

Fifteenth Session

CHAPTER IV - 1

ANNEX XVII - (v)

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DISARMAMENT - THE SENSE OF URGENCY

Statement on Disarmament by Mr. Howard Green,
Secretary of State for External Affairs in the
First Committee on November 14, 1960

... The Committee will recall that, on 1 November, I explained that the Canadian Delegation had decided, in co-sponsorship with the Delegations of Norway and Sweden, to submit the draft resolution which is now before the Committee as document A/C.1/L.255. I have asked to speak at this time in the belief that it might be helpful to the Committee if I were to review briefly the main purposes of the draft resolution. I am particularly happy to speak now, after hearing the speech of the representative of Iceland. It was to allow time for this effort by Norway, Sweden and Canada at a compromise to succeed that the three co-sponsors have not pressed for an early vote on their draft resolution.

You will remember that, in my remarks on previous occasions, I pointed out that we would be delighted to get suggestions; that we were putting forward our proposals for the consideration of the Committee, but that they were not hard and fast, as we were very anxious that suggestions should be made. For that reason, I am particularly happy that the representative of Iceland has followed that suggestion, and has commented today on this resolution. In so far as his proposed amendment deals with a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a rapporteur, we agreed, and we think that the chairman of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Padilla Nervo, would be an excellent chairman.

The essential difference between the proposal made by Iceland and that proposal made by Norway, Sweden and Canada is that Iceland has left out the provision for an ad hoc committee. Now, this change is a matter of argument, a matter for consideration, and in the course of my short remarks this morning I propose to give a few reasons why we think there is great value in having such an ad hoc committee appointed by the Disarmament Commission. But before I go on to do that, I would emphasize again that it was not the intention of the three co-sponsors to introduce controversial proposals.

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Our sole object is to bring about a constructive result in this debate. We are aware that other members of the Committee, and notably of course India, are seeking to evolve a compromise formula on principles, and that some progress is being made. We warmly applaud this painstaking effort which, if it succeeds, will greatly facilitate the resumption of negotiations. Negotiations in the future would surely benefit from having, as a new point of departure, a unanimous recommendation on principles by the General Assembly.

