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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FORTY-FIFTH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 140 (continued)

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA (A/C.1/38/L.80; A/38/193 and Corr.1, A/38/439 and Rev.1, A/38/495)

Mr. BOUONY (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): The question of Antarctica, which has been newly inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly, is of undeniable interest and without doubt falls within the competence of our Organization.

The Heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries, during their seventh summit Conference last March, examined this question with particular attention. Taking into account the increasing interest manifested by the international community in Antarctica, they considered that the United Nations should debate this issue and possibly undertake a general study which would summarize the situation and regroup all the elements of the question.

Tunisia welcomes the initiative of Malaysia, Antigua and Barbuda and considers an examination of this issue to be useful and necessary, since it raises questions of principle to which we are particularly sensitive. Our attitude is part of the general attitude governing our activities in the United Nations.

My delegation supports any request to the Secretary-General to assemble the observations of all States Members and to submit a study to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session. Such a study would have the considerable merit of providing States Members of the Organization with the facts necessary for a serious and constructive debate on this issue at future sessions.

By means of such a debate, and on the basis of well-established principles of international law, in particular those governing terrestrial and maritime space, we should be able in due course to reach agreed solutions acceptable to all members of the Organization.

In the view of my delegation, it is only through such a reasonable, concerted approach that we will manage to protect the interests of science and the progress of humanity, ensure that Antarctica is utilized exclusively for peaceful purposes

(Mr. Bouony, Tunisia)

in the interest of all humanity, and prevent strategic considerations from making it a theatre of confrontation or a stake in international disputes, since this is a region which is part of the common heritage of mankind.

The existence of an international Treaty governing the Antarctic activities and claims of States should not in itself constitute an obstacle to the consideration of the question in our Committee. Thus far the Treaty has gathered a rather limited number of States signatories. Apart from the legal problems resulting from its provisions - and from the attitude of the States Parties in their own relations - the Treaty raises a fundamental question for all the African countries: the presence of South Africa among the signatory countries. My delegation has serious doubts that the purposes of the Treaty can be achieved with the inclusion of a State which is known for its contempt for international justice, peace and security. How can a warlike, racist and expansionist State contribute in these conditions to the promotion of peaceful and scientific activities in that important region of the world? As an African State, Tunisia considers that the credibility of the purposes and objectives of the 1959 Treaty is seriously tarnished by that State's unfortunate association with the Treaty.

In these circumstances, the initiative taken with regard to this question is of general interest for more than one reason. Its aim is to consider this text, which is still in effect, in order eventually to establish a truly universal framework for the promotion of international co-operation on an expanded basis, taking into consideration the various legitimate interests involved. In that way we shall prevent that continent - which is without a native population and still unexploited - from being the object of desires based on outmoded or highly contested notions: the notions of material and technological power, and of discovery and appropriation by the fastest-acting or the most powerful.

At this stage, however, there can be no debate on the substance of the matter. My delegation awaits with interest the publication of a complete study on this question.

Mr. SORZANO (United States of America): It is a matter of record that my delegation did not participate in the General Committee decision to include this item on the agenda of the thirty-eighth General Assembly session. This was not a reflection of any inability or unwillingness to consider a discussion of

(Mr. Sorzano, United States)

Antarctica. Quite the contrary, we are convinced - even more so after listening to some previous speakers - that the provisions and achievements of the Antarctic Treaty system deserve as broad and detailed exposure as possible. We declined, however, to participate in the General Committee decision because we do not accept the presumption inherent in the proposal for an agenda item on Antarctica that the Antarctic Treaty system is somehow a "problem" in need of revision or replacement. This remains the firm position of my Government.

Previous speakers representing Parties to the Antarctic Treaty have elaborated, with precision and eloquence, the important provisions contained in the Antarctic Treaty. They have also itemized the Treaty's many significant achievements. As they have noted - indeed, as it must be noted - the Treaty is an important arms control agreement which reserves Antarctica exclusively for peaceful purposes, prohibits all activities of a military character, prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear waste, and establishes a comprehensive verification system of on-site inspections. In recent days the headlines of the international press have highlighted how difficult it is to reach agreement on arms control matters. Yet for over two decades the Antarctic Treaty has incorporated and effectively implemented far-reaching arms control and security agreements which have made the entire Antarctic continent a region of international peace and co-operation at a time when most other continents have, regrettably, been convulsed with violence and conflict. There are no arms races, there is no nuclear escalation in the Antarctic. It is a zone of peace and a nuclear-free zone. But these benefits are not the result of a lucky situation or a fortunate coincidence. They are directly attributable to the Antarctic Treaty, and for that reason the United States is committed to preserving and strengthening that Treaty.

This spirit of close international co-operation also underlies the Treaty's scientific objectives, which guarantee freedom of scientific research in Antarctica, promote international co-operation in such research and the exchange of scientific observations and results.

These are, unfortunately, times of heightened international tensions, and the United States shares the desire of many other nations to reduce these tensions wherever and whenever possible. That is another reason for our wish to preserve the Antarctic Treaty. The Treaty has successfully removed from the Antarctic

(Mr. Sorzano, United States)

continent the international rivalries and tensions normally associated with conflicting territorial claims and boundary disputes. Given the state of many other regions of the world, this is an enviable situation which is also directly attributable to the Antarctic Treaty.

The Treaty is also an important environmental agreement which has served as the basis for a wide array of steps to protect the extremely fragile ecology of Antarctica from the effects of human activity. During the 22 years of the Treaty's existence, the Consultative Parties have adopted over 60 agreed environmental protection recommendations to prevent a possible harmful impact from human activities present or future. These include the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora, which provide for the overall protection of native animal and bird populations. These Agreed Measures provide that individual animals or birds can be taken only within very strict limits and only as indispensable food or as scientific or museum specimens. They also provide for setting aside areas of particular ecological interest as specially protected areas in which human activity is prohibited. There are 14 such areas at present.

Strict limitations have also been placed on human activities which would interfere with the unique opportunities for scientific research offered by Antarctica. A system of sites of special scientific interest has been designed, in which human activity which would diminish the scientific value of the sites concerned has been banned. In addition, there are: a code of conduct for Antarctic expeditions and stations; and recommendations to assess the potential impact of proposed activities in Antarctica, as well as to develop base-line measurements to monitor the introduction of pollutants into the area.

This same emphasis upon environmental protection has pervaded the Antarctic Treaty system's response to potential economic activities in the area. In 1972, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals was negotiated, an instrument separate from but consistent with the Antarctic Treaty itself. The seals Convention provides a system for ensuring the conservation of Antarctic seals should commercial-scale harvesting of seals ever develop. Of the six species of Antarctic seal, three are totally protected. Interest in commercial harvesting to date has not developed, but this Convention clearly demonstrates the concern of the Consultative Parties to protect the native fauna and to ensure that possible future activities are provided for.

