



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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GENEVA DISARMAMENT TALKS

Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, Geneva, July 24, 1962.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates:

It has been very pleasant to return to Geneva and meet the old friends taking part in this Conference and also, of course, to have a hand in the concluding acts of the Conference on Laos.

The agreement signed yesterday on the future of Laos has shown that initial suspicion and distrust need not be insuperable barriers - and I think that is the main trouble in the world today, too much suspicion and distrust. I repeat, suspicion and distrust need not be insuperable barriers if all concerned are prepared to work patiently towards agreement. Certain difficult political issues were faced in the Conference on Laos and acceptable solutions were worked out involving compromises by all. I suggest that the same determination to negotiate until agreement is reached should guide our further work at this Disarmament Conference.

We convened here last March, at the request of the United Nations General Assembly, with the specific task of working out an agreement on general and complete disarmament in accordance with a statement of principles which had been agreed between the United States of America and the Soviet Union but also had been accepted unanimously by the General Assembly. I draw your attention to the last of these principles, which reads as follows: "States participating in the negotiations should seek to achieve and implement the widest possible agreement at the earliest possible date. Efforts should continue without interruption -- this is the principle agreed to unanimously -- until agreement upon the total programme has been achieved, and efforts to ensure early agreement on and implementation of measures of disarmament should be undertaken without prejudicing progress on agreement on the total programme and in such a way that these measures would facilitate and form part of that programme".

This was decided at the last session of the General Assembly.

We are now only eight weeks away from the next session. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider seriously what this Conference should be doing in the coming weeks to fulfil the specific mandate which it has been given.

Against Adjournment

I have been concerned about a growing tendency to accept with resignation a return to the General Assembly with virtually no progress to report and furthermore to adjourn this Conference while the General Assembly is in session. This must be resisted and with it the temptation to spend the intervening weeks in building up a case for blaming others for failure to achieve results here in Geneva.

Mr. Chairman, can we believe that any member of this Conference would be held free of responsibility by the United Nations if we recess for the purpose of wrangling in New York? The agreed principle which I have already quoted shows clearly that the United Nations expects efforts to reach agreement here to be continued without interruption. This Disarmament Conference has the specific injunction to persevere, which was not the case with its predecessors. When the Conference was set up, every member of the United Nations, of course, was aware of the difficulties we should face, but, for that very reason, the Conference was instructed to continue its efforts without interruption.

One gratifying characteristic of the discussions here has been the objectivity and the seriousness with which the negotiations have been conducted day by day. If we go to New York and indulge in recriminations and mutual accusations of bad faith, the good faith, the good atmosphere in this Conference would certainly suffer. In fact, I am afraid it would be at an end.

I recognize, of course, that the forthcoming General Assembly will wish to discuss disarmament and the progress that we have made so far. However, it does seem to me self-evident that all the United Nations can do, given its previous decision, is to say to this Conference: "Continue your efforts to carry out the task which you have been set". Obviously, Mr. Chairman, Geneva must continue to be the negotiating forum.

Role of the Uncommitted

In this connection, let me emphasize once more the important role of the eight uncommitted countries. They were chosen from all parts of the world precisely to be representatives of the United Nations as a whole; here they have a vital and unique role to play in helping to bring about agreement. They have been constructive participants in all aspects of the negotiations and

their presence is one of the main assets of this Conference. I hope, and I am sure, that they will not lose heart but will continue the work they have been doing.

What we must consider is how the Conference can continue to work without interruption and avoid stalemate. I suggest that we concentrate in the next eight weeks on those areas in which progress can be registered so that we may have some concrete achievements to report to the General Assembly. This Conference must not simply mark time.

The course of events since we began our work last March has more than ever convinced me of the urgency of our task. The spiralling arms race, to which Mr. Menon has referred, which becomes more dangerous and more costly every day, makes the continuing efforts of this Conference imperative.

Sheer Madness

At the top of the list of questions where agreement should be within reach is the cessation of nuclear tests. The announcement of the regrettable decision of the Soviet Government to resume tests points up that this is the most pressing issue which we have to resolve. The Canadian position has been and is that we are against all nuclear weapons tests. Mr. Chairman, all this testing is sheer madness - polluting the air human beings must breathe, endangering the lives of generations yet unborn, and possibly leading to the destruction of civilization.

The members of this Conference, and particularly the nuclear powers, have a responsibility before the world to make a further all-out effort to find a solution. The Canadian Government has been deeply disappointed by the lack of progress in the discussion thus far in the sub-committee on the cessation of nuclear-weapons tests. There is no doubt that the action which the nuclear powers take to deal with tests will be the criterion by which their intentions and their good faith will be judged in the whole field of disarmament.

