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Chairman: Mr. Finn MOE (Norway).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Carlos Blanco (Cuba), the Vice-Chairman, presided.

Regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments (A/1943 and A/C.1/667)

[Item 66]*

Not only were the Western nations rearming but also there was fighting in Korea, Indo-China and Malaya. Therefore they should reach their goal as quickly as possible.

4. The sponsoring Powers proposed to reach these ends by producing proposals which were not merely plausible but faced the technical and political problems. They aimed at a sensible form of treatment by laying out general directions and did not seek, for propaganda purposes, to pretend that disarmament was an easy matter.

International control of atomic energy : report of the Committee of Twelve (A/1922)

[Item 16]*

5. Their first suggestion was that an international mechanism was needed. The problems should be discussed and analysed; mere resolutions and paper agreements were inadequate. The Committee should follow the recommendations of the Committee of Twelve and establish a single commission in which would be merged the functions of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments and give the new commission some guidance.

6. This policy represented a change in the position of the United States. Initially their view had been that the problems involved in atomic energy were so novel that that matter should be dealt with separately. That course had been followed but eventually the Atomic Energy Commission had reported that they did not believe that further progress could be made except in a wider framework. The United States had also believed that the problem of conventional armaments would to a large extent be solved automatically following the disarmament of the Western nations in the years 1945-47. However, they had changed their view and now urged that the commissions be consolidated.

7. There were four main elements in the three-Power plan :

- (1) An international inventory and check of armaments and armed forces through a process of disclosure and verification ;
- (2) Disarmament to agreed levels ;
- (3) The prohibition of atomic weapons ;
- (4) The creation of safeguards.

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Mr. ACHESON (United States of America) said that the proposals concerning the regulation, limitation and balanced reduction of all armed forces and all armaments contained in the draft resolution submitted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/C.1/667) came at the time of the greatest peace-time effort to rebuild defences. For that reason they might seem anomalous to some, although not in his view. There had never been a more important time than the present to put forward such proposals. These proposals, if accepted, could produce a turning point in the world's history and lead to a solution of the great questions dividing the East and the West.

2. The three sponsoring Powers wished to reach an international system which would include the regulation and reduction of all armaments of all types, which would embrace all nations having substantial armed forces, which would prohibit atomic weapons and which would provide safeguards to ensure the security of all nations. They sought to achieve a situation in which all the facts would be known and no mysteries would remain.

3. They wished to achieve these objectives because the level of tension in the world was rising dangerously.

* Indicates the item number on the General Assembly agenda.

