

**Message From President Nixon to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, February 23, 1971<sup>1</sup>**

Today the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament begins a new session of work in the vital fields of Arms Control and Disarmament.

On this occasion, once again I want to convey my thoughts to you directly because of my conviction that few areas of endeavour go so deeply to the heart of the concerns and the aspirations of all nations as the search for restraints on armaments. Sound limitations on armaments can enhance international stability and increase the security of all countries; they can reduce the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>1</sup> CCD/319, Feb. 23, 1971.

economic burden of armaments; and they can lay the ground-work for productive international cooperation in other areas.

The achievements of this Committee during the past decade have been significant, including, notably, the negotiation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty,<sup>2</sup> and most recently a Seabed Arms Control Treaty<sup>3</sup> which was overwhelmingly commended by the UN General Assembly<sup>4</sup> and signed earlier this month by a substantial number of States.

The tasks before the Committee are very important to world security. As in the past, genuine progress can best be made through patient and careful work toward mutually beneficial measures. Opportunities for such progress can and must be realized.

I believe that an opportunity for progress exists in the field of chemical and biological weapons. Despite differences of approach, there appears to be a fundamental area of agreement and common interest in the CCD regarding this problem. All members desire the greatest possible advance in achieving effective restraints on these weapons. All members are aware that such progress will enhance their own security and international security in general.

An agreement prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons should serve these objectives. Because of the rapid transmission of contagious diseases, particularly with modern means of communications, any use of biological weapons—by any State in any conflict anywhere in the world—could endanger the people of every country. Additional restraints on biological weapons would thus contribute to the security of all peoples. A prohibition against the possession of biological weapons could also have far-reaching benefits of another character. It could encourage international cooperation in the peaceful application of biological research, a field which may lead to immeasurable advances in the health and well-being of peoples everywhere.

With respect to chemical weapons the objective situation is different. Unless countries can have assurance that other parties to an agreement will no longer possess chemical weapons, there will not be a basis for a sound and reliable arms control measure. It is this basic fact that determines the approach of the United States.

The common task with respect to chemical weapons now is to find solutions to the difficult problems of verification. We are determined to pursue this task. And, in any biological weapons convention, we will support an unambiguous commitment engaging all parties to undertake further negotiations regarding limitations on chemical weapons.

Important efforts are being made to move ahead in other areas

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<sup>2</sup> *Documents on Disarmament, 1968*, pp. 461-465.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11.

<sup>4</sup> *Documents on Disarmament, 1970*, pp. 680-681.

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of arms limitation. The need for restraints on nuclear arms is universally recognized. Negotiations to achieve limitations are continuing through the bilateral strategic arms talks. It is our earnest hope that these crucial talks will result in positive and substantial arms limitations.

The General Assembly has requested this Committee to continue as a matter of urgency its deliberations on a treaty banning underground nuclear weapon tests. It also called attention to the need to improve worldwide seismological capabilities in order to facilitate such a ban.<sup>5</sup> The United States will continue to support these efforts, particularly those designed to achieve a greater understanding of the verification issue.

At the same time, I hope that increasing attention will be given to the question of arms limitation with respect to conventional weapons. When such a vast proportion of all expenditures on armaments is being devoted to these weapons, all States, in all stages of development, share a common interest in exploring the possible paths toward sound agreements consistent with their security interests. The Seabed Treaty demonstrated, as have other arms control agreements negotiated during the past decade, that steadfastness in the pursuit of common goals can lead to tangible results. When we have worked toward measures in the interests of all, we have succeeded in resolving differences and overcoming obstacles that seemed great. Let us continue to do so.