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Chairman: Mr. Radha Krishna RAMPHUL
(Mauritius).

AGENDA ITEM 34 (continued)*

Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace: report of the Secretary-General (A/8809, A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 and 633)

1. The CHAIRMAN: As agreed at our last meeting, the Committee will now resume consideration of item 34. Under this item the Committee has before it a draft resolution, sponsored by 27 Powers, which is contained in document A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1. In this connexion, I wish to draw the Committee's attention to the Secretary-General's note on the financial implications of the draft resolution submitted in accordance with rule 155 of the rules of procedure and contained in document A/C.1/L.633. Here I wish to inform the Committee that I had proposed to put to the vote the draft resolution in question. However, at the request of some delegations still awaiting instructions from their Governments—I understand they will be receiving those instructions within the next two hours—I propose to put the draft resolution to the vote early this afternoon.

2. Mr. AMERASINGHE (Sri Lanka): It seems to me, from discussions I have had with several members, that there is some doubt as to whether the draft resolution can be put to the vote before the blank space in operative paragraph 3 is filled. That paragraph does not affect the substance of the draft resolution. A resolution adopted in a Main Committee has no special significance except as a recommendation to the General Assembly; it is before the General Assembly adopts the resolution that it must be complete in every detail. Therefore, the omission of the members of the *ad hoc* committee at this stage is immaterial and the filling of that gap is not essential to the taking of a vote on the draft resolution. I realize that, in order to constitute a committee of this nature the Chairman must consult all groups and that that takes time. Therefore, I would suggest that the Committee decide to proceed to a vote on this draft resolution even before the blank space in paragraph 3 regarding the membership of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Indian Ocean is filled but that it also decide that, before the resolution comes up in the General Assembly, the Chairman communicate to the President of the General Assembly the names of the States which he has nominated to serve on

this Committee and that that decision form part of the Rapporteur's report to the General Assembly.

3. The CHAIRMAN: I take it that the representative of Sri Lanka has made a formal request that draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 be put to the vote this afternoon and we are to do so, as I understand, including operative paragraph 3. The representative of Sri Lanka suggests that the names should be filled in later by the Chairman. For the Chairman to do this, he will have to be mandated by the Committee. Does the Committee agree that this draft be voted on as it stands now, with operative paragraph 3 still to be filled in, on the understanding that the Chairman will carry on negotiations and consultations and then submit the names at a later stage, that is, before voting in plenary meeting, and that this should be recorded in the Rapporteur's report? If there is no objection, we shall so proceed.

It was so decided.

4. The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other speakers who would like to speak before the explanations of vote? I give the floor to the representative of Liberia on a point of order.

5. Mr. DOSUMU-JOHNSON (Liberia): I am a little confused about the procedure we are adopting now. I am given to understand that you are about to defer voting on this resolution until some time this afternoon. I saw three meetings scheduled for today and, if we are going to take the whole of this morning explaining votes, I do not see the necessity for a night meeting. Night meetings to some of us—especially those of us who are a little old are felt more acutely than others, whereas for some others, who have the energy, it is not the same thing. I do not see why we should now defer voting on this question: I see no reason why we should not vote on this now and start on something else this afternoon. I do not like night meetings and I do not think there is any necessity for us to have one if we proceed with this question as it is before us now.

6. The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Liberia for his intervention on a point of order. May I immediately put his mind at ease and inform him that there will be no night meeting this evening. The reason why it was mentioned in the *Journal* is that we were awaiting the list of speakers on item 34. If some 20 speakers had wished to make statements, we would have had a night meeting but, as there are not many speakers, the night meeting will be cancelled.

7. I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their vote before the vote.

8. Mr. HATTINGH (South Africa): There has been little discussion in the general debate at this session on item 34. I

* Resumed from the 1904th meeting.

should like, therefore, to make the following brief comments on draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 on this item.