8. With regard to the first point Mr. Acheson believed that verification was more important than disclosure and that a system for verification was essential. Further, the process would have to be a continuing one. Such inspection would not be easy but the matter was vital since the issue was the security and survival of States. One could not rely upon unverified statements of any nation. Only with certain knowledge could nations embark upon the programme for the limitation of armaments.
9. The plan would have to apply to all armaments and armed forces and not merely to what a nation might call its armed forces. Security police, border-guards and similar para-military formations together with their armaments, should be disclosed.
10. Some matters were more secret than others and they should therefore proceed by stages, disclosing and verifying matters, to begin with, in those areas where there was the least danger to national security. Such disclosures, even with ample verification, would in the beginning involve a considerable element of faith. After there was evidence that the system worked they could proceed to the more secret matters. The initial disclosure could concern all types of armed forces including para-military forces, police and organized reserves together with their conventional armaments.
11. At the same time certain matters relating to atomic energy could be disclosed and verified. It was clear from the reports of the Atomic Energy Commission that the number of bombs actually fabricated was less meaningful than the amount of available fissionable material and the rate of production. The last two items were the measure of atomic armaments. Atomic energy disclosures also should begin in the less secret areas, starting with raw materials and progressing through the processing plants. After these procedures were completed it was proposed to go forward to the more secret fields until all secret weapons, including atomic weapons, had been disclosed and verified.
12. The disclosure and verification proposals did include provision for disclosure of atomic information. This was a change in the United States position which had been made in the hope that it would enable the United Nations to make progress.
13. Allegations had been made that the proposal to proceed by stages was a trick to enable the United States to avoid revealing any secrets. If those allegations were an attack on the good faith of the three Powers or of the future commission it might be that there was not enough international confidence to set up a system of disarmament. However, it might merely mean that the proposal was not clear.
14. The plan could include a provision that progress from one stage to another should not be a matter for further political decisions but should take place following the completion of certain stages and be an administrative matter in the control of the commission. There could be a provision that the commission should not be controlled by any nation. Thus the programme could be advanced on the basis of its success in the early stages which would create the background of successful operation needed as a guaranty when the stages vitally affecting national security were reached.
15. An international inspection staff would need to be organized, for nations could not rely upon other nations to perform their own inspection. The international staff should be empowered not merely to verify statements which had been made but to examine all facts without limitation. Obviously this would have to be the case for no irregularities were likely to be declared.
16. The reduction or limitation of armaments and armed forces also should apply to all armaments and armed forces. Not only so-called regular armed forces should be included but also all security police, frontier guards and the like. Further, all countries having substantial military or para-military establishments should be included in the system and not only the "Big Five". There were too many other countries with substantial military establishments to limit the programme to the five great Powers.
17. It was suggested in the draft resolution that the commission should be directed to seek criteria of general application. It was realized that no formula could fit all nations, that the criteria would be only general guides and the actual reductions would be determined by specific agreements. The various relevant factors had often been reviewed during the past fifty years and their very number tended to complicate the issue. To find a solution the Committee should examine the evil which they sought to correct.
18. The source of anxiety was the possibility that large nations and their associates might so enlarge their military establishments that other nations would become fearful and in turn increase their forces thus setting a spiral in motion. This could be dealt with by restricting forces to those adequate for defence.
19. The problem was to find criteria, particularly for the larger nations. Clearly one criterion might be related to population; it might seem appropriate to set a limit beyond which no nation could go. There might be some percentage of population, although that presented difficulties because there were countries of vast territory and small population and countries small in area and large in population. These were areas in which criteria might be sought although there was no reference to them in the draft resolution as it did not seem proper for the Committee to commit itself, at the outset, to any criteria.
20. Even criteria of this nature would not alone solve the problem. The limit on the German army established in the Versailles treaty should be recalled together with the manner in which that limit was defeated by the organization of reserves. That was another area in which criteria were needed.
21. Another criterion could be related to the amount of the national production in order to limit nations with vast resources to their defensive needs. This might be done by means of an absolute ceiling in monetary expenditures or in the use of vital materials such as steel. The problem in this field was to avoid interference with normal industry.
22. There was the further problem of the use of the permitted manpower and materials. In order to avoid the danger of a combination of a group of nations which might concentrate their permitted resources on a certain type of arm such as bombers or tanks or submarines, there was a need to agree upon the nature of the armaments and the armed forces which would be allowed. Nations should submit information on what they proposed to do with their resources and other nations should be able to raise objections to those programmes. The proposals should not only be scrutinized by the proposed commission but their implementation should be inspected by it.

23. The proposal of France included the prohibition of atomic weapons. This matter was referred to in the second paragraph of the preamble and again in subparagraph 3 (a) of the operative part. The intention was clear. Statements made in the General Assembly that the United Nations plans and the United States proposals did not have prohibition as an objective were untrue. Mr. Acheson proceeded to review a series of proposals which showed the views of the United States and of the plan of the United Nations. The statement made on 15 November 1945 by the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Canada and the President of the United States gave as an objective of the proposed United Nations Atomic Energy Commission the formulation of proposals for the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments. That part of the statement was later subscribed to by Generalissimo Stalin.

