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INIS-mf--13083



Fact Sheet No.

A Comprehensive
Nuclear Test Ban

DISARMAMENT

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The cover reproduces the symbol for the World Disarmament Campaign which was launched by the United Nations General Assembly on 7 June 1982.

Background

No other question in the field of disarmament has been the subject of so much international concern, discussion, study and negotiation as that of the banning of nuclear-weapon tests in all environments.

Some 1,500 nuclear-weapon tests have been conducted since 1945, more than a third of them in the atmosphere and the rest underground. The Soviet Union and the United States together account for about 90 per cent of the total. Since 1963, when the so-called partial test-ban Treaty, banning nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, was concluded, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States have conducted all their nuclear tests underground. France has not conducted any atmospheric test since 1974 and in fact no such tests have been conducted by any nuclear-weapon State in recent years, including China.

Thus the problem of radioactive fallout, which was the cause of great concern in the 1950s, has been practically eliminated. However, the development and accumulation of nuclear weapons have continued with the help of underground tests. A comprehensive nuclear test ban would impose effective constraints on the nuclear-weapon States and also on non-nuclear-weapon States having capabilities to develop nuclear weapons. Indeed, such a ban could lead to reduced reliance on nuclear weapons by the former and would substantially reduce incentives for the latter to follow the nuclear path. In short, a comprehensive test ban would represent an important step towards cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

Since 1954, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India appealed for a "standstill agreement" in respect of nuclear explosions, the complete cessation of nuclear-weapon tests has been one of the prime disarmament objectives of the United Nations. It has been a separate agenda item of the General Assembly each year since 1957, and some 50 resolutions calling for an end to nuclear-weapon testing have been adopted by that body over the course of the years, more than any other issue of disarmament. The question has been considered in various deliberative bodies of the United Nations – the plenary meetings of the General Assembly, its First Committee, the Disarmament Commission – and in a variety of multilateral negotiating bodies. In addition, between 1958 and early 1962, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States participated in the tripartite Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests in Geneva. Subsequently, between 1977 and 1980, trilateral negotiations took place among those same countries again in Geneva.

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A concrete result of these efforts was the conclusion of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water (the so-called partial test-ban Treaty) in 1963. However, despite persistent urging by a majority of States at every session of the General Assembly and in the negotiating bodies, and the determination expressed by the United Nations that the cessation of all nuclear-weapon testing is a matter of the "highest priority", the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty is still eluding the international community.

The proposals put forward at one time or another included various forms of suspension of testing, unilateral and agreed moratoria on testing, a "threshold" above which all underground tests would be banned with or without a moratorium, a progressive lowering of the threshold as verification techniques improved, and interim measures to reduce the number and magnitude of tests and to phase them out. Numerous proposals were also considered on the delicate question of verification. They included the use of automatic seismic stations (the so-called "black boxes"); a limited and variable number of on-site inspections; verification by challenge; a commission of scientists, possibly from non-aligned countries, to consider ambiguous events; and a "detection club" for the international exchange of seismic information. None of these efforts has produced an acceptable solution.

Some countries, notably the Soviet Union and other socialist States, maintained that existing techniques of verification were adequate to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with a future treaty. Other countries, in particular the Western States, questioned the adequacy of existing verification techniques for small underground tests. It is widely felt that a system of verification of a nuclear test-ban treaty should include a provision for *on site* inspection. A number of countries believe that those inspections should be carried out by challenge or on a voluntary basis. Other countries maintain that it is of crucial importance that a request for *on site* inspection will not meet with a refusal on the part of a State party in whose territory it should be conducted.

Over the years, non-nuclear-weapon States have increasingly questioned whether there was a political will to bring about a cessation of nuclear-weapon testing. While the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, for their part, repeatedly reaffirmed their intention to achieve a comprehensive test ban, they could not reach agreement as to when testing should stop and on the extent of verification required.

As a result of the failure to stop nuclear-weapon testing, many States became disillusioned and increasingly

discontented. Non-nuclear-weapon States in general came to regard the achievement of a comprehensive test ban as a litmus test of the determination of the nuclear-weapon States to halt the nuclear arms race.

