

RUSSIAN FEDERATION, UNITED STATES CALLED ON TO STRENGTHEN ABM TREATY
UNDER DRAFT RESOLUTION APPROVED BY FIRST COMMITTEE

(...)

The States parties to the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) -- the Russian Federation and the United States -- are called upon to exert renewed efforts to preserve and strengthen the Treaty through full and strict compliance, under the terms of a draft resolution approved today in the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security).

The draft text, one of six recommended by the Committee for adoption by the General Assembly, was approved by a recorded vote of 80 in favour to 3 against (Israel, Federated States of Micronesia, United States), with 63 abstentions. (For details of the vote see Annex I).

Other texts were approved on: prevention of an arms race in outer space; risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East; the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere; the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty; and the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament.

The revised text on the ABM Treaty, submitted to the Committee on 31 October by the Russian Federation, would also have the Assembly welcome the ongoing dialogue between the Russian Federation and the United States on a new strategic framework premised on openness, mutual confidence and real opportunities for cooperation, which was of paramount importance, especially in a changing security environment.

Speaking in explanation before the vote, the United States representative said that many had asked him whether the additions to the draft had changed his attitude towards it. His answer was still "no". The issues surrounding the ABM Treaty remained a matter for the Treaty parties. Upon introducing the revised text, the Russian representative, himself, had said that the new language had done nothing to change the basic thrust of the resolution.

(...)

According to a draft resolution sponsored by Belarus, Côte d'Ivoire, China, Fiji, Haiti and the Russian Federation on the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) (document A/C.1/56/L.1 Rev.1), the General Assembly would call for continued efforts to strengthen the Treaty and preserve its integrity and validity, so that it remains a cornerstone in maintaining global strategic stability and promoting further strategic nuclear arms reductions. It would also call for renewed efforts by each of the States parties to preserve and strengthen the Treaty through full and strict compliance.

Further, the Assembly would call upon parties to the Treaty, in accordance with their Treaty obligations, to limit the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems, refrain from the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems for the defence of the territory of their country, not provide a base for such defence and not to transfer to other States or deploy outside their national territory anti-ballistic missile systems or their components limited by the Treaty.

By further terms of the text, the Assembly would urge all Member States to support efforts aimed at stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. It would support further efforts by the international community, in light of emerging developments, towards safeguarding the inviolability and integrity of the Treaty, which is in the strongest interest of the international community.

(...)

The representative of Syria, speaking before the vote on the draft on the ABM Treaty (document A/C.1/56/L.1/Rev.1), said that the Treaty had promoted global strategic balance and was an integral part of the bilateral and multilateral system of disarmament treaties and agreements. He called for full and strict compliance with its provisions, adding that the language used in the seventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 5 had not served the main thrust of the draft and diverted it from its main objective. In fact, the language used in those two paragraphs would encourage violation of the objectives of the ABM Treaty and, therefore, ran counter to the draft's purpose.

He said he had wished to enter his strong reservation regarding the provisions of those two paragraphs. But, despite that, his delegation, in the interest of global strategic balance and stability and the importance of compliance with international treaties, would vote in favour of the draft.

[The seventh preambular paragraph recalls the widespread concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Operative paragraph 5 urges all Member States to support efforts aimed at stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.]

The representative of the United States said that his position on the draft and its predecessors had been consistent. Recently, however, the principal co-sponsor had introduced a revised text. He had been asked whether that had changed his attitude towards the resolution. The answer was "no". The United States firmly believed that the issues surrounding the ABM Treaty remained a matter for the Treaty parties. Discussions had intensified in recent months between the United States and the Russian Federation on a new strategic framework, including a revised approach to the ABM Treaty.

He said that, under those circumstances, it was even more appropriate that the body not take up the subject. When the Russian Federation representative introduced the revised text he, himself, had said that the new language had done nothing to change the basic thrust of the resolution. Thus, the United States would vote no on L.1/Rev.1, and urged others to do the same.

The representative of Tajikistan said that he could not take part in the vote, under the relevant provision of the United Nations Charter, but if he had had the right to vote, he would vote in favour of the draft. The ABM Treaty was the basis for strategic stability and had continued to effectively play its role as one cornerstone of the entire international legal system in disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite the Treaty's restricted number of participants, it had involved every nation, small and large, and compliance with it should not be treated as something only in the purview of the parties to the Treaty.

The representative of Pakistan said that the international community should evolve a consensus on the relationship between offensive and defensive missile systems, so as to preserve and sustain strategic stability at both the global and regional levels. The ABM Treaty was widely regarded as a pillar of strategic stability and any change in it, if at all required, should be part of a cooperative approach among all concerned States. An abrogation of the Treaty could well result in a strategic arms race between the major Powers. He supported the draft's broad thrust and would vote in its favour.

He said he was concerned, however, that the draft had not addressed the important issue of regional stability. He urged the principal sponsors of the draft to exercise self-restraint in supplying ABM systems to his eastern neighbour, as that could be a factor in destabilizing the situation of mutual deterrence that currently existed in South Asia.