(Mr. Sorzano, United States)

Yet another illustration of the Treaty's high sensitivity to conservation matters is the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. This Convention, which entered into force in 1982, is another agreement separate from but complementary to the Antarctic Treaty. It establishes an innovative ecosystem-wide management approach to the living resources found in the frigid waters surrounding Antarctica. The Convention provides obligations to ensure the continued well-being not only of the harvested species, but also of dependent or related populations and the ecological system as a whole. The Convention provides for the establishment of a commission, scientific committee and secretariat located in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. This machinery has made a good start, both in developing the capacity to assist the status of living resource populations found in Antarctic waters as well as establishing necessary working relationships with related institutions.

Yet despite these truly impressive achievements in arms control, in scientific co-operation, in lowering international rivalries and in protecting a fragile ecosystem, we are aware that a number of misunderstandings about the Antarctic Treaty still persist.

We have heard, for instance, that the Treaty is an exclusive club. The facts, however, indicate otherwise. The Antarctic Treaty is an open multilateral Treaty of 16 consultative and 28 acceding members. Indeed, just within the last few months Brazil and India have become full Treaty members and China has acquired acceding status. This openness has led to heterogeneous and truly representative membership representing East and West, North and South, developed and developing and - if I may say so - non-aligned and aligned as well.

We have also heard that the Treaty is static and due to expire in 1991. Again, the facts point in a different direction. The Treaty is of unlimited duration and includes built-in mechanisms to ensure its evolution and adaptation to emerging circumstances. Regular consultative meetings have led to numerous measures and additional legal agreements. The ongoing operation of this system of meetings serves both to ensure continuing implementation of the specific obligations contained in the Treaty and to ensure that the objectives of this Treaty are also applied to new activities in the Antarctic as they may emerge.

(Mr. Sorzano, United States)

That brings me to one final misunderstanding concerning the Antarctic Treaty. It is alleged that the Treaty members are conspiring to share among themselves the mineral resources of the Antarctic. This is simply not the case. The Consultative Parties are striving to devise a mechanism for dealing with future mineral-resource activities in Antarctica. Again, ensuring the integrity of the Antarctic environment is a primary concern. This mechanism would provide a collective means of judging the acceptability of possible future Antarctic mineral-resource activities and for governing any such activities determined to be acceptable. In the view of the United States - and I believe that this is a view shared among other Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty - no mineral-resource activity would be permitted unless there were sufficient information to judge its impact and unless that information demonstrated that the activity would take place in a manner consistent with the protection of the Antarctic environment.

It is not known whether mineral-resources activities will ever become feasible in Antarctica. No commercially viable deposits have been discovered and the costs of any such activities would be enormous, perhaps even prohibitive. Nevertheless, the Consultative Parties are engaged in developing a system to make sure that if mineral-resources activities are ever proposed, decisions will be made about them in a manner consistent with the environmental and other objectives of the Antarctic Treaty. This system will be open to all States with an interest and would further complement the existing elements of the Antarctic Treaty system.

I have dwelt upon the nature and accomplishments of the Antarctic Treaty system in some detail because they stand as a remarkable achievement in multilateral international co-operation and as a monument to the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter. The Treaty has many virtues: it is open to all countries; it is of unlimited duration; it is based on the United Nations Charter and promotes its purposes; it establishes Antarctica as a zone of peace; it excludes Antarctica from the arms race; it has demilitarized a whole continent; it forbids nuclear weapons and their use in the continent; it has set aside conflicting territorial claims; it encourages scientific co-operation; it protects the fragile natural environment of the Antarctic; and, finally, it guarantees the protection, management and careful monitoring of Antarctic living resources.

(Mr. Sorzano, United States)

The Antarctic Treaty system has evolved and adapted itself to meet new circumstances and to welcome new participants. This, combined with its outstanding record of international co-operation, makes it for the present and for the future one of the best and most concrete expressions of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. It is for this reason that the United States will firmly resist any effort to weaken, undermine or replace that system.

Mr. STARCEVIC (Yugoslavia): Our Committee is at present engaged in consideration of a question that my delegation regards as very important indeed. As was pointed out by the Heads of State or Government of non-aligned countries in New Delhi, the continent of Antarctica has considerable environmental, climatic, scientific and potential economic significance to the world. This statement, we believe, can hardly be disputed by any country, regardless of whether it belongs to the group of non-aligned countries or not.

Any question of significance to the world in general should as a rule be considered by this world Organization. The fact that a question as important as Antarctica has never before been considered by the United Nations is remarkable in itself, taking into account that the past and present activities of the United Nations have included consideration of such matters as the deep sea-bed and outer space, both questions of similar character and implications to those of Antarctica.

The explanation could probably be found in the fact that States' activities pertaining to Antarctica were not until now perceived as entailing potential problems such as those envisaged in connection with the unregulated usage of oceans and cosmic space. It partly reflected a lack of immediate interest in that barren land, terra incognita, on the part of the majority of Member States. This left as interested parties only the States of geographic proximity to it or other States whose level of development permitted first, the sending of discovery expeditions and later, the conduct of scientific investigation.

In addition, before world awareness of questions relating to Antarctica reached a level which permitted the elaboration of global solutions, as in the cases of the sea-bed and outer space, the régime for Antarctica was already established by the interested parties themselves.

(Mr. Starcevic, Yugoslavia)

Irrespective of the fact that the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 is a product of a rather limited group of States, its extraordinary significance cannot be denied. In a way it is a document that was ahead of the time in which it was adopted. The provision of article I that Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only and that any measures of a military nature there shall be prohibited is as exceptionally important now as it was in 1959. The international community owes gratitude to the contracting parties for their foresight, which has preserved until this day the peaceful character of the Territory where military measures, especially of a nuclear nature, could have catastrophic consequences.

Of great importance also is the fact that the Treaty provides a framework for international scientific co-operation. Furthermore, the prohibition of the disposal of radioactive waste material in Antarctica shows a justifiable concern for the preservation of its ecology.

Some of the aspects not covered by the Treaty were regulated later by the contracting parties through the adoption of separate conventions, such as the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Seals and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

All of these important achievements of the Antarctic Treaty system must be preserved. No action on the part of the international community should have as a consequence the weakening of the existing agreements which have so far withstood the test of time. This shows that it is possible to have legal instruments which basically protect wider interests, although they are elaborated in a limited circle of nations.

Possible it is, but the question arises: is it indispensable? The answer to that question has to be in the negative. The determination of global interests and of the ways to safeguard them can best be made by the entire community of nations, represented in this Organization. The development of the system by which the international community regulates the utilization and protection of those parts of this planet, as well as outer space, over which no country has exclusive jurisdiction, has gone far beyond the system used in respect of Antarctica.

It is a fortuitous situation that the results achieved through the Treaty system are generally deemed acceptable even by countries critical of the mechanism

(Mr. Starcevic, Yugoslavia)

employed. However, the Antarctic Treaty does not deal with the question of mineral resources; some point out that if an attempt had been made to regulate that question too in 1959 there would probably not have been a Treaty adopted at all. That speaks of both the importance of the question and the difficulty of reaching an agreement on it, at least at that time. The Treaty wisely sidesteps the question of territorial sovereignty, stating that no acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica. Therefore, no claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica can be deemed to have been accepted and in a legal sense Antarctica is still res communis omnium as are oceans beyond national jurisdiction or outer space. As a result, there are no property rights as such accepted by the international community, and no exploitation of resources on behalf of any individual State can be permitted.

In accordance with the practice that has evolved in the United Nations within the last two decades and the important precedents established over that time - the Moon Treaty, the outer space Treaty, the Law of the Sea Convention - the utilization of the resources of Antarctica should be carried out for the benefit of all mankind. Only a régime elaborated to serve that purpose could be deemed acceptable by the wider international community at the present stage of its development.

Yet the Consultative Parties to the Treaty are at present actively involved in negotiations with the aim of elaborating a new agreement to govern the exploration and exploitation of Antarctic mineral resources with a clear sense of urgency.

The Treaty parties quite rightly agreed in 1977 that, pending the timely adoption of an agreed régime concerning Antarctic mineral resource activities, no activity should be conducted to explore or exploit such resources. In our view, however, "an agreed régime" should be a régime elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations and not one agreed to among the Treaty States only.

The matter is further complicated by the potential severe environmental dangers of exploitation of minerals in an extremely delicate environment such as Antarctica. The warnings of conservationists as to what havoc could be wrought upon the environment there by a single oil spill, for example, and what would be the long-term effects of the pollution of Antarctica, sound convincing indeed. It

(Mr. Starcevic, Yugoslavia)

may very well be that it would be in the best interests of the international community not to risk such environmental disasters and to refrain entirely from the exploitation of minerals there. But this has to be a conscious decision on the part of the world community, adopted after a careful consideration of all arguments that might be presented in this case and the comparison of their relative importance for the greatest benefit of mankind as a whole.

If such a régime for exploitation of mineral resources has nevertheless to be satisfied, it should be a régime that would safeguard the legitimate interests of the whole of humanity. My delegation believes that a clear case is made for the desirability of the role of the United Nations in this matter and the need for its involvement at this stage.

For those reasons my delegation supports the initiative of the delegations of Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda that the United Nations should prepare a comprehensive, factual and objective study on all aspects of Antarctica. It is based entirely on the decision adopted by the Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi, with a then proclaimed goal of widening international co-operation in the area, to which my delegation fully subscribes. It is our view that the result of the study should be an active involvement of the United Nations in the question of the utilization of the natural resources of Antarctica, which is an urgent and important task.

We are glad that the proposed resolution is to be adopted by consensus, and we see it as a sign of the future fruitful co-operation in this matter between Treaty States and other States alike. This co-operation would significantly contribute to the resolution of the question of the natural resources of Antarctica in the best interests of all members of the international community.

Mr. LOUET (France) (interpretation from French): Ever since Dumont d'Urville discovered Adelie Land in 1840, France has been one of those countries most attached to Antarctica.

Because my country wishes that continent, over some of which it exercises its sovereignty, to remain a zone of peace. Eager to promote international scientific co-operation, of which the International Geophysical Year has proved the effectiveness, my country participated in the elaboration of the Washington Treaty, established in 1959, and has been a party since its origin.

(Mr. Louet, France)

The Washington Treaty gives effect to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and contributes to promoting them.

Under article I, only peaceful activities are authorized in the Antarctic. All military measures, such as the establishment of bases, the construction of fortifications and manoeuvres, as well as weapons tests of any kind, are forbidden. The entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty has made it possible to prevent a continent of primary strategic importance becoming a source of international disagreement.

Moreover, the Washington Treaty establishes the principle of freedom of scientific research and provides for co-operative ways and means to carry out that research. The research done within this framework is an essential contribution to a better knowledge of our planet. Its results are made freely available, in accordance with article III of the Treaty.

The Treaty provides for machinery by which it is possible, if necessary, to take into account new problems for which no special provision was made originally. As a result, a number of measures have been taken to protect the Antarctic environment: since 1964, agreed measures to protect the fauna and flora, and, in 1972, a Convention to protect the Antarctic seals. However, the main element is undoubtedly the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, signed in 1980, which came into force in 1982.

Scientific research in Antarctica has been all the more fruitful and the measures taken for the protection of the environment have been all the more effective because the parties to the Treaty have, in accordance with article III, actively co-operated with the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other interested international organizations. The Commission set up by the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources has opened up to this co-operation a vast new field of activities, and the twelfth consultative meeting held last September in Canberra decided to strengthen the links between the Antarctic Treaty system and those organizations.

It should be pointed out that the Antarctic Treaty, concluded without any time-limit, is open to accession to all the Member States of the United Nations, and any Member State wishing to do so can participate actively as long as it shows its interest in the Antarctic by carrying out substantial scientific research

(Mr. Louet, France)

activities there. It is worth noting that since the Treaty's entry into force 16 States have acceded to it, and that four of them - Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany, India and Brazil - now participate in the consultative meetings. France is particularly pleased that two major countries, India and Brazil, were represented at the twelfth consultative meeting last September.

By inviting the States signatories which are not Consultative Parties to participate in the twelfth meeting as observers, and by deciding now to invite them under the same conditions to the thirteenth meeting to be held in 1985, the Consultative Parties have again given concrete proof of their determination to associate those other countries ever more closely with their work. Moreover, they are prepared to co-operate with those countries which wish to conduct research programmes in the Antarctic, as is shown by the examples of Brazil and India.

Motivated by the open-mindedness which is characteristic of the Treaty, and aware of the growing interest in it, the Canberra meeting also adopted a number of measures aimed at better informing the international community about the Antarctic system. In particular, it decided that a manual on the Antarctic Treaty, containing all the recommendations adopted on the consultative meetings, should be regularly brought up to date, and that the final report of the regular consultative meetings should henceforth be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Bearing in mind the achievements that I have just mentioned, my delegation considers that the Antarctic Treaty is the most appropriate instrument to guarantee and promote on that continent respect for the principles shared by all the Members of the United Nations. That is why we could not associate ourselves with any initiative that might lead to questioning the international régime established by the Treaty. In this respect, as regards the draft resolution before us, France does not consider that the reference to the Declaration made at the conclusion of the summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries held in New Delhi last March can commit us in any way.

Moreover, my delegation regrets that the sponsors of the draft resolution did not feel able to emphasize the benefits of the Antarctic Treaty in the various areas that I have just mentioned. However, we note that the draft resolution recognizes the importance of the Antarctic Treaty system and the need to take it

(Mr. Louet, France)

fully into account in the study requested of the Secretary-General, and in these circumstances my delegation can accept the adoption of the draft resolution without a vote.

The French delegation does not doubt that the measures taken by the Consultative Parties to provide the international community with better information, as well as the factual study that the Secretary-General will undertake in collaboration with all the States and international organizations directly concerned, will lead to a better understanding of the Antarctic Treaty. We hope that thanks to these initiatives a growing number of Member States will accede to the Treaty, and that it will thus continue to make, in the interests of all mankind, an essential contribution to a better knowledge of the planet and to world peace.

Mr. WOOLCOTT (Australia): Antarctica involves the national and security interests of the Australian Government and people.

I have already spoken - on Monday - on behalf of the 16 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties about the value and importance of the Antarctic Treaty and its system. I also spoke about Antarctica in the General Assembly on 23 September, when the item was initially inscribed on the agenda. In the context of the fourth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution, I would, however, like the Secretariat to note the Australian statement in the General Assembly and ask that - in the words of the draft resolution - it be taken into account in the preparation of the proposed study.

I do not propose, therefore, to take the time of the Committee today by reiterating at length the attitude of the Australian Government on the value and importance of the Antarctic Treaty. Rather, I prefer to comment on some of the misleading statements made about the Treaty by several of the representatives who have already spoken in this debate.

I should say at the outset that Australia was fully involved in the protracted negotiation of the draft resolution, and my delegation endorses the hope expressed by both you, Mr. Chairman, and the Permanent Representative of Malaysia that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Australia did not participate in the decision to inscribe the item on Antarctica on the agenda of the General Assembly. Let me explain why.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

We are not opposed to discussion of Antarctica in the United Nations. The Antarctic Treaty seeks to promote the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and it is reasonable that it be discussed here. But the memorandum accompanying the original request by Antigua and Barbuda and Malaysia for inscription of the item - and more, what was said by these delegations in the debate earlier this week - carry the clear implication that the longer-term objective of the initiative is to replace the Antarctic Treaty.

That we cannot accept. Australia was an original signatory of the Treaty and we continue to give it our unqualified support today. More than that, Australia would regard any moves which might undermine the Treaty as a major setback to the cause of international co-operation.

As I have said, my main wish today is to take up some of the points that have emerged in the debate so far.

An initial observation I would have to make is to express disappointment that a number of those who have spoken in the debate seem to have sought to belittle the significant achievements of the Treaty by omission and, in one or two areas, misrepresentation. There is, for example, the claim that exploration and settlement of the Antarctic has been impelled by a "colonialist impulse". We do not accept that view, at least as far as Australia is concerned. Australia is a southern hemisphere country. It has a relationship with the Antarctic which, in geographical terms, is not all that different from the relationship that a number of northern hemisphere countries have to the Arctic, or, for that matter, that some countries have with their desert hinterlands; or, perhaps, the relationship one part of a sovereign State might have with another part when the two parts are separated by sea.

But beyond that, we have problems with the terminology. "Colonialism" and "colonialist impulses" evoke certain emotional connotations which my delegation believes are simply not relevant to what has been taking place in the Antarctic. What has been taking place there is essentially scientific investigation and scientific endeavour, the results of which have been made freely available to mankind as a whole. The scientific work that has been undertaken in Antarctica, often at very great financial cost, has undoubtedly added greatly to the sum total of global knowledge. In fact the Antarctic continent's only export in the foreseeable future will be knowledge.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

Next, let me address the arguments about "common heritage". There were a number of references to common heritage in statements made on Monday and Tuesday. There seems to be a desire, at least on the part of some delegations, to have Antarctic resources, whatever these are or may be, declared the common heritage of mankind, like those of outer space and the deep sea-bed, beyond national jurisdiction. Australia is, of course, in favour of this principle in the Law-of-the-Sea context, but we do not consider it relevant or appropriate in Antarctica. First, for Australia and six other countries that maintain national territorial claims and, let me add, national settlements, Antarctica is not beyond national jurisdiction. Antarctica has instead been the subject of exploration, settlement and claims to sovereignty by a number of countries over many years. So there can be no international consensus that a common-heritage approach to Antarctica is acceptable.

Secondly, the common-heritage concept embodies a developmental purpose, which is not now, and we hope will never be, dominant in Antarctica, where the environment is, as some of the sponsors of this draft resolution have stressed, extremely vulnerable to the activity of man and must be safeguarded by those pursuing activity there in the interest of all mankind.

The representatives of Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda have referred to the krill in their statements and the need to prevent uncontrolled harvesting of this resource. It is relevant, I think, to note that under the auspices of the Antarctic Treaty it has been possible to negotiate a highly satisfactory convention on marine living resources, the main thrust and purpose of which is to regulate and control the exploitation of fishing and other marine resources. The purpose of this convention is precisely to ensure that there be no upset to important global food-chain systems. This convention is open to all to join and we would urge that as many States as possible should do so.

We have also heard the suggestion in this Committee that the Antarctic is a veritable cornucopia, overflowing with all kinds of minerals. This is a far-fetched assessment. Traces of minerals have been found, but there is nothing in the current evidence that would suggest the possibility of mineral exploitation for very many years to come and probably not before well into the next century.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

There is no lure of economically valuable resources, to quote one speaker, and no multinational company, certainly not an Australian one, awaiting the prospect of exploiting Antarctic resources. I would also ask delegations to ponder on the cost of exploitation, even if resources were to be found there. Antarctica is not the deep sea-bed. It is a continent permanently encased in ice up to a depth of two or three miles in many places. It is certainly no place for your neighbourhood drilling team. In fact, the costs of doing anything there on the basis of present technology are simply prohibitive. Also, there is the assumption that exploitation would be practical or desirable. I would repeat that the approach to the continent so far has focused not on developmental purposes, but on the preservation of an extremely fragile and finely tuned environment not so far subjected to the hazards of exploitation for commercial gain.

The Australian delegation was naturally pleased to hear in many of the statements delivered so far that most delegations recognize the important part played by the Antarctic Treaty in the disarmament area. In fact, the Antarctic Treaty constitutes a major disarmament agreement. As many speakers have noted, it explicitly prohibits military activities; it forbids nuclear explosions in Antarctica; and it prohibits the dumping of nuclear waste. There is a comprehensive on-site inspection, with observers being guaranteed freedom of access at any time. The Antarctic continent is in fact, as my New Zealand colleague said yesterday, the only effective, functioning nuclear-free zone in the world today. It is perhaps appropriate, given the importance of the Treaty to disarmament, that this matter is being debated in the First Committee of the Assembly.