In 1979, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to prepare a study on the question of a comprehensive nuclear test ban to be submitted to the multilateral negotiating body, the Committee on Disarmament, in Geneva. Accordingly, the Secretary-General appointed a group of experts which completed the study the following year. In the foreword to the study (United Nations document A/35/257) the Secretary-General, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, stated: "The problem can and should be solved now".

This fact sheet summarizes the results of that study and gives a brief account of subsequent events up to the conclusion of the 1984 regular session of the General Assembly.

Partial Test-Ban Treaty, 1963

The question of a test ban was actively discussed from 1955 to 1958. In April 1958, Chairman Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union notified President Dwight Eisenhower of the United States of the decision of his Government to end nuclear testing and called upon the Western Powers to do likewise. The Soviet Union reserved the right to resume testing if the Western Powers continued their testing. Failure to achieve a mutual suspension led to the resumption of testing by both sides.

Subsequently, following a United States proposal and an exchange of letters by President Eisenhower and Chairman Khrushchev, it was decided that a conference of experts from eight countries (Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States) be convened to study the possibility of detecting violations of a possible agreement on the suspension of nuclear tests. The Conference of Experts met in Geneva from 1 July to 21 August 1958 and submitted a unanimous report in which they concluded that it was technically feasible to establish an effective control system that could detect and identify nuclear explosions, including low-yield explosions of from 1 to 5 kilotons.

The Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States agreed to begin negotiations in Geneva on 31 October 1958 in an effort to reach agreement on a treaty for the discon-

tinuance of nuclear-weapon tests on the basis of the experts' report. France stated that it would not sign a test-ban treaty unless the treaty were accompanied by other measures of disarmament.

The three Powers agreed to suspend nuclear tests unilaterally when the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests began in October 1958 and continued the suspension on a voluntary basis. In the mean time, France conducted its first nuclear explosion in 1960.

Early in the Conference, verification became the main issue of the negotiations. The Conference made considerable progress on that question in 1959 and 1960, drawing up the broad outlines of a control organization, although significant differences remained unresolved, particularly with regard to the number of on-site inspections which could be carried out on an annual basis.

Political relations between the two sides deteriorated in 1961 and the Conference became deadlocked. The Soviet Union stated that it could not ignore the fact that France, as a NATO member, could improve the nuclear capability of the Western alliance by continued testing. It proposed that either a test-ban treaty be concluded on the basis that national means of verification were sufficient, or the question be considered within the context of general and complete disarmament. The United Kingdom and the United States maintained that the proposals for a treaty based on national means of verification amounted to self-inspection, and therefore were not sufficient, and that to merge the test-ban issue with general and complete disarmament would be to submerge it in an even more complex problem.

On 30 August 1961 the Soviet Union announced that it would resume testing and did so the following day. All but one of its tests were conducted in the atmosphere. The United States and the United Kingdom proposed on 3 September that all atmospheric tests be ended without any requirement for international control. On 15 September the United States resumed testing underground and, later, in the atmosphere.

The Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests met briefly towards the end of 1961, but made no progress and finally adjourned in January 1962. At the last session, the USSR restated its opposition to any international control while the arms race continued, on the grounds that such control could serve as a means of espionage. It proposed a draft treaty providing for a ban on all tests in the atmosphere, outer space and under water, to be supervised by national means of detection, with a moratorium on underground tests until a control system had been developed as part of the system

for control over general and complete disarmament. The United Kingdom and the United States rejected the Soviet arguments and draft treaty, and declared that an uncontrolled moratorium on underground tests was unacceptable. Thus ended what had appeared to be a hopeful and encouraging effort to achieve a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Endeavours at the United Nations and elsewhere that year to break the deadlock were unsuccessful.

During 1963, private talks were held between the USSR and the United States on a test ban and, on 10 June, it was announced that the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States had agreed to hold talks in mid-July on the cessation of nuclear tests. On 2 July, the Soviet Union stated that the insistence of the United States and the United Kingdom on on-site inspections made a comprehensive nuclear test ban impossible. The USSR was therefore prepared to sign a limited treaty banning tests in three environments, that is, in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water. It also withdrew its previous demand that a partial test ban be accompanied by a moratorium on underground testing.