The representative of France said that the world had changed and the conditions, in terms of international balance, should be redefined. That redefinition was under way and he was pleased to note discussions going on at the highest levels on that item between the United States and Russia. The text, almost identical to that of preceding years, had not reflected the changes or offered any indication of the key to the new international system, so he had decided, this year, to abstain in the vote.

Nevertheless, he said he hoped that the international legal system was not moved aside for a non-binding one, which could give rise to new competition. Strategic international balances following the cold war should be safeguarded and deliberations should be intensified -- in which his country would take part.

The representative of India said that, like last year, he would vote in favour of the draft, as he had wished to reaffirm the importance of full implementation, in good faith, of all existing bilateral and multilateral arms control treaties, including the ABM Treaty. As he awaited the outcome of efforts under way towards commonly agreed approaches germane to the Treaty, the points stressed in the text had remained valid.

The representative of Iran said that the ABM Treaty was a cornerstone of strategic stability and all efforts should be made to preserve it. It was beyond the arrangement of two countries to decide the fate of such an essential foundation. Any change would affect the international security environment, destabilize the whole strategic balance, and stimulate a new arms race, particularly in the nuclear area. The adoption of such a resolution was totally relevant to the General Assembly's objectives, and he highly supported it.

The CHAIRMAN announced the addition of Côte d'Ivoire as a co-sponsor to the draft.

The Committee then approved the draft resolution on the ABM Treaty (document A/C.1/56/L.1/Rev.1) by a recorded vote of 80 in favour to 3 against (Israel, Federated States of Micronesia, United States), with 63 abstentions. (For details of the vote, see Annex I).

Speaking after the vote, the representative of Chile said that the Treaty was important for the purpose of reducing strategic nuclear weapons and had played an important role in strategic peace and security. He was concerned at the danger involved in the development of installations of anti-ballistic missile and military systems, which could be used in outer space, and which, among other things, would help to erode a world climate favourable to international disarmament and security. He had abstained in the vote on the ABM Treaty text, however, in the hope that the Treaty parties could eventually reach an agreement on that very important topic.

The representative of the Philippines said she wished to put her vote of abstention in perspective. She shared the view that the ABM Treaty played a vital role in maintaining global security, in general, and restraining missile proliferation, in particular, but dialogue on the issue should be kept open, primarily among the Treaty parties. She noted the recent bilateral talks and awaited with keen interest the result of the Russian President's visit to the United States to discuss that in full. She also welcomed the spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding present in those talks.

She said she continued to support the ABM Treaty and shared the international community's anticipation that an agreement on its status could be reached between the parties, mindful that those would continue to dialogue and arrive at a mutually acceptable arrangement that would redound to the global cause for peace and security.

The representative of Germany spoke on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. He said those countries had abstained in the vote, because the Committee's consideration of the ABM Treaty should have the support of both Treaty parties. Since that had not been the case, they had decided to abstain.

He said they recognized the key importance of the Treaty in contributing to strategic stability over the past decades. The Russian Federation and the United States had been engaged in intensive consultations on a new strategic framework, with a view to strengthening strategic stability and continuing reductions in offensive arsenals of both sides. They were looking forward to the forthcoming summit between those Presidents in the United States and supported that continuing dialogue, which they hoped would lead to an agreement that would serve as a basis for further reductions and strategic stability. Meanwhile, the NPT remained the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

The representative of Ukraine said he abstained in the vote. His country had consistently advocated ensuring an effective system of international security and had recognized the key role over the past decades of that Treaty in a system of international legal instruments in the area of nuclear disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Hopefully, the intensive "US-Russian dialogue" would prove effective towards producing agreements in support of strategic stability worldwide.

The representative of Sweden said he had also abstained in the vote. He was satisfied with the ongoing consultations on a new strategic framework, which had been reflected in new operative paragraph 7 of the text, and

he welcomed the indication that both sides were prepared to make deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals. A decision on such reductions should take the shape of formalized agreements that were verifiable, transparent and irreversible. The way in which the ABM Treaty was dealt with in the Assembly should have the support of both Treaty parties, and he underlined the need for consensus on that resolution.

Regrettably, however, despite recent positive developments, there was still disagreement in the Committee about how to address that issue, he said. He was concerned about unilateral actions related to the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems, but he had not shared the draft's overriding preoccupation with strategic stability. That concern had been closely linked with cold war doctrines, which, while those formed an important part of traditional arms control negotiations, should not be the sole basis for disarmament and non-proliferation efforts in the post-cold war era. That should, to a greater extent, be based on agreements, such as the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

The representative of Nepal said that the reasons he had voted in favour of the draft for the past two years were still valid. Undermining the ABM Treaty would have negative consequences on global strategic stability. He, therefore, supported the draft's objectives.

The representative of Haiti said that he wished to remind the Committee that his delegation was a sponsor of that draft resolution.

(...)

ANNEX I

Vote on ABM Treaty

The draft resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) (document A/C.1/56/L.1/Rev.1) was approved by a recorded vote of 80 in favour to 3 against, with 63 abstentions, as follows:

In favour: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Thailand, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Against: Israel, Federated States of Micronesia, United States.

Abstaining: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

Absent: Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican a, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Honduras, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Maldives, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Tajikistan, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe.