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BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF SOVIET
SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

14 March 1958

On instructions from the Government of the USSR I am forwarding herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR on the question of disarmament, dated 14 March 1958, and would ask you to issue it as an official United Nations document.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) A. SOBOLEV

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STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

Reports have recently appeared in the foreign Press to the effect that the United States of America and other western Powers are maturing plans to convene the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Knowing in advance that the Commission's work will have no positive results, they are making it their business to create the impression that the reason for the deadlock in the disarmament negotiations is the Soviet Union's refusal to participate in the Commission's work. They plan to use this as a pretext for referring the whole question of disarmament to the Security Council for consideration. It is stated that preparations to do this are already being made by States members of the Commission which belong to western military groups.

In connexion with these plans of the western Powers the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR feels compelled to state the following.

The Soviet Government, as an ardent advocate of the relaxation of international tension and the immediate solution of the disarmament problem, has proposed that a conference of the leading personalities of States should be held in the very near future, with the participation of Heads of Government.

The questions which the Soviet Union proposes for discussion at such a conference include the immediate discontinuance of atomic and hydrogen weapons tests, renunciation of the use of these types of weapons, the establishment in Europe of a zone free of atomic, hydrogen and rocket weapons, and the reduction of foreign forces in the territory of Germany and other European States. The solution of these pressing disarmament problems would lead to a considerable improvement in the whole international situation and would create conditions conducive to further progress towards disarmament and to the settlement of other important international problems.

The Soviet Government's initiative with regard to the convening of a high-level conference has won the whole-hearted approval and universal support of the peoples. Public opinion throughout the world and the Governments of many countries demand that the conference should be convened as soon as possible in order to put an end, in the very near future, to the "cold war", the armaments race and the burdens they bring in their train.

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Negotiations on specific matters connected with the organization of such a conference are now being actively pursued between the parties principally concerned. The Soviet Union recently proposed that a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs should be held as early as April 1958 in order to prepare the agenda of and decide on the participants in the conference of Heads of Government which the Soviet Union has proposed should be held in June 1958.

In these circumstances, plans to convene the United Nations Disarmament Commission and to refer the disarmament question to the Security Council can only be regarded as an attempt to distract attention from measures to convene a high-level conference, in which Heads of Government will participate and one of whose main tasks will be to find a way to reach agreement on solutions to the problems of disarmament. It is quite obvious that this would suit those who are not interested in improving the international situation and who would like to prevent the holding of negotiations with a view to the reasonable settlement of the differences now dividing the great Powers.

That is the conclusion which anyone who is in a position to form an objective judgement will reach. Indeed, the experience of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and its Sub-Committee in their many years of work shows that they are not able to break the present deadlock on disarmament. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the majority of the members of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and its Sub-Committee belong to the Western military alliances and have blocked any proposals that did not coincide with the interests of those military groups. Instead of facilitating the effort to reach mutually acceptable agreements, those bodies were turned into an obstacle to disarmament and began to be used increasingly as a screen to mask the armaments race carried on by the western Powers.

The Soviet Union naturally could not let that situation go unchallenged. In order to establish the most favourable possible conditions for the consideration of disarmament problems and thus to prepare the ground for an agreement on practical steps to be taken in that field, the Soviet Government proposed at the twelfth session of the General Assembly that a Permanent Disarmament Commission should be established to consist of all States Members of the United Nations. A Commission with such a membership would have enabled all countries, large and

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small, to take a direct part in the discussion of the disarmament problem and to make their contribution to its settlement.

Instead of supporting that equitable proposal, the western Powers imposed a decision which left everything unchanged. In the newly enlarged Commission, sixteen of the twenty-five members belong to one or another of the military blocs controlled by the western Powers; this enables the latter to continue hampering the adoption of any decision aimed at the prohibition of atomic weapons, the discontinuance of tests of such weapons, the elimination of foreign military bases on the territories of other countries, a significant reduction of armed forces and armaments, the establishment of appropriate international control to observe the performance by States of the undertakings they assumed, and so forth.

Naturally, the Soviet Union, in its consistent struggle for disarmament, could not accept such a decision which left everything unchanged. Accordingly, the Soviet delegation stated at the twelfth session of the General Assembly that the Soviet Union would not take part in the work of that Commission. That statement by the Soviet Union still holds at the present time.

Those who are at present formulating plans for convening the Disarmament Commission are well aware of the Soviet Union's attitude towards that Commission and of its reasons for being unable to take part in the Commission's work. The attempt to convene the Commission when it is known in advance that it will lead to nothing shows that the sponsors of that manoeuvre are prompted not by the desire to facilitate the establishment of conditions conducive to the serious consideration and settlement of the urgent problems of disarmament but by the desire to aggravate the situation, to widen the division between countries and to pile up new obstacles to the settlement of the disarmament problem.

To further these ignoble ends they are also trying to make use of the Security Council, proposing to refer the disarmament problem to it for consideration. It is obvious that the purpose of this manoeuvre is to cloak with the authority of the Security Council the bankrupt disarmament policy of the western Powers.

All this is being done precisely at a time when world public opinion is demanding more insistently than ever that steps should be taken to reduce international tension and that high-level negotiations should be held for that purpose.

It is imperative that we find other means of breaking the deadlock on disarmament which has resulted from the position taken by the western Powers. That purpose would be served by the calling of a conference of Heads of Government at the earliest possible moment, to settle the most urgent international problems on which it is possible to reach agreement, and first and foremost the problem of disarmament. This is the course of action which promises the most satisfactory results and opens up genuine prospects for the practical application of measures capable of initiating the relaxation of international tension which is so ardently desired by all the peoples of the world.