In areas other than disarmament, the sponsors of this item have, I think, been less generous about the Antarctic Treaty. We have heard again claims that the Treaty is exclusive and that it accords a privileged status to only some of its members. With this we, frankly, have to disagree. The Treaty is not exclusive. Any State may join, and 28 countries with diverse economic and political interests have already done so. In 1983, two new members, China and India, joined the Treaty, and Finland only yesterday signified its intention to do so. Australia warmly welcomes the recent accession of China and India and also the interest in accession shown by Finland.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

What about the status of Consultative Parties? Claims have been made here which reveal a misunderstanding of the operation of the Treaty. Any State carrying out substantial scientific activities may become a Consultative Party to the Treaty. In 1983 Brazil and India took this step. There are now 16 Treaty members that are also Consultative Parties.

It is not unnatural that those heavily involved in scientific research should wish to consult together and then to make available to the international community the fruits of their consultations.

Claims that the deliberations of the Consultative Parties are conducted in secret and that Consultative Parties meet as a cabal to take secret decisions, sometimes contrary to the interests of the acceding parties and the international community are quite simply untrue. Acceding parties, for their own good reasons, have presumably wished to limit their commitment to the Antarctic, short of that implied by consultative status. In fact that is the real point. It is not so much that the Consultative Parties enjoy benefits from their status as that they share obligations and responsibilities, often at very considerable cost. Those benefits which flow are essentially benefits of a scientific and technical nature and these benefits have been made available to all States and to the international community as a whole, without discrimination.

It is relevant that at the last meeting of the Consultative Parties in Canberra as recently as in September of this year, all members of the Antarctic Treaty, acceding as well as Consultative, participated in the deliberations. The results of the discussions at that meeting are before the Committee today, in the Final Report of the Twelfth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. So where is this alleged secrecy? A copy of the report has also been sent to the Secretary-General. I regret that we were unable to provide the Secretary-General with the report in the other working languages of the Treaty in time to have him distribute it as an official document of the Assembly. I hope that it will be possible to do this very shortly and I commend the report to delegations.

I have also today forwarded to the Secretary-General a copy of a document entitled "Antarctic Treaty Exchange Information: Particulars for Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions 1983-84". This document is provided to

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

Treaty parties in accordance with the provisions on the exchange of information under article VII of the Antarctic Treaty, but I am also arranging for transmission to the Secretary-General and to delegations of copies of the Antarctic Treaty Handbook of Measures in Furtherance of the Principles and Objectives of the Antarctic Treaty. This handbook sets out the measures recommended at the 11 consultative meetings held between 1961 and 1981. These measures deal with such diverse subjects as man's impact on the environment, tourism, historic sights and monuments, disposal of nuclear waste and so on. I hope that they will provide valuable information to the Secretary-General in the drafting of his report and to interested delegations.

There was a suggestion in what was said on Monday by the representative of Malaysia that the next few years would see a revival of rival territorial claims in the Antarctic leading, perhaps, even to conflict and turmoil.

Frankly, it is difficult to follow the logic of this suggestion. Surely a significant achievement of the Treaty has been to remove the potential for disputes relating to the exercise of sovereignty, through a formula which does not prejudice the position of any party. No new claim or enlargement of an existing claim may be asserted while the Treaty is in force. The Treaty has thus clearly fulfilled one of its major purposes of enabling countries that are active in the area to set aside the differences that they have outside Antarctica and to co-operate peacefully in Antarctic research.

This is something which we should have thought all Member States of the United Nations would have welcomed and applauded.

Australia, when it determines its approach to a regional question, invariably gives weight to the views of the regional countries closest to, and most directly concerned with, the particular issue under consideration. We do this, for example, on African questions, on Latin American questions and on questions relating to South-East Asia. A glance at the map will show that Antarctica lies to Australia's immediate south. This is the basis of our own clear and legitimate concern that the present satisfactory situation there should not be disturbed.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

It would be our hope and expectation that other countries, further removed from Antarctica than Australia, would weigh these Australian concerns carefully in formulating their own positions on the subject before the Committee as we do in formulating our positions on their concerns. This approach, we hope, will be adopted, particularly by our neighbours to our immediate north.

The memorandum which accompanied the request of Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda for inscription of the item reads in part:

"Despite the progress made in these collaborative scientific efforts" - that is, under the Treaty - "there is a need to examine the possibility for a more positive and wider international concert through a truly universal framework of international co-operation through the United Nations, to ensure that activities carried out in Antarctica are for the benefit and in the interest of mankind as a whole." (A/38/193, annex, para. 4)

We have no problem at all with the last phrase of this statement, namely, the need to ensure that activities carried out in Antarctica are for the benefit and in the interest of mankind as a whole, but this must be achieved by building on the Antarctic Treaty and the system of measures, instruments and actions in furtherance of it and not by beginning from scratch, or trying to begin from scratch, with some new instrument.

In current international circumstances it would simply, in the view of my delegation, not be realistic to expect that a new instrument could have the same provisions for total demilitarization of the region, verified by on-site inspection, for the setting aside of potential disputes over territorial sovereignty and for harmonious international co-operation in scientific research and environmental protection. In short, any new instrument would not as effectively protect important international interests in the Antarctic as does the current Treaty; and any attempt to revise this situation would, in our view, risk reopening the very contention and competition which the Treaty was created to do away with.

Against this background I hope that delegations will understand our concern that the question of Antarctica should be handled at the United Nations with care and sensitivity. It is our hope that the First Committee and the General Assembly will recognize the unique merits of the Treaty in demilitarizing the continent and removing it from contention. In the longer term, the best way of broadening the

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

management of Antarctica and taking account of the interests of all would be to encourage more accessions to the Treaty and to work out ways of improving the working of the Treaty without, however, affecting the Treaty itself which we believe is irreplaceable.

In conclusion, Australia is not opposed to a study on Antarctica, as called for in the draft resolution before the Committee, provided that such a study would be factual and objective and provided that it would draw fully, as requested in the draft resolution, on the experience of those countries, like Australia, which have developed over the years, and at great financial cost, considerable experience and expertise in the Antarctic continent.

Miss DEVER (Belgium) (interpretation from French): The day before yesterday the representative of Australia spoke on behalf of the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. Therefore, I shall confine myself to just a few aspects of the subject of special interest to us.

Belgium has long been interested in Antarctica. My country started the idea of the International Geophysical Year of 1957-1958, a prelude to the Antarctic Treaty, of which Belgium was one of the original signatories. Antarctica is not the high seas. It is neither res communis, nor res nullius. On the contrary, Antarctica is a territory which is today the subject of a juridical régime which was established by the Antarctic Treaty, in keeping with general international law and the Charter of the United Nations. There is then no gap or legal vacuum which needs to be filled with new law, or which would justify new jurisdiction.

