



UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY



Distr.  
GENERAL

A/8492 and add.1  
1 October 1971

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twenty-sixth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM  
IN THE AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

DECLARATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE

Letter dated 1 October 1971 from the Permanent Representative of Ceylon  
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am directed by my Government to request that, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the following item be placed on the agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly as an item of an important and urgent character:

"Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace."

In the pursuit of international peace and security and of general and complete disarmament, several positive measures have been adopted by the United Nations.

These measures include the declaration of continental areas as nuclear-free zones. The best examples of such measures are the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Organization of African Unity's Declaration of Africa as a nuclear-free zone.

The Government of Ceylon considers that the progressive application to areas of the world of the principle of demilitarization and of exclusion of military competition in various forms would contribute substantially to the cause of international peace.

Recent years have shown a noticeable trend in the development of international law and practice towards the principle that areas not assimilated to national jurisdiction constitute an international domain that should be subject to

international regulation and international responsibility. Cases in point are the agreements on outer space and Antarctica. The principle has been further elaborated in the Declaration on Principles Governing the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor, and the Subsoil Thereof, beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction which recognizes the area of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction as the common heritage of mankind.

In seeking the inscription of the item "Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace" on the agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Government of Ceylon's purpose is to secure United Nations approval of an international domain, subject to international regulation and international responsibility, covering the entire high seas of the Indian Ocean. Existing circumstances in the Indian Ocean, as distinct from other oceans of the world, are specially conducive to the application of this policy to the area. The presence of the military and naval forces of the great Powers in the Indian Ocean areas has not yet assumed significant proportions.

None of the great Powers nor any of the medium Powers are contiguous States. The major maritime nations are geographically remote from the Indian Ocean area nor are the economic interests of the great Powers involved to any appreciable degree in the area.

The countries of the Indian Ocean need conditions of peace and tranquility in which to transform and modernize their economies and societies. It is imperative to the success of these efforts that the Indian Ocean should be preserved as an area of peace.

Immediate action is considered necessary to arrest and reverse certain trends which have lately become manifest and which, if allowed to continue, would render the progressive militarization of the Indian Ocean unavoidable. The admission of the item is, therefore, sought under rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

The main features of Ceylon's proposals are that the entire high seas area of the Indian Ocean will be declared a peace zone to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. This would mean the exclusion of armaments, defensive or offensive, and military installations from the prescribed area. Warships and ships

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carrying war-like equipment will exercise the right of transit but may not stop other than for emergency reasons of a mechanical, technical or humanitarian nature. The use of the sea-bed area by submarines, except for reasons of a mechanical, technical or humanitarian nature, is to be prohibited. There will be a prohibition on naval manoeuvres, naval intelligence operations and weapons tests in the area. These are the main features of the proposal.

I should be glad if this letter were treated as the explanatory memorandum required by rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and circulated as an official document of the United Nations.

(Signed) H. Shirley AMERASINGHE  
Permanent Representative of Ceylon  
to the United Nations

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