The trilateral negotiations began in Moscow on 15 July 1963 and ended on 25 July, when the text of the treaty was initialled. The Treaty Banning Nuclear-Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, whose implementation is based on national means of verification, was signed on 5 August by the Foreign Ministers of the three countries and was opened for signature in the three capitals. The Treaty entered into force on 10 October 1963. By 31 December 1984, 111 States had become parties to the Treaty. Two nuclear-weapon States, China and France, are among those that have not adhered to it.

The commitment of the three original parties to pursue a comprehensive test ban is contained in the preamble and in article I of the partial test-ban Treaty:

“Seeking to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time, determined to continue negotiations to this end, and desiring to put an end to the contamination of man’s environment by radioactive substances. . . .”

Article I of the Treaty reads as follows:

“1. Each of the Parties to this Treaty undertakes to prohibit, to prevent, and not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion, or any other nuclear explosion, in any place under its jurisdiction or control:

“(a) in the atmosphere; beyond its limits, including outer space; or under water, including territorial waters or high seas; or

“(b) in any other environment if such explosion causes radioactive debris to be present outside the territorial limits of the State under whose jurisdiction or control such explosion is conducted. It is understood in this connection that the provisions of this subparagraph are without prejudice to the conclusion of a treaty resulting in the permanent banning of all nuclear test explosions, including all such explosions underground, the conclusion of which, as the Parties have stated in the Preamble to this Treaty, they seek to achieve.

“2. Each of the Parties to this Treaty undertakes furthermore to refrain from causing, encouraging, or in any way participating in, the carrying out of any nuclear weapon test explosion, or any other nuclear explosion, anywhere which would take place in any of the environments described, or have the effect referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.”

The Treaty was the first international agreement of world-wide scope reached in the field of nuclear-arms limitation. It was hailed as an event of great significance that would begin to curb the nuclear arms race. In practical terms it has greatly contributed to the elimination of radioactive pollution. It has also brought about some relaxation of international tension and has helped to create a climate facilitating negotiations on other agreements on nuclear arms limitation, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. However, it has not slowed down the nuclear arms race among the major nuclear Powers, except to the extent that it has placed technical constraints on the underground testing of large thermonuclear weapons.

It must also be noted that despite the commitment in the Treaty to pursue a comprehensive test ban, no such negotiations took place in the following decade.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1968

The question of a comprehensive nuclear test ban was one of the issues raised in the 1960s in the negotiations on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The non-nuclear-weapon States sought binding undertakings from the nuclear-weapon Powers that there would be substantial progress towards nuclear disarmament which would, obviously, include the achievement of a comprehensive test ban. The resolution of that question was regarded as one of the necessary elements of an acceptable balance of the mutual responsibilities and obligations between the nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States.

The ensuing Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which opened for signature in 1968, contains the following preambular paragraph:

“Recalling the determination expressed by the Parties to the 1963 Treaty banning nuclear-weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water in its Preamble to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions for all time and to continue negotiations to this end . . .”

Article VI reads as follows:

“Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Deliberations and negotiations, 1963-1979

After the tripartite Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests ended, early 1962, the task of seeking agreement on a comprehensive test ban fell mainly on the multilateral negotiating body in Geneva, the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962-1969). Each year from 1962 on, the Committee considered the question of a comprehensive nuclear test ban and regularly reported to the General

Assembly. In its 1963 report, following the conclusion of the partial test-ban Treaty, the Committee expressed its satisfaction with the conclusion of the Treaty and "with the aims proclaimed by the negotiating parties in the preamble of the Treaty".

In the intervening years between the signing of the partial test-ban Treaty, in 1963, and the signing of the non-proliferation Treaty, in 1968, there was no significant modification by the nuclear-weapon States of their positions on an underground test ban. While the United States and the United Kingdom acknowledged that some progress had been made in the technique of detection and identification of seismic events, in their view it was not enough to eliminate the need for on-site inspections. They were prepared to discuss the possibility of accepting a smaller number of on-site inspections than previously proposed, but did not suggest any new number. The Soviet Union continued to insist that no on-site inspections were necessary and that national detection systems were adequate and, in effect, it withdrew a previous offer of two or three on-site inspections a year.