This is a multilateral Treaty negotiated by all States wishing to participate in its preparation and is remarkable by virtue of its contents and its variety of signatories. Indeed, the Antarctic Treaty was the first arms control agreement after the Second World War. It internationalized and demilitarized the continent of Antarctica, while at the same time organizing a system of co-operation which is unique and exemplary in many respects.

Furthermore, the Antarctic Treaty has been functioning effectively for the past 22 years. No country questions the peaceful nature of Antarctica, as defined in 1959. No State has tried to violate that status. Scientific research, in which my country has participated, has not slowed down and the results of these efforts are available to all those who wish to use them.

(Miss Dever, Belgium)

Another feature of the Antarctic Treaty was the agreement of States to set aside their territorial claims for an unlimited time. During the present crisis in international relations, we are bound to point to the exemplary nature of this provision and to the wisdom of those who suspended their claims in deference to a stable solution which has undeniably benefited the community of nations.

The Antarctic Treaty is not hermetic: it is open to all Member States of the United Nations. By gathering many States other than the original signatories, it has demonstrated its vitality and adaptability. The present list of States parties indicates that all States - from North and South, East and West, developed and developing alike - feel that they can take part in the system established by the Treaty. Some of them have shown elsewhere great sensitivity to any form of discrimination in international relations. Their accession to the Antarctic Treaty confirms, if need be, that the agreement is not discriminatory. I might also mention that this year, Brazil and India, which have shown specific interest in Antarctica, have been accepted as Consultative Parties.

The Antarctic Treaty, as has been generally acknowledged, has proved its effectiveness. This international agreement is directed against no one. Indeed, it represents a guarantee of peace and progress and is destined to become universal.

Article XII, subparagraph 2 (a) provides for machinery to review the Treaty 30 years after its entry into force, and that time is approaching. Hence the Treaty is not static and can be adjusted to changing circumstances. It is within this framework that States should seek solution of their problems, and it is of inestimable importance that they do so.

Eighty-six years ago, Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery conducted the first Belgian expedition to Antarctica. Many Belgians have since followed in his footsteps. They have taken part in purely national missions, or more recently in mixed missions, or have participated in scientific expeditions under the flag of other Member countries.

Our contributions have been made in many areas where Antarctica offers many scientific opportunities. I am referring to glaciology, geology, climatology, topography, oceanography, cartography, and even biology. Belgium continues to have great interest in the sixth continent. We will continue to play our role there for

(Miss Dever, Belgium)

the benefit of everyone. It is in this spirit that my country in 1985 will be hosting the thirteenth consultative conference of the Antarctic Treaty.

The international community has a unique and remarkable instrument in this Treaty. We are as concerned, however, by any action that might weaken it as we are desirous of participating in any efforts that will strengthen it. We hope that the study provided for in the resolution before us will be carried out in this spirit.

Mr. FERM (Sweden): The question of Antarctica now inscribed on the agenda of the United Nations is an agenda item of a very special character which should be approached with caution and deliberation. The decisions we take here will shape the role of the United Nations with regard to Antarctic problems for many years to come.

In recent years Antarctica has increasingly attracted the attention of the international community. There are many reasons for this. Antarctica is the only major undeveloped area remaining in the world. It has considerable scientific, environmental, climatic and geophysical significance far beyond the limits of the Antarctic region. It constitutes the largest demilitarized and denuclearized zone in the world.

The economic development of Antarctica still belongs to the future. Experience so far, it seems to us, points to significant technological and logistic difficulties, which have to be surmounted before any meaningful consideration can be given to exploiting the possible resources of the Antarctic area. Furthermore, the starting point of any exploitation must give regard to the Antarctic environment, which is of concern to all mankind. It is clear that any use of Antarctic resources has to be based on a better knowledge of the unpredictable and extremely complex consequences that disturbances in the Antarctic environment may have on the global climate and oceanic conditions in general. Such improved knowledge no doubt can best be obtained through international co-operation.

International co-operation has been, as a matter of fact, an important factor in Antarctic exploration and research for many years. The International Polar Years and the International Geophysical Year 1957-58 are generally recognized as very significant steps in this context. Another important event was the conclusion in 1959, in the wake of the International Geophysical Year, of the Antarctic Treaty, in which the countries most heavily engaged in Antarctic research agreed that in the interest of all mankind Antarctica should forever be used for peaceful purposes only and should not become the scene and object of international discord.

(Mr. Ferm, Sweden)

The Antarctic Treaty represents an important achievement in international affairs. It brought about the effective demilitarization and denuclearization of the whole continent. This means that Antarctica is one of the few large areas that, by treaty, are completely free of nuclear weapons. It is also the only continent on earth where military activities and installations are forbidden. These provisions are of great importance for peace and stability in the region as well as in a more global context. Furthermore, the Treaty has provided a mechanism for setting aside asserted territorial claims on the continent. This too is of importance for stability in the area. The Treaty established an international framework for scientific research and co-operation. It is in our common interest to preserve these gains.

The Antarctic Treaty system has been working well and efficiently during the years it has been in force, and it embodies important principles for promoting peace and international co-operation in the area. It is open for accession by any Member State of the United Nations. Sweden, for its part, is prepared to participate in international co-operation in Antarctica under the terms of the Treaty. The scientific community in Sweden has on many occasions manifested its interest in polar research. I should like to announce that with these considerations in mind the Swedish Government intends shortly to submit a proposal to the Swedish Parliament that Sweden should accede to the Antarctic Treaty and to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources of 1980.

The request to include the question of Antarctica on the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly refers to the need to examine the possibility of wider international co-operation to ensure that activities in Antarctica are for the benefit and in the interest of mankind as a whole. As I pointed out at the beginning of my statement, the world community has many reasons to take an interest in Antarctic problems. In the Swedish view, the achievements obtained through the international co-operation established within the framework of the Antarctic Treaty constitute a basic element in any serious study of Antarctica. It is of paramount importance that the international co-operation already achieved in the area is not jeopardized by bringing up old rivalries anew.

With this in mind, my delegation finds the draft resolution before the Committee to be encouraging. A comprehensive factual study of all aspects of the

(Mr. Ferm, Sweden)

Antarctic issues would undoubtedly provide us with the basic knowledge we need in order to assess the problems in a constructive manner. Sweden would be willing to contribute to such a study and is interested in doing so.

Mr. ARIAS STELLA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): The international community's growing awareness of the present and future importance of the continent of Antarctica justifies the inclusion of the question of Antarctica as an additional item on the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. That is in keeping with the desires of Member States and with the decision adopted at the seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held in March 1982 at New Delhi.

Peru acknowledges the merits of the Antarctic Treaty, which entered into force in 1961. The commitment to use those territories for peaceful purposes only; freedom of scientific research; preservation of the environment; and the agreement that this continent should never be the scene or the object of international discord: these are without question purposes which are in full accord with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Since 1981 my country has been a party to the Treaty and since that time has spared no effort to take an ever more active part in its work.