9. South Africa is a littoral State and by far the greater part of its coastline of some 2,000 miles is washed by the waters of the Indian Ocean and so is Durban, our biggest port. This matter is therefore of direct concern to South Africa and, like some other delegations which have expressed themselves on this issue at the twenty-sixth and the current Assembly sessions, we should like to see the Indian Ocean as an area free from big-Power rivalry. South Africa is conscious of the importance of the Indian Ocean in relation to its maritime trade and its own security and will spare no effort to promote peace in the area. My country, therefore, has sympathy in principle with any proposal that would guarantee that this Ocean should remain a peace zone but one of several questions arising is who or what agency will guarantee or maintain this peace zone? This is but one aspect of the declaration requiring further consideration.

10. The South African delegation at the twenty-sixth session pointed to the need for further study of the implications and consequences of the proposals contained in the declaration and to the fact that there was considerable uncertainty as to how they would be implemented by other States. I have noted with interest that operative paragraph 2 of the present draft resolution refers to this matter. However, we have all seen the response of Member States to the Secretary-General's letter of 10 February 1972 [A/8809] on the declaration and I think we can safely say that the uncertainty, mentioned earlier, remains.

11. The Indian Ocean is an important international trade artery and I wish to emphasize that at present an estimated 20 per cent of the world's oil supplies is transported along it from the Middle East producer countries via the Cape sea route. This includes almost the bulk of the oil destined for the countries of Western Europe. The establishment of the Indian Ocean as a peace zone is at present an objective or an ideal still to be attained. However, until the countries to which I have just referred and the major maritime and trading nations of the world are prepared to consider supporting the proposals in the declaration, it cannot be made an effective or practical instrument. This is, unfortunately, a fact which has to be faced. In view of the foregoing considerations it will, unfortunately, not be possible for my delegation to support draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 although, as I have said, we have sympathy for the principle underlying it.

12. Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand): I appreciate this opportunity to explain the position of my delegation on draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 which is now before us. I should like to recall the fact that my delegation abstained in the voting, both in the First Committee and in the General Assembly, on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace in resolution 2832 (XXVI) of 16 December 1971. My delegation will not take up the Committee's time by reiterating its reasons, but wishes only to refer the Committees' attention to the verbatim record of the 1884th meeting of the First Committee on 10 December 1971. Moreover, those reasons were summarized

before the Committee during its debate on the disarmament item at its 1884th meeting on 6 November 1972.

13. However, with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 now before us, my delegation notes that its content is mainly procedural, with principal emphasis on the worthy concept and underlying objectives and the recognized need for a study of their implications having due regard to the security interests of the littoral and hinterland States. In this connexion, my delegation wishes to convey its sincere appreciation to the delegation of Sri Lanka and the other sponsors of this draft resolution for their co-operation in accepting the amendment to the fourth paragraph of the preamble in order to make it conform to the wording in operative paragraphs 1 and 2.

14. In view of the foregoing, my delegation considers that its previously stated position on resolution 2832 (XXVI) does not preclude it from giving support to the present wording of the 27-Power draft, on the clear understanding that our support for the present draft does not prejudice the previously stated position of Thailand on the Declaration itself.

15. My delegation will, therefore, vote for draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1.

16. Mr. CHEN (China) (*translation from Chinese*): During the discussions on the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace in the First Committee last December, the Chinese delegation stated that the proposal for such a Declaration reflected the urgent desire of many Asian and African countries to defend national independence and State sovereignty and oppose super-Power aggression and expansion; the Chinese Government and people firmly supported this just proposal while pointing out that if countries closely related to the Indian Ocean, such as the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom, did not undertake corresponding obligations with regard to the zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, there would be no guarantee for the peace and security of the region.

17. In the Joint Communiqué of the Prime Ministers of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Sri Lanka issued on 5 July of this year, the Chinese Government reaffirmed its principled stand of resolutely supporting the proposal for declaring the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and maintained that the resolution on the subject adopted at the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly on 16 December 1971 [*resolution 2832 (XXVI)*], should be respected.