The USSR urged a ban on underground tests above a threshold of seismic magnitude 4.75, with a voluntary moratorium on tests below that threshold. The United States continued to reject an unverified moratorium in any form. Various attempts by the non-aligned countries to mediate between the two sides were of no avail.

China conducted its first nuclear-weapon test in October 1964, thereby becoming the fifth nuclear-weapon State. The event provided the occasion for many United Nations Members to express concern not only about the testing in the atmosphere by China and France, but also about the continued underground testing by the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In 1965, Sweden formally proposed international cooperation in the detection of underground explosions by the exchange of seismic data (the "detection club"). The following year, it proposed a system of "verification by challenge" or "inspection by invitation", whereby a party to a comprehensive test ban suspected of a violation could provide information and invite inspection either on its own initiative or on request. Failure to do so would entitle other parties to withdraw from the treaty.

These proposals met with no immediate response from the two major nuclear-weapon Powers, which continued to maintain their respective positions on verification. In 1971 and in subsequent years, however, the multilateral negotiating body—the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament

(CCD), as it was then called — gave increased attention to the question of international co-operation in the exchange of seismic data.

At a special meeting of the CCD held on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the partial test-ban Treaty, in 1973, nearly all speakers underlined the importance of the Treaty and the need to complete it with an underground test ban. The Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, in particular, stressed the role that the Treaty had played in reducing world tensions, curbing nuclear-arms proliferation and promoting arms limitation measures. At the same time, several non-aligned members of the CCD, supported by a number of Western countries, expressed strong dissatisfaction that the commitment of parties to the Treaty to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all nuclear-weapon tests had not been fulfilled, and several of them specifically expressed concern that such failure could undermine the viability of the non-proliferation Treaty.

On 3 July 1974, the USSR and the United States signed the Treaty on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear-Weapon Tests, commonly referred to as the threshold test-ban Treaty. Under that Treaty, the two countries undertook not to carry out, beginning 31 March 1976, any underground nuclear-weapon test having a yield in excess of 150 kilotons and to conduct all permitted tests solely within specified testing areas. Each party would use the national technical means of verification at its disposal and was under the obligation not to interfere with the means of verification of the other party. The parties also agreed to exchange information necessary to improve the assessments of the yields of explosions.

The Treaty did not enter into force by 31 March 1976, the agreed cut-off date, and has not entered into force as of 1984. However, the parties have stated that they would observe the limitation during the pre-ratification period.

In addition to the limit placed on the size of underground tests, each party committed itself to restrict the number of tests to a "minimum". Nevertheless, testing activities have not diminished.

In the CCD, several members welcomed the threshold test-ban Treaty as a step towards a comprehensive test ban. On the other hand, many members pointed out that the 150-kiloton yield threshold was so high (more than 10 times the yield of the Hiroshima bomb) that the limitation would not contribute to the cessation of the nuclear arms race. Moreover, the threshold exceeded by many times the level of verification capability. It was generally admitted that detection and identification of nuclear explosions of much lower size were pos-

sible. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the very concept of a threshold test ban, which implied the continuation of testing, was not consistent with the objective of a comprehensive test ban.

The provisions of the threshold test-ban Treaty did not extend to underground nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. To fill that gap, the two Powers decided to work out a separate agreement for underground explosions for peaceful purposes. On 28 May 1976, they signed the Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes, commonly referred to as the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty. The Treaty regulates the explosions which may be carried out by the Soviet Union and the United States outside their nuclear-weapon test sites and which may, therefore, be presumed to be for peaceful purposes. To ensure that explosions announced as peaceful should not provide weapon-related benefits that were not obtainable from weapon testing limited by the threshold test-ban Treaty, the new Treaty established the same yield threshold for explosions for peaceful applications as had been imposed on weapon tests, namely, 150 kilotons. In a Protocol setting forth specific operational arrangements, the two parties committed themselves to provide detailed information on explosions for peaceful purposes conducted by them and even to allow designated personnel of the other party to come within the area of explosion for observation purposes. Those provisions are generally considered as representing a significant advance in the question of verification.