24. On various occasions quotations had been made from a letter, written by Mr. Acheson in March 1946 transmitting his report on atomic energy control¹ to the Secretary of State, which purported to show that he had claimed that the plan would not cause the United States to discontinue manufacture of atomic weapons. This was gross misrepresentation. Mr. Acheson proceeded to quote from that letter to show that he had stated that at some time the plan would require the United States to discontinue that manufacture, after an international agreement had been reached.

25. Proposals based on that plan had been presented to the United Nations by Mr. Baruch on 14 June 1946.² He had stated that when an adequate system had been agreed upon and put into effect the manufacture of atomic weapons should stop and existing stocks should be disposed of. On 2 July 1946 it was further proposed in a United States memorandum³ that it should be specified by treaty when and under what conditions the manufacture, possession and use of atomic weapons should be outlawed. Shortly thereafter among the purposes proposed for inclusion in the Charter of an international atomic development authority proposed by the United States there was to be found the prohibition of atomic weapons.

26. As for the allegations that the United Nations plan made no provision for prohibition, Mr. Acheson drew attention to the records of the Atomic Energy Commission where there was to be found the statement that the treaty should provide for the prohibition of atomic weapons and the disposition of existing stocks of nuclear fuel.⁴ After the consultations of the six permanent members of the Atomic Energy Commission in 1949, the majority of the members in their report said that the Soviet Union proposals would not offer an adequate guarantee of prohibition and would delude the people of the world into thinking that atomic energy was being controlled when in fact it was not, while the United Nations plan would ensure that no nation could have the means with which to make atomic weapons.

27. In brief, from the outset, the proposals of the United States and the plan of the United Nations had provided for prohibition. The three-Power proposal did the same.

28. There remained the necessity for safeguards. What he had said in connexion with the question of verification was also largely true with respect to safeguards, which must apply to all nations, and must be backed up by international inspection. Similarly, such procedures must also be carried out through and by the United Nations. Mr. Acheson stressed the point that, in matters affecting national security so profoundly, there must be a basis of factual knowledge of the situation, and that promises, though he did not wish to disparage them, could not suffice as such a basis.

29. There might be many ideas as to how the three-Power proposals could be put into effect, and the ideas of his Government might be considerably affected by those which others would put forward in the course of discussion. The proposed commission would have to work out provisions for putting into effect the various parts of the plan: it would have to draft procedures in respect of disclosure and verification, establish criteria for the limitation and reduction of armaments as well as a schedule for the same purpose, and so forth. It would also have to make provision for a continuing international agency to carry on its work.

30. Mr. Acheson considered that there were two main ways in which the commission could go about its task, both of which would be acceptable to his Government: dealing with the procedures for disclosure and verification first and other matters subsequently, and drawing up simultaneously procedures covering the whole field which the assembled nations would be asked to act upon as a whole. In some ways, the first alternative seemed preferable, but his Government was ready to adjust its views to those which might be put forward by others.

31. In any case, following the work of the commission, the whole matter would be submitted to the proposed conference, which would include all nations with military establishments of any importance. He noted in passing that there would be no point in convening such a conference without the prior study and elaboration of procedures which the draft resolution proposed, since it would then be only a tower of Babel.

32. Finally, the conference would have to establish one or possibly more bodies to carry on the various inspections and provide the safeguards, and to review continually the agreements reached on the limitation of armaments so as to provide for any inequities or difficulties which might arise in practice.

33. There was a very close relationship between those proposals and other events in the world. It was clear, for instance, that no plan could be put into effect while fighting was going on in Korea, though that was not, perhaps, a practical difficulty, since all hoped that the fighting would be ended long before the necessary preliminaries to the envisaged treaty of disarmament could be concluded. Obviously, there must be a close connexion between a reduction of tensions in the world and a reduction of armaments. That did not mean that any unexpressed conditions were intended, but it was highly unlikely that the various nations of the world would enter into such a treaty under the prevailing tensions. The very working out of such a treaty would in itself assist in the reduction of tensions and there was thus a direct connexion between the international temperature and the establishment of a system of disarmament. The working out and inauguration of such a system would in itself prove a turning point.