In this connection we cannot fail to pay a tribute to co-operation with us on the part of friendly countries, members of the Treaty, which have provided and continue to provide facilities for participation in the scientific expeditions they have carried out in those territories.

Peru's special interest in the Antarctic region derives basically from the fact that our coastline faces the Antarctic continent, from that continent's influence upon our climate, ecology and marine biology, and from the historic ties that have linked us with it since the time of the first exploratory expeditions to brave the continent and its waters. The coastal waters of Peru are among the richest in the world in terms of fish; they are fed by the Peruvian or Humboldt Current, which originates in Antarctica.

Peru is aware of the need to protect that continent, which is a fundamental element in the regulation of the ecosystem of the southern hemisphere and of the world in general. We are also aware of the harm that could be done by indiscriminate exploitation of its resources.

(Mr. Arias Stella, Peru)

Therefore, my delegation deems appropriate the initiative which would entrust the Secretary-General with carrying out a broad, objective study on all aspects of Antarctica, bearing in mind the elements contained in the Treaty and bearing in mind also the opinions of all States Members of the United Nations.

Mr. van WELL (Federal Republic of Germany): The Federal Republic of Germany is very interested in the question before the Committee, and it has therefore studied carefully the explanatory memorandum by Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda annexed to document A/38/193 in which they request inclusion of the item on Antarctica in the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. It has also closely followed the statements made on the question in this Committee. Allow me to add to the statement made by the Australian Ambassador on behalf of the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty - to which my delegation fully subscribes - by making a few remarks from our national point of view.

The main reasons for our active interest in Antarctica, which led to our accession to the Antarctic Treaty as recently as 1979 and to our becoming a Consultative Party in 1981, are obvious. German scientific interest in the sixth continent reaches far back into the last century. Demilitarization and environmental protection are among the most important aims of the policy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Therefore, my Government strongly emphasizes its interest in the conservation and integrity of the existing Antarctic Treaty system, a system which was created in 1959 and which has set aside the controversies about sovereignty claims. It allows neither any new claims nor the enlargement of existing claims while the Treaty is in force. This is essential for my country, which has never made territorial claims in Antarctica and has not recognized those of others. The neutralization of the claims problem was one of the major reasons why Antarctica, unlike any other part of the world, has been a unique experiment in international co-operation. While other continents have been shattered by crises, conflicts and wars, Antarctica has been neither the scene nor the object of an international conflict since the Treaty was signed.

Another outstanding feature of the Treaty is that it is also an important instrument of disarmament. Under its régime, all military activities are explicitly prohibited. So are nuclear explosions or the disposal of radioactive waste. The importance of this aspect cannot be stressed enough, particularly in

(Mr. van Well, Federal Republic
of Germany)

this Committee. Not only has the demilitarization of Antarctica had a strong effect globally: it has - beyond the achievements of the Tlatelolco system - led to the creation of the only nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world that is presently generally recognized. As such, it is a functioning disarmament effort in the nuclear field in which all the nuclear-weapon States co-operate. Furthermore, it is a co-operative disarmament effort in which nuclear-weapon States as well as non-nuclear-weapon States join hands in maintaining the exclusively peaceful use of Antarctica. The geostrategic significance of assuring that Antarctica will always remain a demilitarized zone can - as the most casual look at the map will reveal - hardly be overestimated.

A further aspect of tremendous importance to the Federal Republic of Germany is the promotion and safeguarding of free scientific research guaranteed by the Treaty. This enables all States to conduct scientific activities in various fields and encourages scientific co-operation encompassing the exchange of scientific information beneficial to all States.

One of the greatest concerns to all countries is the effective protection of the extremely fragile ecosystem in Antarctica, including the living resources. In our opinion, effective measures have been taken to this end under the present Treaty.

The various activities I have referred to, as well as the safeguards built into the Treaty to ensure the conservation of Antarctica for the benefit of all mankind, are subject to regular and efficient co-administration. My delegation would like to call the attention of all States to this very important fact: there is a comprehensive system of on-site inspection with observers being guaranteed complete freedom of access at any time to any or all areas of Antarctica.

The Treaty system as it stands has thus proved its great value in many respects for almost a quarter of a century. My delegation is confident that it will continue to do so for the benefit of all mankind. One area which is being given great attention is that of the use of mineral resources. Let me point to the fact that it still remains to be proved whether the presumed mineral resources really exist, whether their use will ever be economically feasible and when their development could ever start. Irrespective of this, a voluntary policy of restraint has already been agreed upon between the Consultative States, which are

(Mr. van Well, Federal Republic
of Germany)

at present endeavouring to elaborate a régime for eventual future development. Any such mineral régime will be open to all States and should serve the interests of all mankind.

These few remarks indicate that in the view of my Government the Antarctic Treaty and the system which it has developed have proved their outstanding importance not only to the parties to the Treaty but to all States. Of course, any treaty system can be improved. But, given the enormous political, economic and social difficulties of our time, it might well be one of the best examples of functioning international co-operation, encompassing North and South, East and West.

My delegation firmly believes that it is essential to preserve this asset of international relations. The elimination of any flaws, as well as necessary changes and adjustments of the existing system, should be of an evolutionary nature and be undertaken from within, rather than from the outside with the aim of changing or revising the system. Any attempt to produce a new system would greatly jeopardize the considerable progress achieved so far. In any case, a new agreement of similar quality would, under the prevailing political circumstances, be inconceivable.

And there is no need for one. The present Treaty is of unlimited duration. It is open for accession by all States. It is fully in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. A number of States have acknowledged this and have only recently acceded to the Treaty. They represent avarious regions of the world with different political, economic and social backgrounds. In our view, this is the responsible way to proceed. We therefore invite all Governments which have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty and actively participate with the other parties in the peaceful exploration and use of Antarctica for the benefit of all mankind.

My Government is confident that a factual and objective study will prove the tremendous importance of the existing Treaty system in Antarctica. The Secretary-General could count on our constructive co-operation.

Miss DURRANT (Jamaica): The Jamaican delegation would like to pay a tribute to Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda for having proposed inclusion on the agenda of this Assembly of the item "The Question of Antarctica".

As is well known, this was not the first request for consideration of such an item by the United Nations, but the widespread support for the initiative of

(Miss Durrant, Jamaica)

Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda reflects the growing interest which the international community has in the Antarctic region.

Many reasons for that interest have been advanced during the course of this debate. They all, however, reflect the view that developments in Antarctica - whether political, economic or scientific - could have deleterious effects on the stability of the international environment.