The parties agreed that the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty could not be terminated so long as the threshold test-ban Treaty was in force, since it is an essential complement to the latter. That Treaty has also not entered into force as of 1984.

In 1975, for the first time since 1962, one of the nuclear-weapon States, the USSR, proposed a draft treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests. The draft treaty, which was submitted to the General Assembly, provided for a prohibition of unlimited duration of all nuclear-weapon tests in all environments. It further provided that all nuclear-weapon States must ratify the treaty before its entry into force. As regards verification, the relevant provisions of the treaty were to be based on "national technical means of control", that is, there would be no on-site inspection. They contained, however, undertakings of the parties to co-operate in an international exchange of seismic data and to consult and make inquiries, as well as a procedure for lodging complaints with the Security Council in the case of a suspected violation.

In 1977, the USSR submitted to the CCD its 1975 draft treaty, together with an amendment, which had been submitted to the Assembly at its 1976 regular session, providing for on-site inspections by invitation under certain conditions.

Subsequently, Sweden also introduced a draft treaty with possible transitional arrangements permitting the two major nuclear-weapon Powers to phase out their testing over a limited period of time. On verification, the draft envisaged the establishment of a consultative committee of parties to the treaty to clarify ambiguous events. The draft also provided for the withdrawal of any party if all nuclear-weapon Powers had not adhered to it within a specific period. Sweden urged that a working group be set up at an early date to negotiate a concrete agreement on the matter.

In 1976 the CCD decided to establish an *Ad Hoc* Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events. The Group held its first meeting in 1976 and is continuing its work. In 1978, the Group submitted a comprehensive report to the CCD, recommending the establishment of a global network of seismological stations and the carrying out of a practical exercise to test the proposed network. The CCD, after considering the report, decided that the *Ad Hoc* Group should continue its work and study the scientific and methodological principles of the possible experimental testing of a global network of seismological stations of the kind which might be established in the future for international exchange of data under a treaty prohibiting nuclear-weapon tests, as well as under a protocol dealing with tests for peaceful purposes, which would be an integral part of the treaty. In 1979, the *Ad Hoc* Group submitted a second report on the subject. There was also a third report in 1984 and on that basis it was decided that an experiment be conducted.

In the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, held in 1978, the Member States of the United Nations recognized that the cessation of nuclear-weapon testing would make an important contribution to the goal of ending the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and the development of new types of such weapons, and of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

China stated that it found those parts of the Final Document dealing with the complete prohibition of nuclear tests totally unacceptable. Likewise, France dissociated itself from the idea that the cessation of nuclear tests would make a significant contribution to the prevention of the production of new types of weapons and the proliferation of nuclear

weapons. In its view, the two most heavily armed Powers had, as a result of numerous tests, accumulated sufficient data to make any qualitative improvements they might desire, without carrying out new tests.

Trilateral negotiations, 1977-1980

Following consultations between the Soviet Union and the United States in June 1977, trilateral negotiations, with the participation of the United Kingdom, began in July of that year for the achievement of a comprehensive test ban. Several rounds of those talks took place, the latest of which came to an end in October 1980.

The trilateral negotiations were private, and official information in regard to them is based on the progress reports that were provided from time to time to the multilateral negotiating body in Geneva by the United Kingdom on behalf of the three negotiating parties.

On 30 July 1980, for the first time, the three negotiating Powers submitted a tripartite, and more detailed, report to the Committee on Disarmament, which stated that they had agreed that the treaty would require each party to prohibit, prevent and not carry out any nuclear-weapon test explosion at any place under its jurisdiction or control in any environment; and refrain from causing, encouraging or in any way participating in the carrying out of any nuclear-weapon test explosion anywhere. They had also agreed that the treaty would be accompanied by a protocol on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes, which would be an integral part of it. In the protocol, the parties would establish a moratorium on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes and, accordingly, would refrain from causing, encouraging, permitting or in any way participating in the carrying out of such explosions until arrangements for conducting them were worked out which would be consistent with the treaty being negotiated, the Treaty Banning Nuclear-Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

According to the report, the parties were considering formulations relating to the duration of the treaty. They envisaged that a conference would be held at an appropriate time to review its operation. Decisions at the conference would require a majority of the parties to the treaty, including all parties

that were permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations.

