

CANADIAN DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(FIFTEENTH SESSION)

RELEASE ON DELIVERY

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Statement on Disarmament by Mr. W.B. Nesbitt,
Q.C., M.P., Chairman of the Canadian Delegation,
in the First Committee, on December 17, 1960

Mr. Chairman:

As you have reminded us, time has become of the essence in our current consideration of the disarmament items on our agenda. The adjournment is now very close at hand. We have had a particularly long and comprehensive discussion. I can, therefore, be very brief in explaining the changes incorporated in Document 255/Rev. 1, co-sponsored by my delegation, and in setting forth our ideas on how we might wind up this phase of our work on disarmament.

There is general agreement among us that one of the most immediate, and from the long-term point of view the most important question on our agenda is that of disarmament. This is not a matter which we or public opinion at large would care to see ignored or neglected in these times of strained international relations. There is also widespread recognition that the United Nations has the ultimate responsibility for disarmament and that the role of the Disarmament Commission in this field should become more meaningful.

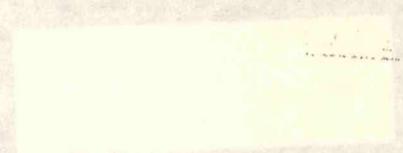
At the same time few would deny that real progress towards disarmament will come only from patient and serious negotiation among the great military Powers. As has been said often in our debate, nothing can be gained, and indeed it might even be harmful to attempt to direct the course of disarmament by means of majority votes in this organization.

These are, I believe, the considerations weighing heavily with delegations as they assess how best to proceed with the many resolutions tabled before us - some thirteen in number. It would be unrealistic to seek a definitive vote on every one of these before the conclusion of this part of our session.

We are, therefore, faced with three decisions relating to the method of procedure we should adopt at this juncture. First, we must decide what we are prepared to

REPORT NO. 32
December 17, 1949

UNITED STATES
300 Third Avenue
New York



Statement of the Delegation to the United Nations
General Assembly, December 17, 1949
in the First Committee, on December 17, 1949

Mr. Boardman:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst. and to inform you that the Department of State is currently reviewing the matter. I am, therefore, very sorry that I cannot explain the delay in the Department's response to you. I am, however, sure that the Department will be able to give you a more definite answer in the near future.

There is a general agreement in the Department that the most important question on our agenda and from the long-term point of view, the most important question on our agenda is that of disarmament. This is not a matter which we can discuss in a large number of sessions or reflect in these times of global political relations. There is also a general recognition that the United States and the United Kingdom are the only two nations which have the capability of making a contribution to the disarmament problem in this field.

At the same time, we would not want to see progress towards disarmament will come only from present and future negotiations. The great military powers, as has been said often in the past, should be the first to take the lead in disarmament. It is our hope that the United States and the United Kingdom will be able to lead the way in this regard.

These are, I believe, the essential points which we are trying to make in our report. We are sure that you will find them of interest. We would be very glad to discuss them with you at any time. We are, therefore, faced with the decision of whether to include them in our report. We are, therefore, faced with the decision of whether to include them in our report. We are, therefore, faced with the decision of whether to include them in our report.

vote on before December 20. Second, we must determine what should be done with the other substantive resolutions on which we are now not prepared to come to a vote. Third, we owe it to ourselves and to the people we represent, to provide a means for this organization to continue to focus attention on the issue of disarmament.

With regard to the first decision I do not think there is any dispute that we are all prepared and indeed anxious to vote on three resolutions. These are the three-Power draft on the suspension of nuclear tests, Document 256, the twenty-six-Power draft on the same subject, Document 258 Rev. 1, and the five-Power draft against the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons contained in Document 253 Rev. 1. We believe that the content of these three resolutions would commend itself to the large majority of the delegations here and that the Committee would wish to vote on them without further discussion.

The remaining resolutions contain substantive proposals covering a wide range of subjects. There are varying degrees of merit in these suggestions and many have a rightful place in the framework of general and complete disarmament under effective international control, which the General Assembly voted for unanimously last year. However, many delegations doubt that most of the proposals contained in these resolutions would be feasible and useful if they were considered outside of that context. Obviously much detailed study and careful examination in the light of all relevant implications will be required before useful decisions can be reached in regard to these proposals. Between now and December 20 it will not be possible to accord them that measure of thoughtful attention^{which} they deserve. In this situation I suggest we must take a decision that will leave the way open to dealing effectively with these resolutions at a later and more propitious time, either in the Disarmament Commission, in the General Assembly, or in both.

Without wishing in any way to detract from any of these resolutions, I do believe that the three texts dealing with the central question of principles, and in particular the suggested compromise text in Document 259, deserve special mention. We owe the warmest tribute to the distinguished Minister from

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India, Mr. Krishna Menon, and those who worked closely with him in their zealous effort to effect a compromise between the eastern and western positions on principles. They very nearly succeeded in formulating an agreed basis for future negotiations. Certainly we should take care to ensure that it will be possible to go forward from the excellent start they have made in this critical area.