The difficulty of finding a satisfactory verification system has been the main obstacle in the way of an effective test-ban agreement. A major contribution to overcoming this obstacle has been the compromise proposal tabled by the eight uncommitted members of this Conference.

It is, of course, encouraging that the nuclear powers have all indicated their acceptance of this neutral proposal as a basis for further negotiations.

But in my view, Mr. Chairman, the nuclear powers have not exploited sufficiently the possibility for progress which the eight-nation memorandum affords and have been engaged in a largely fruitless debate over how it is to be interpreted. The time is overdue to enter upon real negotiation based on this memorandum.

Proposals for Compromise

There are three basic elements in the compromise suggested by the eight powers:

First, a detection system based on existing national networks, with new posts if necessary;

Second, the establishment of an international scientific commission to process the data yielded by these stations, and

Third, the obligation for states parties to the agreement to provide adequate assurances that a suspicious event on their territory is not in fact a nuclear explosion.

As far as we can see, the combination of an improved system of national detection stations, plus an international establishment to collect and analyse the data received from them, provides a satisfactory technical basis for an agreement acceptable to both sides. The crucial question which remains is how to deal with doubtful events that may be detected on the territory of one of the parties to the treaty. The United States representative made an important suggestion at the beginning of last week, when he proposed that the latest scientific data provided by recent research be thoroughly reviewed in this Committee and that in the detailed examination of this information qualified experts from all delegations should participate.

I believe that a discussion of this sort should be held and held just as soon as possible; it could lay the foundation for an agreement acceptable to all concerned. The conclusion of a treaty to halt tests for all time not only would be of immeasurable importance as a first step in halting the arms race, but would also create the right atmosphere for constructive progress in other areas of disarmament.

In the field of what are called collateral measures, I also believe there is now a prospect that this Conference can take steps forward in the weeks to come.

To Halt Dissemination

I am happy that the Conference has now embarked on an active discussion in the Committee of the Whole of measures for the prohibition of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of accidental war.

In approaching the problem of preventing the wider spread of nuclear weapons, we can draw encouragement from the fact that through their support for the Irish resolution, which, as you all know, was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly last year, all governments represented at this table are already on record as favouring the adoption of effective measures in this field. Every day increases the likelihood that nuclear weapons will eventually

come into the possession of a wider circle of countries. This is surely an outcome which all countries, whether or not they possess nuclear weapons themselves, deeply desire to avoid. While we may not see eye-to-eye on the exact nature of the arrangements that should be concluded, we all possess a common interest and recognize a common goal.

In the opinion of my Delegation, the approach which offers the best prospect for agreement is to base the work of this Committee on the recommendations set forth in the Irish resolution. It should be possible to negotiate, within a relatively short period, an effective and lasting ordinance which would ensure no further expansion of the nuclear club. My Government holds firmly to this objective and the Canadian Delegation will exert every effort to facilitate its realization.

Accidental War Hazard

The other item which is under discussion in the Committee of the Whole (namely measures to prevent the risk of accidental war) also deals with an urgent problem on which we could reasonably plan to report some agreed measures to the coming General Assembly. The risk of accidental war cannot fail to grow more serious as weapons of ever greater power and complexity are developed. The United States has made several specific proposals designed to deal with this problem and the U.S.S.R., when this Conference resumed, submitted suggestions which in many respects are very similar. We welcome the recognition by the U.S.S.R. that it would be desirable to adopt measures in this field. Like other members who have spoken on this subject, I hope that it will be possible to work out agreed arrangements of this type which could take effect as initial measures without awaiting the completion of our negotiations on the whole programme of general disarmament.

The Canadian Delegation is gratified that both sides recognize the value to be derived from such confidence-building measures as the advance notification of military movements, the exchange of military missions and the improvement of direct communications between heads of state and with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Let us now get down to a thorough discussion of these questions and work out practical arrangements that could diminish mutual suspicion and reduce the possibility of a calamity both sides wish to avoid. I am convinced that early agreement in this area is feasible and would provide a striking demonstration that our Conference is making a serious attempt to resolve problems which are of deep concern to people everywhere in the world.

I would also recall that I suggested here last March that outer space be considered by the Committee of the Whole as a collateral measure. However, the co-chairmen have not yet agreed to place this item on the agenda for consideration by the Committee of the Whole. I hope that in the near future the question of banning weapons of mass destruction in outer space will receive the detailed examination it warrants.

General Disarmament

I turn now to the task of reaching agreement on general and complete disarmament; in my view, a special effort is needed in the following main areas of the two plans before the Conference:

- (1) conventional armaments and armed forces;
- (2) chemical and biological weapons;
- (3) fissile materials and nuclear weapons;
- (4) nuclear weapons carriers.