The negotiating parties had agreed that a variety of verification measures should be provided to enhance confidence that all parties to the treaty were in strict compliance with it. The parties would use national technical means of verification at their disposal in a manner consistent with generally recognized principles of international law to verify compliance, and each party would undertake not to interfere with such means of verification. Furthermore, the negotiating parties had agreed to provisions establishing an international exchange of seismic data. Each party would have the right to participate in that exchange, to contribute data from designated seismic stations on its territory and to receive all the seismic data made available through the international exchange. Seismic data would be transmitted through the Global Telecommunications System of the World Meteorological Organization or through other agreed communications channels. International seismic data centres would be established in agreed locations, taking into account the desirability of appropriate geographical distribution.

The negotiating parties had also agreed to other cooperative measures. In particular, there would be provision in the treaty for direct consultations, and for the exchange of inquiries and responses among parties in order to resolve questions that might arise concerning treaty compliance. If a party had questions regarding an event on the territory of any other party, it might request an on-site inspection for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the event was a nuclear explosion. The requesting party should state the reasons for the request, including appropriate evidence. The party which received the request, understanding the importance of ensuring confidence among parties that treaty obligations were being fulfilled, should state whether or not it was prepared to agree to an inspection. If the party which received the request was not prepared to agree to an inspection on its territory, it should provide the reasons for its decision.

The three negotiating parties reported that they believed that the verification measures being negotiated broke significant new ground in international arms limitation efforts and would give all treaty parties the opportunity to participate in a substantial and constructive way in the process of verifying compliance with the treaty.

The three negotiating parties concluded their report by noting that they had gone far in their pursuit of a sound treaty and continued to believe that their trilateral negotiations offered the best approach. They were determined, they stated,

to exert their best efforts and necessary will and persistence to bring the negotiations to an early and successful conclusion.

Developments since 1980

On 12 December 1980, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions on the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests. By resolution 35/145 A, initiated by non-aligned countries, the General Assembly reaffirmed the highest priority of a test-ban treaty, urged all States members of the Committee on Disarmament to support creation of an *ad hoc* working group to start multilateral negotiations, and called upon the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States to halt tests without delay, either by a trilaterally agreed moratorium or unilaterally. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 111 to 2 (United Kingdom and United States), with 31 abstentions. By resolution 35/145 B, sponsored by Western countries, the Assembly called upon the three negotiating Powers to exert their best efforts to bring their negotiations to a successful conclusion and requested the Committee on Disarmament to take the necessary steps, including the establishment of a working group, to initiate multilateral substantive negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty at its 1981 session. That resolution was adopted by a vote of 129 to none, with 16 abstentions.

At the Committee on Disarmament, in 1981, there was, however, no consensus on the issue. In particular, the United States explained that the review of its policy concerning nuclear testing, including the question of negotiations on a test ban, had not yet been completed and in the circumstances it could not agree to the establishment of a working group. The United Kingdom held that the tripartite forum offered the most realistic way forward. In 1981, the General Assembly again adopted two resolutions, 36/84 and 36/85, on the subject, which essentially renewed the requests contained in those of the previous year.

At the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1982, the great majority of States expressed deep concern not only at the lack of progress, but also at the apparent absence of any prospect of a breakthrough in a matter that was considered to be of the highest priority.

A few days after the conclusion of the second special session, on 20 July, the United States announced its decision not to resume the trilateral negotiations on a test-ban treaty. However, the Committee on Disarmament decided, in the

course of its 1982 session, to establish an *ad hoc* working group "to discuss and define, through substantive examination, issues relating to verification and compliance with a view to making further progress towards a nuclear test ban". China and France made it known that they would not participate in the deliberations of the working group.

The establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group fulfilled only in part the request of the General Assembly. Its mandate represented a compromise which took into account the concerns of the United States and other Western countries on the question. In the view of the United States, any consideration of a complete cessation of testing must be related to the ability of the Western nations to maintain credible deterrent forces and, while a test ban remained an element in the full range of long-term United States arms control objectives, under the current circumstances, the United States held, a comprehensive test ban would not help reduce the threat of nuclear weapons or maintain the stability of the nuclear balance.

Additional resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly on the question in 1982 and 1983 (resolutions 37/72, 37/73, 37/85, 38/62, 38/63 and 38/72). By resolution 37/85 of 9 December 1982, the General Assembly referred to the Committee on Disarmament, for its consideration, the "Basic provisions of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests", which was introduced by the Soviet Union and annexed to the resolution itself. The Assembly also called upon all the nuclear-weapon States, as a gesture of goodwill, not to conduct any nuclear explosions, starting from a date to be agreed among them and until the proposed treaty was concluded.

In 1983, although the item on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban was once again accorded the highest priority by the Committee on Disarmament, no substantive progress was made towards the achievement of that goal. A "Draft treaty banning any nuclear-weapon test explosion in any environment" was submitted, however, by Sweden on 14 June 1983. The draft, which was comprehensive in nature, provided for parties to keep under consideration the question of arrangements for peaceful purposes. Its verification arrangements, which would be ready for implementation when the treaty entered into force, included the international exchange of seismological and other data, as well as international on-site inspection and certain consultative, expert and secretariat machinery.

In 1984, the Conference on Disarmament (previously the Committee on Disarmament) renewed its consideration of a nuclear test ban, particularly in connection with the question of

the mandate for its *ad hoc* working body. A large number of delegations thought the mandate of 1982 fell far short of the expectations of the international community. That mandate, in their view, did not correspond to repeated recommendations of the General Assembly for the urgent conclusion of a treaty on a nuclear test ban. A new mandate should empower the subsidiary body to actually negotiate a treaty. While no delegation opposed the setting up of a subsidiary body, the Conference was not able to do so due to a deep divergence of views on the body's terms of reference.

The Assembly adopted three resolutions in 1984: 39/52, 39/53 and 39/60. They all reflected, in different language, the importance which the Member States of the United Nations attach to a nuclear test ban. Resolution 39/60, sponsored mainly by a group of socialist countries, urged the Conference on Disarmament to proceed promptly to negotiations with a view to elaborating a multilateral treaty. Resolution 39/52, tabled by non-aligned and neutral countries, appealed to the members of that Conference also to initiate immediately the multilateral negotiation of a treaty. For its part, resolution 39/53, submitted by a number of Western States and other countries, while reaffirming its conviction that a treaty was a matter of greatest importance, requested the Conference on Disarmament to resume immediately its substantive work relating to a comprehensive test ban, to take steps for the establishment of an international seismic monitoring network, and to investigate other measures to monitor and verify compliance with such a ban.

On 12 December 1984, before the General Assembly took action on a number of disarmament items, including those on comprehensive test ban, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, made a statement in which, among other things, he appealed for a renewed effort towards a comprehensive test-ban treaty. A comprehensive test-ban treaty was a litmus test of the real willingness to pursue nuclear disarmament. "Talks on a comprehensive test ban have been in abeyance for too long and their value has even been questioned. As with all arms-limitation negotiations, there will never be a perfect time to begin them in the opinion of all sides. The time to recommence these talks is now: they should not be delayed any further", the Secretary-General stated.

The conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban is of critical importance for the future of arms limitation and disarmament. As the 1980 report of the Secretary-General concluded, a comprehensive nuclear test ban is regarded as the first and most urgent step towards the cessation of the nuclear arms race and, in particular, of its qualitative aspects. It could serve

as an important measure for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, both vertical and horizontal. It would have a major arms limitation impact in that it would make it difficult, if not impossible, to develop new designs of nuclear weapons and would also place constraints on the modification of existing weapon designs.

The permanent cessation of all nuclear-weapon tests has long been sought by the world community and its achievement would be an event of great international significance.

December 1984

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DPI/830 — January 1985 — 50,000