



Twelfth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA
OF THE TWELFTH REGULAR SESSION: ITEM PROPOSED BY INDIA

EXPANSION OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE DISARMAMENT
COMMISSION AND OF ITS SUB-COMMITTEE

Letter dated 9 September 1957 from the Permanent Representative of
India to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 9 September 1957

On the instructions of the Government of India I have the honour to request you to include the following item, of an important and urgent character, in the agenda of the twelfth regular session of the General Assembly:

"Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee."

An explanatory memorandum as required by rule 20 of the rules of procedure is attached.

It is the intention of the Government of India to suggest at the appropriate meeting of the General Committee that the above item might be included as a sub-item of item 24 of the provisional agenda of the twelfth session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Arthur S. LALL

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

At the eighth session of the General Assembly, the delegation of India suggested the establishment of a sub-committee of the Disarmament Commission so as to facilitate discussions and with a view to reaching tangible results in the field of disarmament. This proposal was incorporated in resolution 715 (VIII) which was adopted by the General Assembly on 28 November 1953. As a result, the Disarmament Commission, on 19 April 1954, established a Sub-Committee consisting of Canada, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This Sub-Committee has held protracted sessions for the last four years.

In proposing the formation of a sub-committee in 1953, the Government of India was actuated mainly by two motives. First and foremost, it had in mind the staggering proportions which had already then been reached in the arms race and the grave dangers to world peace inherent in the continuance of the development of the quantity and quality of armaments. Secondly, the Government of India felt that a small sub-committee might promote full and frank discussions on the subject of disarmament, and that the presence of a certain number of countries other than the main protagonists might be helpful in reaching an early agreement.

Since the Sub-Committee on Disarmament was constituted, the world has seen developments in the field of armament which not only make the prospects of war more appalling, but which also virtually ensure that any major conflict would result in the annihilation of large sectors of the world's population and the complete destruction of much of the material civilization which men have built. During this period, the hydrogen bomb has been developed into a weapon with a destructive capacity several hundreds of times greater than the atomic bombs which wrought such sobering havoc at the close of the Second World War. Significant progress has also been made in the development of outer space missiles so that they may now be capable of destroying targets at any point on the surface of the earth. Furthermore, the number of countries which possess thermonuclear weapons has increased. Meanwhile also, there is an ever-growing hazard to all forms of life from the continuing accumulation of radiation from test explosions of nuclear weapons. These developments are such that any further delay in achieving progress in disarmament might well mean that the cause of peace is forever lost.

The two items submitted by Belgium^{1/} and Czechoslovakia^{2/} in regard to the effects of explosions and radiation are an index of the widespread impact on opinion in all countries of the consequences of the spectre of nuclear warfare. Thus, though the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission has held numerous meetings for the last four years, it must now be admitted that, in its present form, it does not appear to be able to achieve tangible progress or agreement in the field of disarmament. This is so in spite of the numerous efforts made by the Sub-Committee; and undoubtedly the Powers concerned, without whom no effective progress can be made in the field of disarmament, will continue to exert their utmost in search of a solution. The Disarmament Commission itself, to which the Sub-Committee reports, although a larger body, has not succeeded any better. It cannot be gainsaid that the Commission and the Sub-Committee, while striving strenuously for the objectives laid down by the General Assembly, are not bodies that are adequately representative of the world, geographically or in political terms.

In view of the deterioration of the situation over the last few years by the development and accumulation of new weapons, the increase in the number of countries possessing them and the possibility of further increase, and the mounting expenditure on armament, the Government of India consider that immediate steps should be taken to intensify the efforts of the United Nations to reach a solution of this problem. In this connexion, the Government of India are of the view that the deliberations and discussions of the Sub-Committee on Disarmament might well be assisted by the presence of such countries as, by virtue of their general approach to problems of world peace, may be in a position to stimulate the processes of understanding and agreement among the Powers more directly involved. The Government of India consider, therefore, that the General Assembly itself should nominate a few countries to assist the Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission in its search for tangible solutions to the problems of disarmament.

^{1/} See document A/3630.

^{2/} See documents A/3614 and Add.1.

Similarly, the General Assembly may designate additional countries to serve on and to assist in the tasks of the Disarmament Commission. It will be recalled that the present composition of the Disarmament Commission is based on the membership of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Commission for Conventional Armaments, which were constituted as far back as 1946 when the membership of the United Nations was very different and considerably smaller than what it is today. On the other hand, the constitution of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has been very recently adopted, provides for wider representation in the Agency's governing body.

The Government of India accordingly propose that the following item, in view of its importance and urgency, be included in the agenda of the twelfth session of the General Assembly:

"Expansion of the membership of the Disarmament Commission and of its Sub-Committee."