18. One year has passed since the adoption of the resolution at the last General Assembly session. People had expected that the resolution in question could be implemented and the situation in that region improved to some extent. However, as a result of the intensified contention for world maritime hegemony by the two super-Powers, the Indian Ocean has been far from peaceful. As a result of the Indian aggression against Pakistan last year with the support of the Soviet Union, and the continued non-implementation of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the South Asian subcontinent is not tranquil either. One super-Power takes the Indian Ocean as its important strategic base where its fleet is

plying hither and thither with no intention to quit. The other super-Power, following the steps of the former, has in recent years actively carried out military expansion and established military bases in the Indian Ocean zone in contention for spheres of influence. The strength of its naval fleet in the Indian Ocean has multiplied. It has said gleefully that the United States will sooner or later realize that it is no longer the overlord on the seas. This has pointedly revealed its own true intention to contend for hegemony with the other super-Power. It boastfully claimed that "our century-old dream has come true". What a "century-old dream"! It is clear to all what it has inherited and what it hopes to achieve.

19. In the opinion of the Chinese delegation, the intensified pursuance of gunboat policy by the two super-Powers under the signboard of the so-called "freedom of the sea" is the principal root cause of the threat to the peace and security of the Indian Ocean. Therefore, in order truly to realize the just proposition for the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, it is imperative first of all to stop the two super-Powers' military expansion and contention for hegemony in the Indian Ocean and have all the foreign military bases removed from the Indian Ocean and all the foreign armed forces withdrawn therefrom, and to prohibit all nuclear countries from deploying and using nuclear weapons in the Ocean and all foreign warships and military aircraft from using the Indian Ocean to encroach upon the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean zone belongs to the countries and people in that region. We are deeply convinced that so long as they strengthen their unity and persevere in struggling with concerted efforts, the countries and people in the zone, with the sympathy and support of the people of all countries, will certainly get rid of outside interference and steadily win new victories in their just proposition for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

20. Having made the above statement, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

21. Mr. NISHIBORI (Japan): The Japanese delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 which is intended to establish an *ad hoc* committee to study the implications of declaring the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, since we are sympathetic to the aspirations of the States in and around the Indian Ocean to explore ways and means of strengthening the maintenance of peace in their region. It was only last year that a resolution on the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace was adopted for the first time. We have consistently expressed sympathy with the common desire of the regional States to stay away from the great-Power rivalries and competition, although we have had some reservations as to paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 2832 (XXVI), in the belief that the problems of regional security must be tackled in a more realistic and gradual manner.

22. It goes without saying that the Indian Ocean is one of the most vital sea areas for Japan. We fervently desire that peace in this region be strengthened and the right to free and unimpeded use of the zone by commercial vessels be guaranteed. We observe at the same time that a number of

other countries also have developed various deep interests over long years in this area. We are therefore willing to co-operate with the littoral and hinterland States as well as with other major Powers in exploring the possibilities as to the most effective and practical approach to the promotion of peace and security in the Indian Ocean.

23. We have felt that it might be premature to establish a committee during the current session of the General Assembly in view of the fact that no consultations have yet been held among the littoral and hinterland States, the permanent members of the Security Council and other major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, and also because the Secretary-General's report [A/8809] shows the scarcity of information on the question of implementation of this Declaration. However, with a deep sympathy towards its objective we have decided to support this draft resolution, hoping that the regional States will co-operate closely among themselves in the first instance and that all the other Powers that have important concerns in the Indian Ocean will take a positive interest in the work of the proposed *ad hoc* committee.

24. In this connexion I should like to remind the Committee that, as my delegation pointed out last year, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction is at present discussing matters related to the freedom of the high seas and we have to take carefully into consideration the relationship between the general régime of the high seas and a regional arrangement concerning a part of the high seas.

25. In conclusion, we hope that the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean will make efforts to co-operate more closely with one another as well as co-ordinate their views on the problems of common regional concern and that deliberations in the *ad hoc* committee, when convened, will prove constructive and mutually enlightening.

26. Mr. MARTIN (United States): We stated last year in the General Assembly that the United States shared what we assumed to be a general desire to promote peace and tranquillity in the Indian Ocean area. There have been no changes in our interest in this regard, including our interest in the wish to avoid a competitive expansion of military strength in the entire area.

27. However, it seems to us that the new draft resolution submitted by Sri Lanka shares many flaws with last year's resolution, on which the United States abstained, along with most of the other maritime countries and a substantial number of other States.

