

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINTH MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 February 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. Alfonso García Robles

(Mexico)

PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Argentina: Mr. F. JIMENEZ DAVILA

Brazil: Mr. I. MASTROGIOVANNI

Bulgaria: Mr. R. NIKOLOV
Mr. I. PETROV
Mr. M. SREBREV

Burma: U THEET TUN
U TINT SO

Canada: Mr. R. HARRY JAY
Mr. J. T. SIMARD

Czechoslovakia: Mr. M. RUŽEK
Mr. V. ROHÁL-ILKIV

Egypt: Mr. O. EL-SHAFEI
Mr. F. EL IBRASHI
Mr. A. A. KHEIR
Mr. A. B. MANSOUR
Mr. T. DINANA

Ethiopia: Mr. W. BERHANU
Mr. G. ALULA
Mr. G. DEMISSE

German Democratic Republic: Mr. G. HEPDER
Mr. H-J. MICHEEL
Mr. M. GRACZYNSKI
Mr. H. THIELICKE

Germany, Federal Republic of: Mr. G. J. SCHLAICH
Mr. J. BAUCH
Mr. J. PÖHLMANN

Hungary:

Mr. M. DOMOKOS
Mr. R. TOTH
Mr. I. KÖRMENDY

India:

Mr. K. P. JAIN
Mr. S. T. DEVARE

Iran:

Mr. M. FARTASH
Mr. H. AMERI
Mr. D. CHILATY

Italy:

Mr. N. DI BERNARDO
Mr. M. MORENO
Mr. A. BIZZARINI
Mr. G. VALDEVIT

Japan:

Mr. M. OGISO
Mr. Y. NAKAMURA

Mexico:

Mr. A. GARCÍA ROBLES
Mr. M. MARÍN
Miss A. CABRERA

Mongolia:

Mr. D. ERDEMBILEG
Mr. P. KHALIUN

Morocco:

Mr. S.M. RAHHALI

Netherlands:

Mr. C. A. VAN DER KLAAUW
Mr. A. J. MEERBURG

Nigeria:

Mr. S. T. ADAMU

Pakistan:

Mr. M. YUNUS

Peru:

Mr. G. CHAUNY

Poland:

Mr. E. WYZNER
Mr. A. OLSZOWKA
Mr. H. PAĆ
Mr. A. CZERKAWSKI
Mr. Z. MATKLEWICZ

Romania:

Mr. C. ENE
Mr. V. TUDOR
Mr. G. TINCA

Sweden:

Mrs. I. THORSSON
Mr. G. HAMILTON
Mr. L. NORBERG
Mr. U. ERICSSON
Mr. J. LUNDIN

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics:

Mr. V. I. LIKHATCHEV
Mr. Y. K. NAZARKIN
Mr. N. V. PESTEREV
Mr. I. P. GLAZKOV
Mr. A. N. DAVIDOV
Mr. A. I. TIOURENKOV
Mr. G. A. SHEVCHENKO
Mr. V. V. IVANOV

United Kingdom:

Mr. M. E. ALLEN
Mr. J. G. TAYLOR
Mr. I. R. KENYON

United States of America:

Mr. L. SLOSS
Mr. H. MEYERS
Mr. W. HECKROTTE
Miss B. MURRAY
Mr. A. TURRENTINE
Mr. C. WILMOT

Yugoslavia:

Mr. D. DJOKIĆ
Mr. M. MIHAJLOVIĆ

Zaire:

Mr. LUKABU-K'HABOUJI

Special Representative of the
Secretary-General:

Mr. Risto HYVÄRINEN

Alternate Representative of
the Secretary-General:

Mr. A. CORRADINI

Assistant Secretary-General:

Mr. R. BJÖRNERSTEDT

Communiqué of the meeting

The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament today held its 729th plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the Chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Alfonso García Robles, representative of Mexico.

The representative of Sweden (Under-Secretary of State Mrs. Inga Thorsson, M.P.) devoted her statement to the question of a comprehensive test ban (CTB). She stated that the Swedish Government was encouraged by the expressions of increased political will by the United States and the Soviet Union to discuss the cessation of their nuclear weapon tests. Mrs. Thorsson emphasized that the CTB was a matter for the international community as a whole. The immediate task of the CCD was to negotiate an agreement to be signed in advance of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament to take place in 1978. As a basis for such negotiations, Mrs. Thorsson suggested certain elements for a treaty and announced that the Swedish delegation intended shortly to put forward in the CCD the text of a draft treaty on a CTB.