Importance of Renewed Negotiations

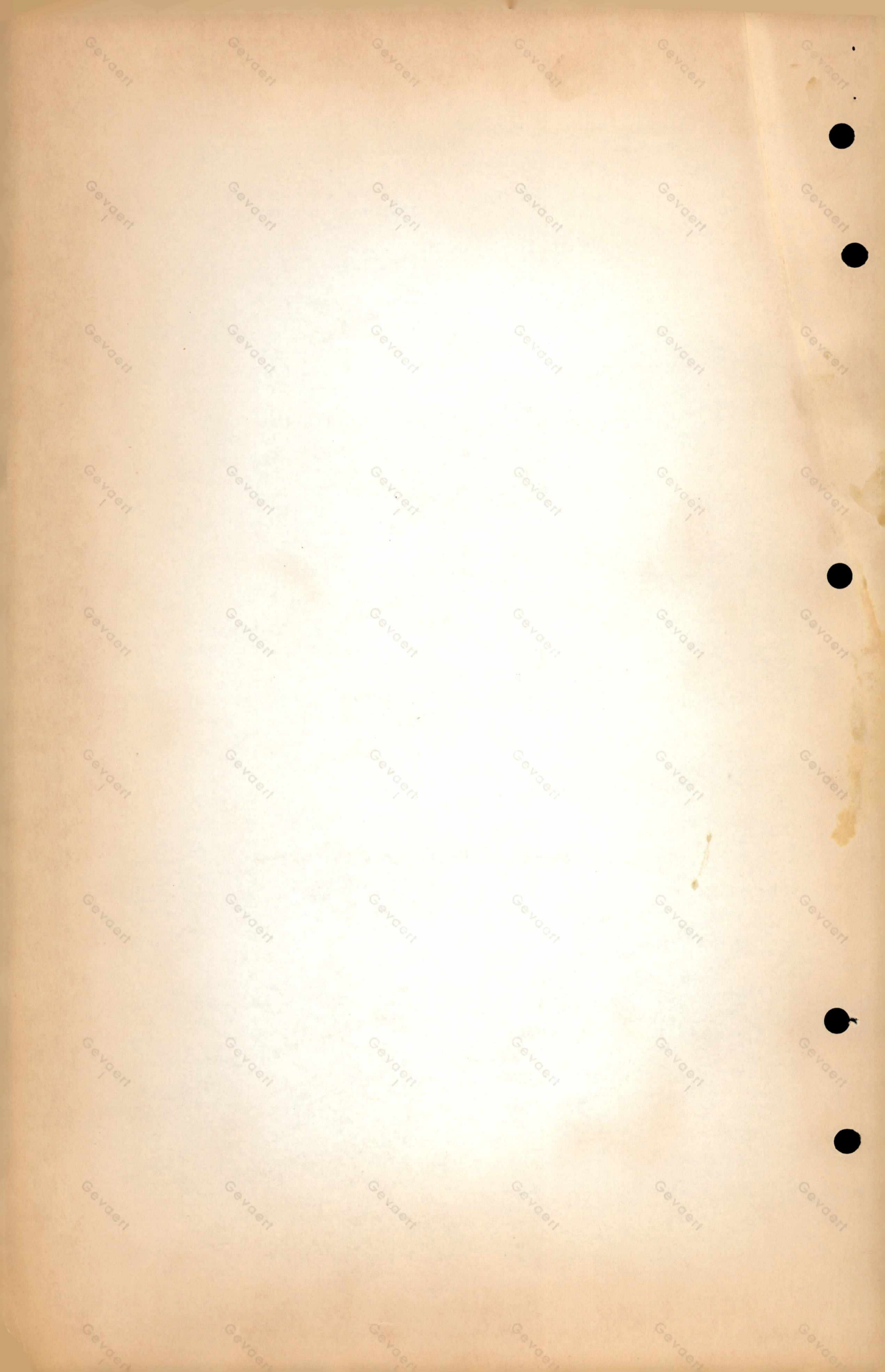
Even with agreement of principles, however, it is generally recognized that, in view of the recent presidential elections in the United States, some delay can be expected before negotiations are resumed between the major military powers. But because this delay in the main negotiations seems unavoidable, this does not mean either that preparations for resumed negotiations should be left in abeyance or that international interest in disarmament issues should be relaxed. Indeed, it may be more important than ever to focus world attention on the problem during this intervening period; to fail to do so would be to invite a dangerous situation in which the governments mainly concerned would be less responsive to the world-wide demand for action on disarmament. In the view of the Canadian Government, it is essential that preparations begin immediately to facilitate the resumption and continuation of negotiations. This reflects our concern and conviction, as a middle power, about the prevailing deadlock on disarmament. We firmly believe that all non-nuclear powers share that concern and also that they have responsibility for maintaining momentum in the search for disarmament agreements.

Duty of Non-Nuclear Powers

No government, large or small, can afford to ignore these issues which vitally affect peoples all over the world. Humanity expects, and has a right to expect, that there will be no prolonged period of inaction. These are the underlying purposes of the three-power draft resolution. The preamble clearly reflects the concern about the interruption of the negotiations, the essential need for immediate preparations for their continuation, and a recognition that, while the main responsibility rests on the nuclear powers, all other states have a responsibility and have the deepest interest in ensuring that negotiations are vigorously pursued.

Three-Power Resolution

To meet the essential need, and to give expression to the responsibility and concern of all nations, the operative part of the draft resolution submitted by Norway, Sweden and Canada provides for the following:



Firstly, the continuation of international negotiations in such body as may be agreed. The representative of Iceland, in his proposed amendment, recommends that these negotiations be continued in the 10-Nation Committee, and you know...we have thought that that would be the sensible forum. However, our resolution reads "in such a body as may be agreed", that is, by the four powers which set up the original Disarmament Committee, or as may be agreed by all the members of the Disarmament Commission.

Secondly, it provides for consideration of the appointment of one or more impartial officers to facilitate these negotiations. We have not, of course, gone into detail such as has been given by the representative of Iceland, but as I have explained at the opening of my remarks, we are in agreement with the suggestion that he has made.