28. Given such widespread doubts about the original proposal, it seems an unhappy circumstance that we are now called upon to vote on a draft resolution which proceeds on substantially the same basis. I shall not recapitulate in any detail our reasons for abstention last year. Suffice it to say that those reasons remain valid and apply as well to the draft resolution now before us. I should like, however, to specify briefly several factors which compel the United States delegation again to abstain in the current vote.

29. First, since we abstained on the 1971 resolution containing the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, it is quite logical that we should do so with respect to the present draft resolution, which seeks to promote movement towards implementation of the Declaration.

30. Secondly, we continue to disagree with the proposition that a special régime can be established for a particular region of the high seas.

31. Thirdly, in this connexion we believe that all nations have a stake in resolving ocean problems, which are by definition global, on a broad multilateral basis without the possible prejudice that separate regional arrangements might create.

32. In these circumstances there seems no more reason this year than there was last year to approve a draft resolution of the type now before us. Accordingly, my delegation will abstain.

33. Mr. BARTON (Canada): Before the vote on this draft resolution takes place I should like to put on record an explanation of the Canadian position.

34. Canada is sympathetic in principle to the promotion of denuclearized or demilitarized zones under regional arms-limitation agreements. For this reason it welcomes efforts to promote the application of such concepts to the area of the Indian Ocean. However, Canada does not believe itself to be in a position to support this specific draft resolution before the Committee as it would require us to join in calling upon States with direct interests in the Indian Ocean to support a declaration defined only in the terms of resolution 2832 (XXVI), on which Canada abstained. It did so because it believed that States of the area and others most directly concerned should propose specific arrangements before the General Assembly is asked to endorse any such projects.

35. Furthermore, we have reservations as to both the definition of the obligations implied in the Declaration and to the establishment by the General Assembly of an *ad hoc* committee to explore a matter on which there does not appear to have been full consultation among the countries chiefly concerned, including the principal maritime Powers with interests in the area.

36. For this reason my delegation will abstain. Our abstention, I should emphasize, is based on reservations regarding the approach to this matter. It does not indicate any lack of goodwill towards the efforts and intentions of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

37. Mr. YANGO (Philippines): When my delegation took part in the general debate on the disarmament items we

made reference to agenda item 34. On that occasion we said that the Philippines supported in principle the concept of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace but that last year we had to abstain on the question because we were convinced that a Declaration at that time would be premature without some agreement or consensus on making the concept practical and effective.

38. It appears to my delegation that the draft resolution before us [A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1] meets the objection we raised last year, in the sense that the process of arriving at some agreement or consensus on the aspects of the concept will be set in motion. The draft resolution, as we understand it, is purely procedural; therefore, in the light of what I have just stated, my delegation will be in a position to vote in favour of this draft resolution.

39. Mr. SARAIVA GUERREIRO (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation last year abstained in the vote on the resolution on the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, and on that occasion my delegation stated for the record that, although we considered the objectives of that initiative quite praiseworthy and thought they reflected the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, we took into account the fact that the idea of establishing an objective legal situation or a political arrangement for a region should have its origin and its roots in the countries of the region, and on that occasion it was evident that some countries in the region had many misgivings and were not ready to support the initiative as presented last year.

40. In the present case this situation does not exist—countries in the region seem to be ready to go along with the idea of consultations in an *ad hoc* committee. For this reason and because the decision now aims at creating the facilities for such consultations, the Brazilian delegation finds it has no difficulty in giving its favourable vote to the proposal before us.

41. Mr. JAMIESON (United Kingdom): As my delegation has made very clear in the past, the United Kingdom Government fully shares the desire of Sri Lanka and the other sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/L.631/Rev.1 that the Indian Ocean should be an area of peace and stability. However, we do not share their view about the means of attaining that end. For a number of reasons, which my delegation went into fully last year, we could not subscribe to the 1971 resolution declaring that the Indian Ocean should be designated a “zone of peace” and calling for certain measures designed to implement the Declaration. We abstained last year and we shall abstain on the present draft resolution because of its relationship to last year’s Declaration.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.