from them in certain important particulars. As the Soviet Delegation attach great importance to this point, we agreed to meet their desire for an explicit reference to the Soviet proposals, in listing the various proposals which the Disarmament Commission should take into account in its search for an acceptable solution of the disarmament problem: but in that case it seemed to us only reasonable to refer also, and equally explicitly, to the United States working paper of May 25, 1954. Naturally the Disarmament Commission is also to take into account any other proposals within the Commission's terms of reference - a provision, I need hardly point out, which refers not only to the past, but to any proposals which any delegation may put forward in the future.

I regret to say that the Soviet Delegation, after careful study, felt unable to co-sponsor the draft resolution if it included in paragraph 2 explicit reference to the United States working paper of May 25, which outlines, as members of this Committee know, the United States views on the rights, functions and powers of an International Control Organ.

The Soviet Delegation has several times made it clear that they are unable to accept the proposals put

forward in that paper. Naturally, Mr. Martin made it clear to the leader of the Soviet Delegation that, as we saw it, requesting the Disarmament Commission to "take into account" a particular document does not in any sense involve the co-sponsors' approval of all the contents of that document. If it did, the Canadian Delegation, and also our associates, would have been quite unable to agree to the inclusion in paragraph 2 of our draft resolution of a reference to the Soviet resolution, with certain parts of which we have already made clear our inability to agree.

Had the key phrase in this operative paragraph been not "taking into account" but "on the basis of" the Canadian Delegation for one could not have agreed to include reference to the Soviet resolution, and we would have understood more easily the Soviet Delegation's inability to accept inclusion of a reference to the United States working paper.

In any case, the Canadian Delegation, together with our associates, the delegations of France, United Kingdom and United States suggested as an alternative for this paragraph a text which would refer specifically to none of the main proposals which we wish the Disarmament Commission and its sub-committee to examine. We put forward the following suggestion:

"Requests the Disarmament Commission to seek an acceptable solution of the disarmament problem taking into account the various proposals referred to in the Preamble of this resolution and any other proposals within the Commission's terms of reference."

On this basis, I am happy to say that the Soviet Delegation, after careful study, were able to agree.

As will be readily seen, the effect of the new version is of course to refer back to the preamble, the third paragraph of which refers both to the Soviet resolution which this Committee has been considering and to the fourth report of the Disarmament Commission of the July 29, 1954, and explicitly to the documents annexed thereto. Among these annexed documents are the Anglo-French proposals of June 11 and the United States working paper of May 25, 1954. All of these documents, therefore, are among those which the Disarmament Commission would now be requested to take into account in its search for an acceptable solution of the disarmament problem.

That then, Mr. Chairman, represents a full and candid account of the revisions we have made, and the reasons for them. I have already expressed the satisfaction of the co-sponsors of the first version of this resolution that the Soviet Union has now agreed to join us in proposing this revised text for the sympathetic consideration of this Committee. I feel sure that all members of the Committee will share our satisfaction that on this question of procedure at least, the five members of what has come to be known as the London Sub-Committee have reached agreement.

I freely admit of course that reaching agreement among five countries even on the terms of a procedural resolution on a subject as vital as this, has been far from

easy. I trust that all members of the Committee will bear this point in mind. Naturally, when we come to try to work out the terms of a Disarmament Convention itself, it will be vital to avoid any possible ambiguities. For the present stage, however, I trust that the Committee will share my view that the present formulation, while not perhaps perfect, is satisfactory as a vehicle for a framework of general objectives and for a procedure which will allow substantive negotiations to go forward with the optimum chance of success.

Before I conclude, Mr. Chairman, I should like to pay a tribute, on behalf of the Canadian Delegation, to the patience, flexibility and readiness to co-operate which we have found in the Delegations of France, United Kingdom and United States, who during the past eight days have been our associates in these negotiations with the U.S.S.R. The readiness on the part of our colleagues to keep their eye on the main objective and to accommodate themselves on non-essentials to the wishes of colleagues, in the interest of co-operation and or progress, has won our admiration. Our objective and that of our associates has of course been in the realm not of mere words but of acts. Inevitably, negotiations on a subject which deals even procedurally with the vital security of nations, and which attracts a great deal of attention and comment in many parts of the world - inevitably such negotiations are complex, and the negotiators have to be sensitive at all times to a wide variety of considerations. I should also like to thank the distinguished leader of the Soviet Delegation for his unfailing courtesy at all times throughout our talks.

Finally, I should add, in all seriousness, a warning against any hasty or irresponsible optimism. The debate of the past few weeks in this Assembly has made it crystal clear that the gap which still divides us from the Government of the Soviet Union, on the nature and scope of an acceptable disarmament programme - and particularly on the all-important matter of control - remains deep and wide. In a few particulars, that gap has been narrowed. That is heartening. But a very wide gap still remains on points of substance. Facile optimism, or wishful irresponsibility, would be fatuous and could be a grave disservice to the cause of peace.

So too, we think, would be cynicism or despair over the great and vital points on which major differences remain. The sound attitude, I suggest, Mr. Chairman, is that we should take heart that at least on procedure, and on a broad definition of objectives, five nations are now agreed: but that we should be careful not to overestimate this very limited step forward.

When we will have finished the general debate, our task will be to set up machinery for the long and difficult negotiations which obviously lie ahead of us. Patience and perseverance will certainly be essential in the future as in the past. But we trust that the Committee will share my Delegation's view that the draft resolution which now stands in the name of Canada, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States, provides an acceptable next step.

Following is text of five power resolution tabled Oct. 22, 1954, as Document A/C.1/752/REV. 2.

(This resolution was adopted unanimously in the First Committee)

*The General Assembly,

REAFFIRMING the responsibility of the United Nations for seeking a solution of the disarmament problem,

CONSCIOUS that the continuing development of armaments increases the urgency of the need for such a solution,

HAVING CONSIDERED the fourth report of the Disarmament Commission of 29 July 1954 (DC/53 and DC/55), and the documents annexed thereto, and the Soviet draft resolution (A/C.1/750) concerning the conclusion of an international convention (treaty) on the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of atomic, hydrogen, and other weapons of mass destruction.

1. CONCLUDES that a further effort should be made to reach agreement on comprehensive and co-ordinated proposals to be embodied in a draft international disarmament convention providing for:

(a) The regulation, limitation and major reduction of all armed forces and all conventional armaments;

(b) The total prohibition of the use and manufacture of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction of every type, together with the conversion of existing stocks of nuclear weapons for peaceful purposes;

(c) The establishment of effective international control, through a control organ with rights, powers and functions adequate to guarantee the effective observance of the agreed reductions of all armaments and armed forces and the prohibition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and to ensure the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes only;

The whole programme to be such that no state would have cause to fear that its security was endangered;

2. REQUESTS the Disarmament Commission to seek an acceptable solution of the disarmament problem, taking into account the various proposals referred to in the preamble of this resolution and any other proposals within the commissions terms of reference;

3. SUGGESTS that the Disarmament Commission reconvene the sub-committee established in accordance with paragraphs 6 and 7 of General Assembly resolution 715 (VIII);

4. REQUESTS the Disarmament Commission to report to the Security Council and to the General Assembly as soon as sufficient progress has been made .