¹ See *A Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy*, Washington, D.C., March 16, 1946, pp. VII-X.

² See *Official Records of the Atomic Energy Commission, First Year*, No. 1, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, *Special Supplement*, annex 4, p. 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Third Year, Special Supplement*, annex 2, p. 17.

34. In conclusion, Mr. Acheson stated that the proposals submitted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States were not ends in themselves. The debate would disclose whether enough of the delegations seated around the table would be willing to seize the great opportunity before them to turn from the dangers of the world into a path of peace.

35. Mr. MOCH (France) recalled that during the general debate, on 16 November 1951, Mr. Schuman, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, had seen no disagreement on the essential objective common to all, namely, the safeguarding of peace, while, on the other hand, mutual suspicions paralysed initiative and distorted intentions.⁵ In that connexion, Mr. Schuman had cited the mystery enshrouding one section of the peoples of the world, which generated anxiety and doubt among the other section. The universal desire in France for the consolidation of peace led his delegation to tackle those barriers of mutual distrust and mystery.

36. The joint draft resolution submitted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States, while bold and new in its conception, fitted in with the efforts consistently supported by his Government. Thus, at the Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference in 1927, France had drawn attention to the necessity for international inspection, which was indispensable in the establishment of a system of verification, safeguards and guarantees which would be acceptable to all states. The same idea had been taken up again at the third regular session of the General Assembly and had been embodied in the resolution 300 (IV) adopted by the General Assembly at the fourth session.

37. The goal was made plain in the joint draft resolution (A/C.1/667): to remove from the world the burden of increasing armaments and to reduce without delay the risk of war by getting every country to forego, by contract with the other countries, forces that would enable it to commit aggression, and to agree to maintain only such forces as were vitally necessary for its defence. To that must be added the goal of a system of collective security in which international order would be safeguarded by the United Nations in such a manner as to enable each country to maintain only such forces as would be required to ensure its internal policing and as might be required

to be placed at the disposal of the United Nations to constitute, if need be, an international police force.

38. Disclosure and verification were prerequisites to any scheme of disarmament though not sufficient by themselves. The one-third or more reduction of armaments proposed by the USSR could not in practice remove mistrust and mystery since States would immediately have to start wondering what totals the reduction would apply to. A system of impartial inspection, impartial by virtue of being international, was evidently required. That was the answer to the question raised by the Byelorussian SSR representative in the general debate.⁶ Both the first step of ascertaining the initial state of forces and the subsequent stages of balanced reduction would have to be verified on the international level, and particularly through effective inspection carried out by United Nations representatives.

39. It was only realistic to concede that a change from the current rearmament efforts to a reduction of armaments could occur with full assurance of success only in an atmosphere of general serenity. That presupposed an end of aggression everywhere and the acceptance by all of a comprehensive and effective system of disarmament.

40. Stressing the importance of the fact that disclosure and verification would extend to the atomic realm as to all others, Mr. Moch urged that close attention be given paragraph 3 (d) of the operative part of the joint draft resolution which stated that the United Nations plan for the international control of atomic energy and the prohibition of atomic weapons should continue to serve as the basis for the control of atomic energy unless and until a better or no less effective system could be devised. That paragraph made it clear that the joint proposal would not in any way imply rejection of new formulae, while still requiring a system of control no less effective than that elaborated by the United Nations. Disarmament and control, he added, bore on all elements of the strength of modern armies.

41. His Government did not underestimate in any way the complexities of the proposed task, but there was no mission greater than that which would be fulfilled by the genuine peace that could emerge from the appeal addressed to all other nations by the Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

⁵ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixth Session, Plenary Meetings*, 348th meeting.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 346th meeting.