

Opening statement by Selwyn Lloyd on disarmament at the WEU Council (London, 26 February 1957)

Caption: On 26 February 1957, the Council of Western European Union (WEU) meets in London under the chairmanship of Selwyn Lloyd, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. In his opening speech, Selwyn Lloyd outlines the recent developments in the United Nations' disarmament discussions and emphasises that the Anglo-French plan gives the best outline yet conceived for comprehensive disarmament, both conventional and nuclear. Views should be exchanged on the line to be taken by the WEU countries represented at the UN Disarmament Sub-Committee negotiations.

Source: The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966. WESTERN ORGANISATIONS (WU): Western European Union - WEU (WUW). WEU ministerial meetings. 01/01/1957-31/12/1957, FO 371/131147 (Former Reference Dep: File 1078 (pp 24 to end)).

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Item III : DISARMAMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Opening Statement by Secretary of State.

We now turn to the next item on the agenda - Disarmament. I would call attention to the Anglo/French paper No. 6(57) 39 which describes the present position. Perhaps I might comment briefly on the situation as we see it.

2. ~~It is encouraging~~ that the Russians ~~should have~~ agreed to support our procedural resolution in the Assembly instead of pressing their own proposals to a vote and Mr. Kuznetsov assured Commander Noble in New York last week that the Soviet Government hope that the Disarmament Sub-Committee this time will produce practical results. He claimed that this was why the Russians had suggested that Foreign Ministers should attend the Sub-Committee. It is our view, however, that the discussions have not yet reached the stage at which it would be useful for Foreign Ministers to intervene. The real purpose of the discussions in Lancaster House next month will be to reveal whether we are at the opening of a new chapter in the disarmament discussions. If so, our representatives might be able to lay the ground work for a meeting between Foreign Ministers at some later date.

3. We certainly intend to probe the exact meaning of the latest Russian proposals (November 17, 1956) which contain many obscurities. However, there are very few signs that the Russians are ready to make the kinds of concession - especially on control - which would be necessary for a satisfactory disarmament agreement. We do not intend to be drawn into detailed discussions on Russian proposals for withdrawals from Europe, for we regard this as a problem of European security

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rather than disarmament.

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4. As far as Western proposals are concerned, the United Kingdom Government still believe that the Anglo/French plan gives the best outline yet conceived for comprehensive disarmament, both conventional and nuclear. However, there has been growing interest in the United Nations for a partial plan which might be helpful in getting disarmament started more quickly. In this connexion we see hope in the new United States proposals which were introduced in the General Assembly in January. We welcome the flexibility of these proposals. This should make it easier to get down to the discussion of more practical matters - without prejudging the question of how and when the measures concerned would fit into the disarmament agreement. Generally speaking, we see more hope of making progress by getting down to the discussion of specific problems such as reductions in conventional armaments, control over the future production of nuclear materials, experiments in control techniques and so on.

5. I should now like to hear the views of my colleagues. In particular, I should be glad to know whether we are in general agreement on the line which it is proposed the Western powers should take in the Disarmament Sub-Committee.