There remains, Mr. Chairman, the third decision to which I have alluded: namely, one which would provide a means for focussing attention on disarmament and the widespread concern in the United Nations for early progress. The Committee has had an opportunity of studying the changes which have been incorporated in the resolution tabled by the Delegation of Canada and eighteen other countries, which appears in Document 255 Rev. 1. It will have been noted that the resolution, alone of all those which have been tabled in this Committee, seeks to deal directly with the problem of bringing about further negotiations. In its provisions for continuing United Nations machinery to assist in achieving that end, added emphasis has been placed on the role of the Disarmament Commission. Moreover, its provisions for the continuing study of the various proposals which have been submitted at this session have also been greatly strengthened. It seeks to enable the middle and small Powers to make a concerted contribution to the urgent task of beginning disarmament negotiations.

Resolution L.255 Rev. 1 has been criticized on the grounds that it is designed to create the impression that something will be done about disarmament, whereas in fact nothing will be done. The operative paragraphs of the resolution clearly show that this criticism is unfounded.

Paragraph 2 expresses the hope that in view of the urgency and importance of disarmament, every effort will be made for the continuation of negotiations among the Powers principally concerned. This is an unequivocal statement that something ought to be done. We realize that the continuation of negotiations will require the agreement of the Powers principally concerned; we also realize that owing to well-known circumstances not all of the principal Powers will for a month or so be in a position to engage in definitive negotiations on disarmament. Nevertheless, we believe that it is right and necessary

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for this Committee and the General Assembly to call on the Powers principally concerned to reinstitute negotiations as soon as possible.

Paragraph 4 deals specifically with the period before negotiations are resumed. It requests the Disarmament Commission to examine and make recommendations on ways and means of facilitating the early resumption of these negotiations. It further requests the Disarmament Commission to examine and make recommendations on the essential principles of general and complete disarmament which should guide the negotiators. I have already drawn attention to the good work which a number of delegations have carried on in an effort to effect agreement on such principles. Quite obviously, this work should be continued. Paragraph 4 makes provision for this.

Paragraph 5, as re-drafted in Document 255 Rev. 1, makes provision for the period after negotiations have been resumed. It contains the important practical suggestion that the Disarmament Commission meet more frequently to consider specific disarmament matters, including reports from the negotiating Powers. Moreover, this paragraph provides for the Disarmament Commission to give guidance to the negotiators. Thus it is envisaged that a stronger and more effective link will exist between the Commission and the negotiating body.

The whole implication of paragraphs 4 and 5 is one of confidence that much meaningful service in the cause of disarmament can be performed by the Disarmament Commission, both before negotiations are resumed and later, while negotiations are actually in progress. The Canadian Delegation and the many others which have co-sponsored Resolution 255 Rev. 1, feel sure that the Committee, on considering this matter, will recognize that in this resolution we are trying to get something done.

The co-sponsors believe this Committee should give to the Disarmament Commission its rightful importance by seizing it of the questions we have been discussing. We feel strongly that once seized of the issues, the Disarmament Commission may in its discretion take action in many useful ways to promote and facilitate the discussion of disarmament either in the resumed session of the General Assembly or in any special negotiating arrangements set up by the Great Powers.

In saying this I do not suggest any specific date by which the Disarmament Commission must necessarily meet. However, I do believe that the stage should be set for a meeting of the Disarmament Commission at any time deemed appropriate by the Chairman of that Commission and its members.

We all realize, I am sure, that if we allow the discussions which we have had over the past three months to terminate without reaching some conclusion as to the way in which the United Nations is to fulfill its ultimate responsibility for disarmament, we risk being accused of indifference to one of the greatest problems facing the world today. We must take steps to reassure the peoples of the world that the cause of disarmament is not hopeless. We must show them that the governments represented here are determined to continue the search for a solution through serious negotiations. The Government of Canada and the other governments co-sponsoring the resolution in 255 Rev. 1 earnestly believe that it offers at least a modest measure of hope to an anxious and expectant world.

With the above in mind, Mr. Chairman, I wish to move formally:

- (a) That this Committee decide to vote immediately on the three-Power and twenty-six-Power resolutions on nuclear tests in Documents 256 and 258 Rev. 1 and the five-Power resolution against the dissemination of nuclear weapons in Document 253 Rev. 1;
- (b) That this Committee agree not to vote at this time on any of the nine resolutions of a more controversial character contained in Documents A/4509, L.249, L.250, L.251, L.252 Rev. 1, L.254, L.259, L.260 Rev. 1 and L.264 Rev. 1.;
- (c) That this Committee decide to vote on the procedural resolution co-sponsored by nineteen governments in Document L.255 Rev. 1.

My proposal is a formal one, Mr. Chairman. It is advanced in a sincere effort to facilitate the successful conclusion of our work in the limited time left to us before the end of this part of our session.