There is little doubt that these concerns motivated the efforts of the international scientific community during the International Geophysical Year, from 1957 to 1958, and laid the basis for the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. Under that Treaty, the parties agreed that Antarctica should be used for peaceful purposes only, while military measures, nuclear explosions and the disposal in Antarctica of radioactive wastes were prohibited. Systems for the protection of the fragile ecological balance, the flora and fauna and the marine resources of Antarctica have been designed and we understand consideration is being given to the creation of a régime to regulate the exploitation of minerals.

The Jamaican delegation regards the measures adopted under the Antarctic Treaty as highly commendable, especially as they purport to have been taken by the parties to the Treaty "in the interests of all mankind". My delegation must, however, join those who have expressed their concern that despite the fact that the Treaty provides that:

"every encouragement shall be given to the establishment of co-operative working relations with those Specialized Agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations having a scientific or technical interest in Antarctica", (article III)

co-operation with the United Nations bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has been rejected. The fact is that no formal mechanism exists to ensure that the international community is made aware of activities carried out under the Antarctic Treaty.

My delegation feels that the interest displayed by the international community, and reflected in the Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries at their conference in New Delhi in March 1983, is timely and that this debate should not be regarded as a "burden on the agenda of this Assembly".

In fact, the General Assembly provides the only forum in which the parties to the Antarctic Treaty, as well as those States not parties to the Treaty, can state

(Miss Durrant, Jamaica)

their views on the merits and demerits of the present Treaty arrangement, and clarify whatever misunderstandings might exist on both sides.

It is for this reason that my delegation supports the call for an "objective, factual and comprehensive study" requested by the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/38/L.80.

We hope that this study will provide the international community with the necessary background on activities in Antarctica. We do not think that the outcome of this study should be prejudged and do not propose so to do.

My delegation therefore hopes that this draft resolution can be adopted by consensus, and that States conducting research in Antarctica will co-operate fully with the Secretary-General, in order to ensure early implementation of the resolution.

Mr. SAHNOUN (Algeria) (interpretation from French): The Algerian delegation has followed the debate on the Antarctic with great attention and interest. Speaking near the end of a debate which has sometimes been rather impassioned and even contradictory, we none the less see how rich it has been. We can say that along with all the divergent opinions expressed, we detect trends which are probably more important in themselves and for the future. It was certainly not expected that a first debate on such a disputed question would produce a definitive solution. That the higher interests of the international community should at this stage have been so generally stressed, however, confirms the indispensability of international dialogue, to the benefit of collective interests.

It was in this spirit that the Non-Aligned Movement has twice this year called for this debate. In so doing we were aware not only of our own interests, the interests of two thirds of the international community, but, above all, of the interests of all of humanity.

Is it not significant in this respect that the Heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries, noting the considerable importance of the Antarctic in various respects:

"expressed their conviction that in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, should not become the scene or object of international discord and should be accessible to all nations." (A/38/132 and Corr.1 and 2, p. 98)

(Mr. Sahnoun, Algeria)

That means that the objective of the non-aligned countries, and hence of the delegations that initiated this debate, does not proceed from any destructive impulse: quite the contrary, because it has for too long been left aside, their primary objective is none other than to promote equitable, fruitful international co-operation for the benefit of all.

In so doing, they are aware of the imperfection of all human endeavour and the need to renovate structures designed for another era - not only to harmonize international relations but to promote coexistence and greater co-operation.

Despite the dangers of the present, the frustrations of the past and the inherent inertia, the last two decades have been marked by this dynamic process. The outer space Treaty and that pertaining to the moon and other celestial bodies, and more recently the Convention on the Law of the Sea, constitute irrefutable evidence of the possibility of equitable international co-operation in which collective interests would take precedence over immediate national considerations through the definition of the spaces covered by those agreements as "the common heritage of mankind".

It is precisely this concept of the common heritage of mankind which is being advanced today. It is the result of a generous vision of a humanity reconciled to itself, a vision of international relations in which co-operation takes the place of covetousness.

Such a move in no way questions important objectives which the Antarctic Treaty has already managed to achieve within its own particular limits. Thus we are thinking of the military aspects of the question and more specifically the denuclearization of the region. One may also consider, along the same lines, the international co-operation specified by the Treaty which today we should not question but expand and consolidate.

By this initiative we do not want to harm any of its major objectives, but rather to remedy gaps and inadequacies by taking a more general perspective on the Antarctic question. Two aspects in particular deserve mention, since both represent the way the world has evolved in the last 25 years.

First, while in 1959 the economic dimension of the Antarctic seemed so unimportant as to have been in fact ignored, the potentialities recognized today require our particular attention.

(Mr. Sahnoun, Algeria)

That is why the New Delhi Declaration considered that:

"the exploration of the area and the exploitation of its resources shall be carried out for the benefit of all mankind ..." (ibid.)

In the second place, it is no small paradox that Africa, one of the continents closest to the Antarctic and the home of nearly a third of all United Nations Members, is the only continent that does not have a single State associated with any activity in the Antarctic region. It is indeed an irony of fate that Pretoria, whose nature and designs are so well known as to require no description, is one of the major parties to the exploration being undertaken in the Antarctic at the very moment when the General Assembly has banished it from the international community.

The first objective of this debate is to have the Secretary-General carry out a complete study of the issue. Modest in itself, this objective will in the future, we are convinced, make possible a thorough debate in which all delegations will be able to discuss the question with a full awareness of all of the elements involved.

My delegation in this respect welcomes the agreement achieved on the text of a draft resolution. We hope that this agreement is only the first step in a future convergence of views.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of the Soviet Union on a point of clarification.

Mr. YAKOVLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): In the interpretation of our statement yesterday there was an unfortunate error which prompted representatives to draw it to our attention. That mistake was repeated in the press release on the meeting. A number of delegations came to us asking whether the Soviet delegation really intended to submit a draft resolution on this question.

The Soviet delegation did not say in its statement that it had any intention of submitting a draft resolution on this question, and we should like the necessary correction to be made in the English-language record and in the press release, so that there may be no doubt about the position of the Soviet delegation on this matter and with respect to the draft resolution itself, which has been submitted to us.

We re-emphasize that the Soviet delegation - since the draft resolution reflects the results of the consultations which were held - will not object to its

(Mr. Yakovlev, USSR)

adoption without a vote, on the understanding that it and the study provided for in it, to be carried out by the Secretary-General, and the subsequent discussion of this question will in no way lead to undermining the Antarctic Treaty or its system. If it seemed that the study, the subsequent discussion of the question and the draft resolution were directed against the Treaty and its system, the Soviet delegation would vote against the draft resolution.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): During my delegation's intervention yesterday we made a point about South Africa's continued adherence to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty and its participation in activities carried out under the Treaty. My delegation regrets that the draft resolution does not take that matter into consideration, and we should like to introduce an amendment to reflect the concern of the African Group of Countries.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.