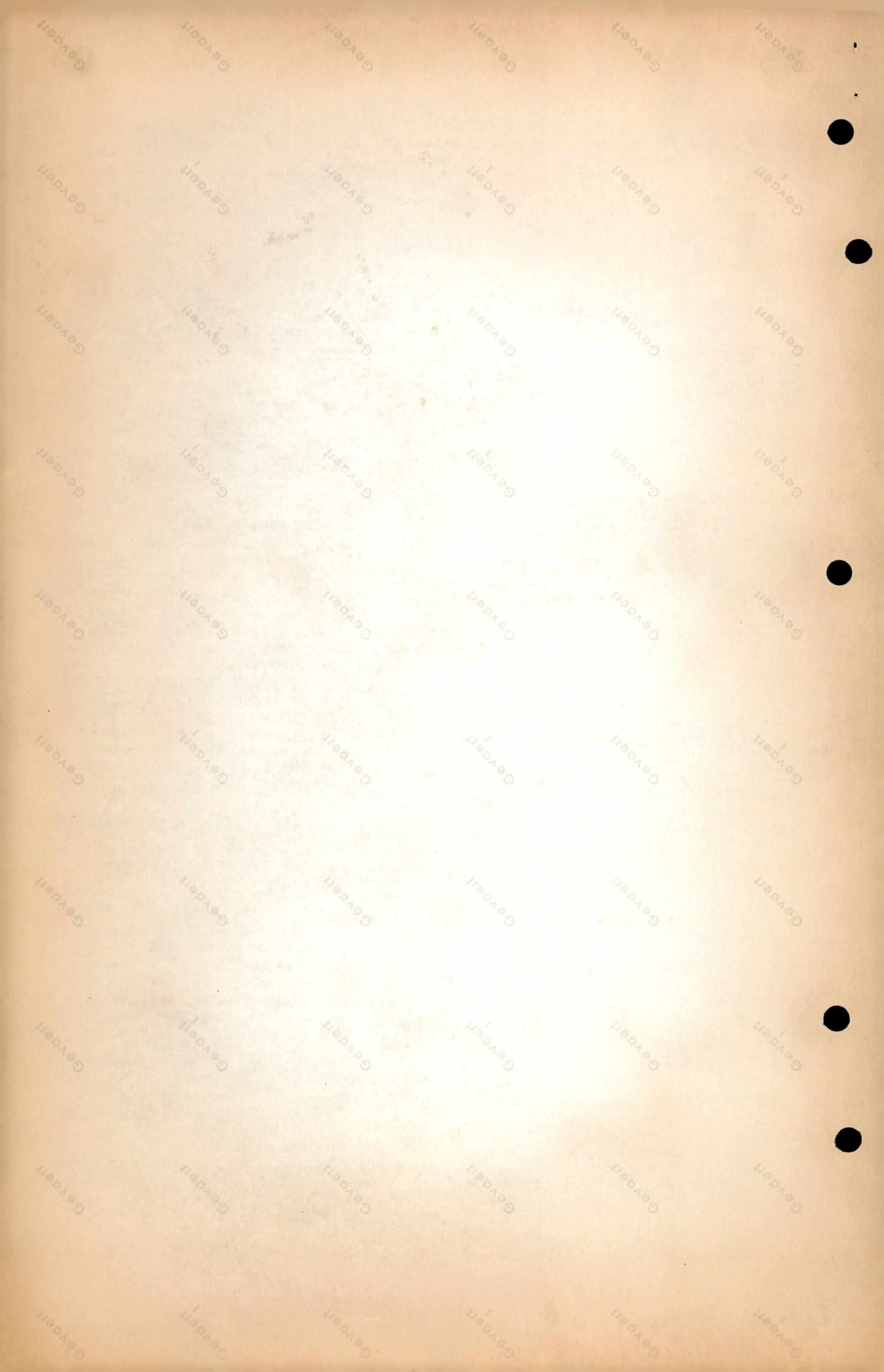
Thirdly, we propose the immediate establishment by the Disarmament Commission of an ad hoc committee. This, of course, is where we differ from Iceland.

