

THE GENEVA CONFERENCE- HOW IT BEGAN

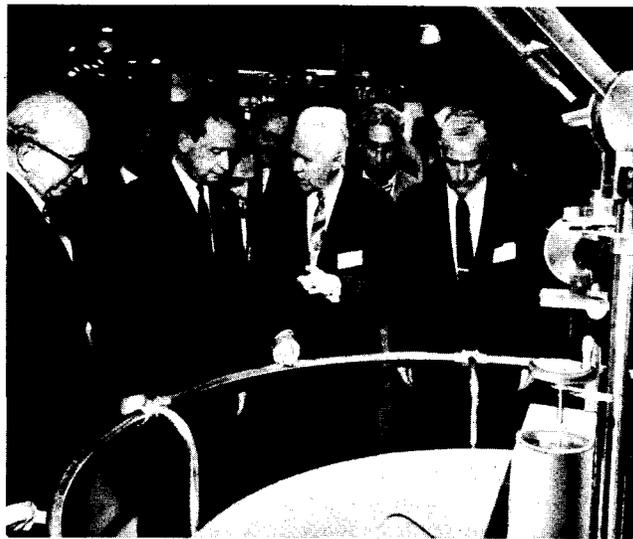
The First International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy had its origin in President Eisenhower's initiative of the early nineteen-fifties, when he proposed a concerted international effort to divert the power of the atom from warlike purposes into the service of peace. To the United Nations General Assembly in December 1953, he pledged the determination of the United States "to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma - to devote its entire heart and mind to finding the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life".

In the following April, the Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, Admiral Strauss, announced that "... it is the President's intention to arrange, through a national scientific organization, to convene an international conference of scientists at a later date this year. The conference, which it is hoped will be largely attended and will include the outstanding men in their professions from all over the world, will be devoted to the exploration of the benign and peaceful uses of atomic energy".

The UN General Assembly in plenary session, in December 1954, unanimously and enthusiastically adopted a resolution which provided for the establishment of an International Atomic Energy Agency, and for the holding of an international technical conference of governments under the auspices of the United Nations. To prepare the way, an Advisory Committee was set up, consisting of representatives of Brazil, Canada, France, India, USSR, United Kingdom and USA.

The result was the largest meeting that had been convened under the auspices of the United Nations; it was held from 8 to 25 August 1955 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, where the necessary facilities were available for such a large multilingual conference. Thirty-eight governments submitted 1067 papers and 1428 participants attended.

The conference was wide in scope, embracing all major aspects of the peaceful applications of atomic energy. It began with a survey of the world's energy requirements and the role of nuclear power, including some economic considerations. A number of sessions were devoted to reactors - research and power reactors, physics of reactor design, and reactor technology. The geology of uranium and thorium were also discussed, including methods of prospecting and estimates of available resources. Other sessions considered nuclear chemistry and the effects of irradiation, and a large part of the proceedings was devoted to various aspects of radio-



At the second Geneva Conference: Admiral L. Strauss, head of the US delegation, and Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, viewing an exhibit (UN photo).

isotope use. Several sessions also dealt with legal, administrative and health and safety aspects of large-scale use of nuclear energy.

In addition to the formal sessions, there was a series of evening lectures on a variety of scientific and practical aspects, given by such eminent persons as Professor Niels Bohr, Dr. Willard Libby, and Sir John Cockcroft. Simultaneously with the conference, a large technical exhibition was held in which many nations participated.

The Second Geneva Conference was even larger; 2135 papers were presented by 46 governments and six international organizations; it was attended by 2692 participants. Twenty governments also presented scientific displays at the accompanying exhibition.

The conference took place from 1 to 13 September 1958, and the agenda was even wider in scope than that of the first conference, as the subject of nuclear fusion was now included. After an initial series of general sessions, five parallel series of technical sessions were held, the main subjects being physics (including fusion), reactors, chemistry, isotopes and radiological protection, raw materials, metallurgy and reactor technology.

The Secretary-General of each of the conferences has written an assessment of the meeting and these follow.