The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (H.E. Ambassador Mark Allen) made a statement concerning the procedures of the CCD.

The Committee decided that the second session of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events be held at Geneva from 21 to 25 February 1977.

In accordance with the decision taken at the 727th meeting on 3 September 1976 to hold unofficial meetings with the participation of experts on the question of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction, the CCD decided to start these meetings on 14 March 1977.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 22 February 1977, at 10.30 a.m.

Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden): Let me first of all associate myself, most warmly, with the words of welcome that last Tuesday were directed towards the newcomers to this body, namely the representatives of Argentina, Egypt, India, Mongolia and the United States of America. We shall enjoy working together with our new colleagues as we did with their predecessors. On the same note I extend the warmest good wishes to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Hyvärinen, to his Alternate, Mr. Corradini and to the Secretariat, as well as to Mr. Björnerstedt in his new capacity as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament.

Three years ago the following statement was made by Herbert F. York, a prominent spokesman for the disarmament community, formerly a member of the defence establishment:

"So far, after almost 30 years of attempts to achieve some kind of serious disarmament, not one single nuclear weapon has ever been destroyed or even moved as a result of an agreement to do so. That record could lead to a feeling of utter hopelessness, or it could lead to a renewed determination to accomplish something at long last. Let us try to make it the latter".

All efforts made since then have accomplished nothing whatsoever in terms of disarmament. Could anyone wonder at the continuously increasing impatience with which demands for results are raised all over the world? This impatience found its expression in many forms in the course of last autumn's General Assembly session. For the first time in many years the urgent need for disarmament was one of the leading themes of almost every statement in the plenary general debate. The work of the First Committee, lasting for six weeks, resulted in more than 20 resolutions, the most significant of which was to call a Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament and to initiate preparations for it.

There is something in the air to give me the feeling that, somehow, disarmament might be the idea whose time has come. And, as we know, no armies can withstand such an idea.

The CCD, as the main international negotiating body in this field, has a particular responsibility to materialize this idea and to achieve progress in the tasks entrusted to it. Only then will we make a contribution of true significance to the work of the special session.

It is thus high time that a real effort is made to finally break the dead-lock that has prevailed for far too long in the two priority items of our agenda.

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

Today, in the first intervention by the Swedish delegation at the spring 1977 session of the CCD, I will address myself exclusively to one of these items, i.e. the comprehensive test ban (CTB). This is an indication of the exceptional importance that we attach to this highest priority issue. And we are indeed not the only ones; also this year the CCD has been asked by the General Assembly to intensify its efforts to reach a CTB agreement. The attainment of this goal, which has eluded us for so many years, is now more urgent than ever. The increasing risk of a proliferation of nuclear explosive technology is a global concern, which was reflected in many statements during the last General Assembly session. At the same time, the credibility of nuclear non-proliferation is closely linked with real progress in the efforts by the two major nuclear-weapon States in the field of nuclear disarmament. We are concerned about the slow pace of the SALT negotiations. While the talks go on, the qualitative arms race, which has a complex relationship to the talks and which is facilitated by nuclear weapons testing, threatens to undermine their very basis.

A CTB agreement as an isolated measure will not lead to real nuclear disarmament. A CTB acquires its full significance only in combination with other measures of qualitative and quantitative nuclear disarmament by the United States and the Soviet Union. But it is self-evident that a CTB would constitute a most important step in this direction.

By now well over 1,000 nuclear test explosions have been carried out by the six countries that have conducted such tests. The 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) did not lead to any decrease in the test activity of the two leading nuclear Powers. The tests were only moved underground, achieving a limitation of the damage to the environment, but no nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, nuclear explosions are unfortunately still being carried out in the atmosphere. In the year 1976, three such explosions were carried out causing radioactive fall-out in the Northern hemisphere countries. Even if the collective dose commitment delivered from a thermonuclear test explosion, like the one last November, is small compared to the annual dose from the natural background radiation, it is important that any such undesirable addition of radioactive pollution of the environment is prevented.

The United States and the Soviet Union have declared their intention to fulfil the obligations of the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) as of 31 March 1976. From the seismic data obtained at the Hagfors seismic array station in Sweden and data so far available to us through international seismic data exchange, we have no reason to believe

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

that any explosion violating the 150 kt threshold has been carried out by the two countries since that date. The treaty is however not expected to limit the development of new nuclear weapons in the two countries or to bring about any significant decrease in the number of tests.

An evaluation of available information concerning the nuclear weapon systems and the test activity of the United States and the Soviet Union in recent years indicates that both countries have been developing nuclear weapon systems with differentiated yields in roughly the same range, i.e. from one or a few kilotons to one or a few megatons.

It is also indicated by the information available that intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) at the disposal of both the United States and the Soviet Union have explosive yields of more than 150 kilotons, and that in both countries ICBMs with yields of 5 megatons and above are still operative. According to our evaluation of the test activity since the 1963 PTBT, no explosion with an estimated yield of 5 megatons or above has been observed. This would imply that no full-scale testing of the warheads of the very large ICBMs has been conducted for more than 13 years. The TTBT will also prevent any further full-scale testing of the larger ICBM warheads. What I have now related contributes to confirm the view that full-scale proof testing is not essential for maintaining the credibility of an existing nuclear weapon system and reaffirms our opinion, expressed already in July 1974, of the limited value of the TTBT.

When looking at the nuclear test activity of the two super-Powers, it can also be observed that the interest in conducting peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) seems to have decreased. The United States carried out its latest PNE in 1973. In the last two years only three presumed PNEs have been observed in the Soviet Union outside the generally recognized nuclear test sites.

The attempts to achieve a CTB agreement have encountered many obstacles over the years. It is obvious that the ultimate goal must be universal adherence to a CTB. I have said so before, and I repeat it today, that we cannot agree with the view that a precondition for entering a CTB by the major nuclear-weapon States should be that all present nuclear-weapon States sign it from the beginning. Every available fact points to the conclusion that should the two leading nuclear Powers agree to halt their underground nuclear testing, their military security would not be jeopardized.

The vast majority of the Member States of the United Nations takes the position that it is for the United States and the Soviet Union, the two States which -- as is known to all -- possess an overwhelming superiority in nuclear arsenals, to be the first to start the process towards a CTB. It should also be noted that, together with the United Kingdom,

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

they are parties to and depositaries of the NPT as well as the PTBT, which contain solemn pledges to seek to achieve a CTB and genuine nuclear disarmament.

The issue of verification has for a long time blocked progress towards a CTB. Since I last spoke on the subject in the CCD an interesting development has taken place. I am thinking of the memorandum put forward by the Soviet Union in the General Assembly last autumn and now in the CCD. It appears from the text of that memorandum that the Soviet Union would be willing to discuss methods of ascertaining on site the relevant circumstances of a seismic event in addition to relying on national technical means and an international exchange of seismic data to verify compliance with a CTB treaty.

This new attitude could hopefully pave the way for a solution to the political aspects of the verification issue. As to the technical side of the problem my delegation continues to believe that the state of the art in seismology is such that an adequate verification can be obtained. The CCD Group of Experts is planning to have its second meeting next week. Hopefully, the work of the Group will substantially facilitate the establishment of a generally accepted global monitoring system for a CTB.

In a statement last summer I referred to a United Kingdom working paper (CCD/492) discussing various technical purposes for continued nuclear testing. The bulk of the arguments advanced were related to the development of new nuclear weapons. According to official United States sources, more than two-thirds of all United States nuclear weapon tests during the eight years after the signing of the PTBT have been conducted for this purpose. The aim of a CTB treaty is precisely to limit the further development of such weapons. All Governments represented in this Committee are solemnly committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Against this background technical arguments for continued tests lose much of their relevance.

Last summer in the CCD I expressed certain doubts as to the existence of a necessary political will on the part of the nuclear-weapon States to move forward towards a CTB. Since that time several statements have been made by leading representatives, especially of the United States and the Soviet Union, in which they have expressed themselves in much more definite terms than before about the desirability of a CTB. We have taken note of the statements in this regard last Tuesday, made by the distinguished representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States.

My delegation warmly welcomes these expressions of a desire to reach, at last, a solution to the problems of nuclear disarmament. The world is eagerly awaiting genuine results of these endeavours.

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

The CCD with its responsibility for this question of acute concern to the entire international community must now see to it that the promising bilateral dialogue between the nuclear super-Powers is transformed into concrete multilateral negotiations aimed at achieving a CTB treaty as soon as possible. Informal talks that we have had with several States indicate a readiness to begin such negotiations within the CCD in the near future.

Work on the treaty should hopefully proceed at such pace that final agreement can be reached before the 1978 Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament. In the light of what has been said by the United States and the Soviet Union, it should be possible for the two super-Powers to move directly to a cessation of all weapons testing. If, nevertheless, some kind of transitional arrangements should prove necessary, we are confident that an acceptable solution can be found to that problem by the two parties concerned under appropriate CCD auspices.

Given enough political will, it should not be too difficult to find the appropriate structure of a draft CTB treaty. Many elements can be found in previous proposals presented by CCD members over the years. We for our part would like to suggest an approach which would facilitate an early agreement on and an early signing of the treaty. One possibility could be to make the entry into force of the treaty dependent upon the final cessation by the United States and the Soviet Union of their nuclear weapon tests. In case transitional arrangements are needed, they could be laid down in a protocol which should be negotiated under CCD auspices and which would enter into force upon signature by the two States in question. Another solution, which would stress the importance of the early entry into force of the treaty, would be to include provisions for transitional arrangements in the treaty itself.

It would be possible under both these formulas for CCD members and other States to sign and ratify the treaty before the United States and the Soviet Union have actually terminated their tests.

One of the problems which has to be dealt with during the negotiations concerns the matter of PNEs. In our view, the possible interest in carrying out PNEs must yield to the urgency of achieving a CTB. A treaty could, however, if this is generally found necessary, allow for the possibility that at some stage in the future the parties to the treaty will find that overriding national or international reasons speak for the carrying out of a particular project. Such a project should then, of course, be subject to strict international supervision and control.

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

As regards verification, we suggest, in the light of the promising developments that have taken place, that the treaty contain provisions for an effective international exchange of seismological data and for a procedure involving on-site inspections on a voluntary basis. For clarification of events pertaining to the subject matter of the treaty, the parties could also include provisions for the services of a consultative committee set up for this purpose.

As to the scope of the treaty, we think that the simplest and most practical solution would be to make it cover nuclear weapon tests or explosions of other nuclear devices in all environments. The treaty would thus be an independent and comprehensive treaty, and not complementary to the PTBT.

As I have said earlier, a universal adherence to a CTB should of course be the ultimate goal. It is not only desirable, but in the long-term perspective fundamental, that all nuclear-weapon States become parties. If this would be deemed of decisive importance for the conclusion of a CTB treaty we could for our part envisage the inclusion of a provision which makes it possible for a party to withdraw from the treaty, if all nuclear States have not adhered to it within a specified period of time.

My delegation intends in the very near future to present to the CCD a preliminary text, containing a draft CTB treaty.

I have already stated that there seems to be reason to hope for a new atmosphere, for new possibilities at long last to achieve concrete and real results in disarmament. I have referred in general terms to statements by leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, further elaborated two days ago in the interventions by the representatives of these two Powers at the opening of the CCD spring session. We have been encouraged by these pronouncements, as we all know the importance of the interplay of the super-Powers, both bilaterally and in this body.

But we, representatives of middle-sized and small countries, must never allow ourselves only to wait for initiatives and proposals by the super-Powers, heavy as their particular responsibilities for concrete action in disarmament are.

Disarmament is a truly international concern, the results or lack of results of which affect all of us. This is the justification for a multilateral negotiating body like the CCD. That is the reason why the smaller countries are trying their best to make active contributions to the work of the CCD, to put forward their own initiatives and proposals.

(Mrs. Thorsson, Sweden)

That is the reason why the Swedish delegation has put before you, today, the proposal that we start now urgent negotiations with the purpose of reaching an early agreement on a CTB treaty. That is the reason why we shall submit to you, in the very near future, background material for such negotiations in terms of a preliminary text of a draft CTB treaty.

So let us now set forth to work for early results in efforts for a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

Mr. ALLEN (United Kingdom): Mr. Chairman, may I begin by joining those of my colleagues who have welcomed your own return to our counsels and have greeted the new leaders of several delegations: Ambassador Martinez of Argentina, Ambassador El-Shafei of Egypt, Mr. Jain of India, Ambassador Erdembileg of Mongolia. We look forward with confidence to having the same fruitful relations with them as we enjoyed with their predecessors. I also express my delegation's pleasure at the presence of Mr. Leon Sloss, Acting Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. His visit to Geneva is sadly short, but we are fortunate that when he leaves us we shall continue to have Mr. Howard Meyers with us, leading the United States delegation. Mrs. Thorsson of Sweden is another most welcome visitor.

The pleasure of greeting new faces has indissolubly attached to it the sorrow of losing old friends. I cannot conclude these remarks without thinking, in particular, of Ambassador Joseph Martin, Jr. of the United States of America and Ambassador Mishra of India, both of whom played such major roles in our work.

My delegation dares to hope that we are entering a more fruitful period in the history of the CCD. Some of us have often lamented, in the past, the absence of "political will" in various quarters. Perhaps those lamentations may be a little less in order now. At any rate, although spring comes quite early in Geneva, I trust that it is not only the approach of spring that has made many of us look forward to making real progress on our priority items, including a comprehensive test ban and chemical weapons, in the 1977 session. But it will, of course, first be necessary for Governments (including, as their distinguished representative pointed out at our last meeting, the new United States Administration) to complete their review of the complex issues involved. We can use the short intervening period for completing our first task for 1977 -- the review of our procedures and programme of work. In this way we can both prevent this topic from interfering later with our substantive work and perhaps provide a more effective framework for negotiations.

(Mr. Allen, United Kingdom)

On this question of our procedures and programme, I take as my starting point the lessons that can be learned from the negotiation of the Environmental Modification Treaty in the CCD last year and from its subsequent reference to the United Nations General Assembly.

First, we recall the negotiations in the CCD. It appears to my delegation that the procedure then adopted, of negotiating the text in an informal working group, was excellent and could serve as a model. We envisage that the CCD might in the future create a series of separate ad hoc working groups, each set up to discuss a specific topic remitted to it by the CCD, and intended to lapse as soon as its task was completed. Such groups should of course be strictly subordinate to the CCD plenary and should, like the CCD itself, work only by consensus. We would frankly prefer such an arrangement to the creation of a permanent negotiating sub-committee.

Secondly, we recall what happened in New York. There, many Members of the United Nations which were not members of the CCD complained in the First Committee that they had not been able to provide any input to the negotiating process and had had insufficient time to consider the text before being asked to give their approval. As we see it, this problem might be reduced in the future by various methods. First, when the CCD decides to set up an ad hoc working group for the negotiation of a treaty, a period of notice, not less than one month, might be given to all States Members of the United Nations not members of the CCD. Such States might be invited to contribute to the negotiating process by submitting either written or oral statements, according to their preference. It is for consideration whether such States might also be offered an invitation to participate more fully in the CCD's negotiations. There is a precedent for the inclusion of non-members of the CCD in working groups, in that some took part in the nuclear-weapon-free zone study two years ago, and some are currently taking part in the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events. The distinguished representative of Italy, in his intervention at our last meeting, actually proposed the formation of a working group to consider a chemical weapons treaty and he suggested that it could be open to any State Member of the United Nations which has a particular interest in the subject and can contribute to the work. I support this proposal, though we would all need to consider what would be the most appropriate moment to take this step. One assumes, of course, that membership of such a working group would be by invitation of the CCD and that efforts would be made to prevent it from growing too large for effective negotiation. Finally,

(Mr. Allen, United Kingdom)

when the CCD completes its work on a treaty, notification might be sent to all States Members of the United Nations which have not participated in the sub-committee. This notification would of course annex the text and would constitute a warning to States that discussion of the text would begin in the General Assembly during the forthcoming session. It would be desirable to give a minimum period of notice, say 3 weeks.

The CHAIRMAN (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom for his statement. Would any other distinguished representative like to take the floor? As this is not the case, the Chair will now inform the meeting of requests received from the Co-Chairmen.

Firstly, as all the distinguished members of the CCD may remember, on a proposal by the delegation of Sweden, the CCD decided at its 726th meeting on 2 September 1976 that the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events would hold its second session in Geneva in February 1977. The Co-Chairmen of the CCD asked me to inform the Committee that, after having consulted interested delegations, they would wish to suggest that the CCD now takes a formal decision to the effect that the session of the Ad Hoc Group be held in Geneva from 21 to 25 February 1977. If I hear no objections on the part of any members of the Committee, I shall take it that the CCD adopts this suggestion of the Co-Chairmen.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN (translated from Spanish): The second message from the Co-Chairmen relates to the question of new weapons of mass destruction. After holding proper consultations with a number of other delegations, the Co-Chairmen propose to the Committee, through the Chair, the adoption of the following decision:

"In accordance with the decision taken at the 727th meeting on 3 September 1976, to hold informal meetings with the participation of experts on the question of new types and systems of weapons of mass destruction, the CCD decides to initiate those meetings on 14 March 1977."

If I hear no objections on the part of any members of the Committee, I shall take it that the CCD adopts this suggestion of the Co-Chairmen.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.