Fourthly, we propose the urgent examination by the ad hoc committee of ways and means of assisting in the resumption of serious negotiations and facilitating the attainment of the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control. That would be the main task of the ad hoc committee, to take steps to help bring about a resumption of negotiations.

Fifthly, we ask for consultations as appropriate by the ad hoc committee with the four governments which established the 10-Nation Committee. Of course, as our draft resolution recognizes, the main responsibility rests on the nuclear powers, but what we seek to ensure by proposing the ad hoc committee is that the responsibility and the interests of other states can be brought to bear in a concentrated form with a view to assisting those who have the main responsibility and with a view to preserving the ultimate responsibility for disarmament which rests with the United Nations.

Ad Hoc Committee Proposal

In their consultations with other delegations, and in preparing to present the three-power draft resolution, the co-sponsors Norway, Sweden and Canada, have taken full account of the efforts to evolve a middle position on principles. Success in that direction would reduce one formidable obstacle to renewed negotiations and would ease the responsibility which the three-power draft resolution seeks to give to the ad hoc committee. Quite apart from principles, it is very apparent that the ad hoc committee would provide an effective working body for studying and



developing the useful suggestions and proposals advanced in the course of this debate -- and there have been useful suggestions advanced by the different representatives who have spoken in this debate in the First Committee. It can perform such other tasks as the Disarmament Commission might assign to it. It would, of course, be a committee -- a small committee -- of the Disarmament Commission.

This would give practical effect to the responsibility of the Disarmament Commission which, as I have said, would set up the ad hoc committee and receive reports from it.

The draft resolution seeks to ensure, through the activity of the ad hoc committee, that the General Assembly's call for the earliest possible continuation of negotiations is heeded. We are trying to avoid a repetition of the situation which followed the Disarmament Commission's meeting in August when, as you know, despite a unanimous resolution calling for negotiations, no negotiations ensued.

Cause for Hope

There is some promise in recent events that efforts here and the universal desire for progress on disarmament will yet yield results. We must not be down-hearted in regard to this problem of disarmament. In his message of 9 November to President-elect Kennedy, Premier Khrushchov stated his readiness to continue efforts to solve the pressing problem of disarmament. Mr. Kennedy, for his part, has publicly reaffirmed his conviction that the achievement of controlled disarmament is a necessity to guarantee world peace. These public undertakings are heartening, very heartening, and I am sure are warmly welcomed by all members of this Committee. They should mean that the hope expressed in the second paragraph of the three-power draft resolution will be realized. The aim should be, and this our draft resolution seeks to achieve, to see that hope realized in the shortest possible time.

Minimum Immediate Objective

In the meantime the sense of urgency must be sustained, and all opportunities for useful preparatory work must be seized. That is why I appeal to all the non-nuclear nations to support the proposals submitted by Norway, Sweden and Canada. This is the time to establish effective United Nations machinery for keeping the focus of international attention squarely on the problem of disarmament and for striving to break the present dangerous deadlock for which the nuclear powers must bear the main responsibility. Unless the non-nuclear powers seek this minimum objective they will have abdicated their share of the grave responsibility and, furthermore, I suggest, will have forfeited their right to complain about the dangers of the situation or to participate in the search for a remedy.

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It does without saying that my appeal is directed also most earnestly to the nuclear powers. They have avowed their interest in reaching disarmament agreement, but have failed to attain it, and they should be prepared to welcome any assistance from any quarter. Our draft resolution offers a means.

In recent years anxiety has been growing about the spread of nuclear weapons. It has become increasingly apparent that the 95 non-nuclear nations would not allow the nuclear powers to retain indefinitely their nuclear monopoly. It is estimated that in a very short time no fewer than 15 countries will have the scientific and industrial capacity to join the nuclear club. That club is rapidly becoming, or may rapidly become, not an exclusive club of four members but the least exclusive club in the world, and we all know what that means. It is quite obvious that time is running out. With each passing day the dangers and the difficulties multiply. It is quite intolerable that the United Nations should simply watch and wait while the disarmament impasse continues and the threat to the survival of civilization grows more menacing.

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