Although serious differences have emerged with regard to some of these questions, on others there are elements common to the proposals of the United States and those of the Soviet Union which I believe can be built up into significant agreement. I deal first with those items where the chances of early agreement are the greatest.

The proposals of the two major powers on conventional disarmament lead to the same goal - the elimination of all arms and of all forces except those needed for the maintenance of internal security and international peace. The differences separating them have now been reduced by the Soviet acceptance of the idea of percentage reductions in this field. We consider that percentage reduction is the most logical and equitable method of achieving the goal and we are glad that the U.S.S.R. has accepted the principle. We hope it will come to recognize the virtue of extending this principle to the elimination of other means of waging war.

Conventional Arms Agreement

The United States and the U.S.S.R. now agree that conventional armaments will be reduced by a total of 65 per cent in the first two stages of disarmament. With regard to armed forces, there is a continuing difference over levels which should apply at the end of stage one. However, there is virtual agreement on a level of about one million men at the end of Stage II.

Here is a large and important area where the two sides are now very close together. This is an extremely significant development, for it means that agreement on the whole question of conventional disarmament has come within the reach of the Conference. Surely, Mr. Chairman, further negotiations can remove remaining points of difference. The co-chairmen, I suggest, should as soon as possible work out agreed articles.

Taken together, the other three points I have mentioned comprise the whole field of mass destruction weapons, namely chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons, and the means for their delivery. How to deal with these weapons is the most crucial issue in the whole disarmament problem. Where do the two major powers stand in this?

First of all, both countries have in the past endorsed the idea of joint technical studies in the field of chemical and biological weapons. During the first round of the negotiations, the United States Delegation offered to bring such studies forward from the first stage of disarmament to the present negotiating period prior to the signature of a treaty. We have not had a reaction to this suggestion from the Soviet Delegation, but, from their proposals of September 23, 1960, we assume that they are not opposed to the idea of a study in this area. Furthermore, we have evidence of numerous statements that the Soviet Union is anxious to make an early start in dealing with weapons of mass destruction in general. The Conference should therefore agree now on an immediate study of this question. We must stop the arms race in this area - chemical and biological warfare - which could only add new horrors to those we already know. We have enough horrors at the present time without adding these additional ones.

Problem of Method and Degree

Second, there is the elimination of nuclear weapons and fissile material. Under the United States plan, the production of fissile material for weapons purposes would be stopped in the first stage, and transfers from past production to non-weapons purposes would begin. This process would be carried forward during the second stage until nuclear weapons, and fissile material for use in their fabrication, would have been reduced to so-called "minimum levels". While containing no provisions on this in Stage I, the Soviet plan calls for all such weapons and their components to be destroyed in Stage II. What then is the difference between the two sides? One calls for complete reduction and the other for reduction to "minimum levels" by the end of State II. Surely these statements show that the main problem is one of method and degree - how precisely to bring about these reductions, and when. In our opinion, agreement on these questions can be reached by a more intensive effort.

Third, there is the question of eliminating nuclear weapons-carriers; the issues involved here are among the most central to the negotiations and there are considerable differences between the two great powers. Both plans call for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons vehicles. If the differences were only of staging and timing, there would indeed be ample room for negotiations and compromise as to what might constitute a mutually acceptable, balanced and verifiable reduction. But while, under the United States outline, the powers move towards the total elimination of nuclear-weapons carriers by a 30 per cent reduction in the first stage and by a balanced elimination of the remainder in Stages II and III, the Soviet Union claims that complete abolition could be achieved in the first stage. The discussions in this Conference have shown that a 100 percent reduction in the first stage would be incompatible with the principle of balance to which Mr. Menon referred this morning and would raise grave verification problems. I am convinced that opportunity for genuine negotiations will exist only if neither side holds to totally uncompromising positions.

Mr. Chairman, I began by saying that this Conference must demonstrate to the United Nations General Assembly that we have done what is humanly possible to fulfil the high responsibilities which they have given us. In our task we have become the servants of the entire world. Humanity will be our judge and, if we fail, it will judge us harshly. We must never forget that while we negotiate the entire world looks on, watching our performance. There is an urgency about our work which grows day by day, as the arms race spirals on. The worst judgment which history could make would be that we failed because we did not try hard enough.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion my principal purpose in addressing this Conference is to lay this point squarely before you: this is the time and this is the place for action on disarmament; if we cannot make progress in this Committee, which is ideally constituted for the purpose, then what real possibility remains for coping with this most vital problem facing mankind?

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