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Chairman: Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia)

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ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 70 (continued)

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA: GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION UPON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. MANSFIELD (New Zealand): This is the third year that this subject has been on our agenda. As members of the Committee know, we, with other parties to the Antarctic Treaty, had reservations about the inclusion of the item. On our part, those reservations stemmed not from any lack of willingness to talk about Antarctica but from concern that the real object of those that sought to place it on the agenda might not be to find out more about the subject but to attack the Antarctic Treaty and the system that has been built up around it. At the same time we recognized that, although for by far the greater part of the history of the Treaty the wider international community has shown little or no interest in it or the work done under it, the situation was changing and that there was something of an information gap with respect to the Treaty and a number of misconceptions about the Treaty system.

We continue to have serious doubts as to whether a political debate in the General Assembly is an appropriate mechanism for responding to genuine interest in Antarctica and activities under the Antarctic Treaty system. Direct exchanges of information and informal meetings are much more effective. We have none the less had no hesitation in contributing to the debates, and we certainly had no reluctance in responding to the Secretary-General's request for information to assist him in the preparation of his valuable study. Our approach reflected the fact that we have always recognized that we have a responsibility to the international community in respect of Antarctica, which includes making our ports and other facilities available to Antarctic expeditions from other countries.

What has emerged from the debates in this Committee, from the Secretary-General's study, from the information-sharing activities of the Antarctic

(Mr. Mansfield, New Zealand)

Treaty countries and from the various public and informal meetings that have been held over the last two years? That is a question to which perhaps no single answer can be expected. For our part, we believe that there is now not only a greater degree of understanding of Antarctica itself but a much wider and deeper appreciation of the Antarctic Treaty system. There is now, for example, a recognition of the uncertain and dangerous situation that gave rise to the negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty and an acceptance of the contribution it has made to international peace and security over the past 25 years.

In addition, even the critics of the Treaty often make favourable mention of some of the other notable features of the Treaty: the demilitarization of the continent; the banning of nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste; the system of on-site inspection to ensure compliance; the protection of the freedom of scientific research; the system of international co-operation in scientific investigation; and the provision of a platform for the development of measures for, in particular, resource conservation and the protection of the environment.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Malaysia, however, has said that, first, there is no international agreement on sovereignty. To his statement we would add that this is clearly contrary to the situation regarding areas such as outer space and the deep sea-bed, in respect of which all States agree on the lack of national jurisdiction. He has said that the reality is that only a few countries claim sovereignty and that many more do not recognize those claims. Yet the reality of sovereignty is not based on a vote among States, but on the relationship between the people of a State and their land areas. New Zealand's people have a long historical link with that part of Antarctica which is directly to their south, and they have a strong commitment to that place. It is a commitment that means that we have a national interest in decision-making about that place.

(Mr. Mansfield, New Zealand)

An accommodation was reached on this question of sovereignty in the Antarctic Treaty, and this balance of interests can never be underestimated. It is of particular significance that there is a growing recognition that the Treaty and the system that derives from it constitute a unity; that its accomplishments flow from and cannot be separated from the unique framework provided by article IV for overcoming the fact that there is no consensus and no prospect of a consensus on the legal status of Antarctica. This development is noted by the International Institute for Environment and Development, one of the non-governmental organizations that follows this subject, in its report on Antarctica of 5 July 1985. It says:

"What the 1984 debate did highlight, and the point that has been refined in public and informal meetings over the last 18 months, is that there are certain fundamental elements of the Antarctic Treaty and its associated legal instruments that cannot be dismantled or ignored without damaging the peace-keeping and co-operative management functions of the Antarctic Treaty system. That is, it is not possible to divorce the peace-keeping role of the Antarctic Treaty from its decision-making procedures and article IV, which preserve and protect the positions of both claimant and non-claimant States in Antarctica."

A wider understanding of the unity of the Antarctic Treaty system is of great importance to New Zealand. We have already set out at length, both in the first of these debates and in the material we submitted to the Secretary-General, the reasons why Antarctica and the Antarctic Treaty are of particular concern to New Zealand. They were summed up in the statement made to the General Assembly on 24 September this year by our Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Geoffrey Palmer. Mr. Palmer said:

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"We value that Treaty not just because of the nuclear-free and demilitarized zone it establishes for Antarctica but because for 25 years it has effectively guaranteed the stability of the region to the south of New Zealand. It remains the only possible guarantee that that region will continue to remain free from international rivalry and conflict." (A/40/PV.7, p. 62)

Small States like New Zealand are particularly dependent on the rule of law, and never more so than on the observance of treaties. The United Nations, as Hammarskjöld reminded us, is an organization which exists first of all for small States and the importance of the rule of law and the sanctity of treaties is clearly recognized in the Charter's opening words

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained".

Treaties and agreements are not easy to achieve, especially those that promote peace and security and effect significant measures in the field of arms control and disarmament. Accordingly, we hope that other small States, in particular, will understand our concern to ensure the preservation and strengthening of the Antarctic Treaty. In this regard it is worthy of note that the South Pacific Forum, the regional organization of States in the south-west Pacific, gave support in the communiqué of its 16th meeting, in August, to the Antarctic Treaty. The Treaty provides a valuable complement to the proposed South Pacific nuclear-free zone by establishing an adjacent demilitarized area.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Malaysia said that his State's second concern was that Antarctica, as nearly one tenth of the surface of the globe, was of great significance in many respects. That is exactly right. Antarctica is of enormous significance and it is the Antarctic Treaty system that is the very real reason why

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Antarctica has remained peaceful and secure and why the results of the system of international scientific co-operation under the Treaty are freely available for the benefit of all.

New Zealand, as a close neighbour, has a special concern for the preservation and protection of the Antarctic environment. The environmental protection measures drawn up and implemented under the Treaty - over 70 of them - have been spoken of on other occasions. I want to emphasize again, however, that the New Zealand Government has a strong commitment to ensuring the protection of the environment of the Ross Dependency and to continuing, under the Treaty system, to take the closest interest in questions relating to the protection of the environment of the continent as a whole.

In this connection, I would note again that the New Zealand Government does not seek to promote or encourage the extraction of resources from Antarctica. In fact, it remains a source of concern to us that some countries outside the Treaty have indicated that what has prompted their interest in Antarctica is resource exploitation. New Zealand believes that the development of a régime to govern Antarctic mineral resources is necessary, as was the régime for living resources concluded in 1980. Without such a régime there remains the risk that resource activity could give rise to the kind of tension and potential conflict that the Antarctic Treaty has successfully prevented. Such unregulated activity could also easily put at risk the Antarctic environment. The Treaty system provides an opportunity for all States to make a contribution to discussions on all resources questions as long as they are willing to accept the emphasis in the system on conservation. We urge all who are interested to do so.

New Zealand was interested to hear the Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister mention South Africa's status as a party to the Antarctic Treaty in the context of

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referring to the lack of African and Arab States parties. On the question of South Africa, the Antarctic Treaty ensures, through its provisions relating to demilitarization, to effective verification and to the prohibition of nuclear-arms testing, that South Africa, like any other party, is contained. Any State can go to Antarctica and use that vast area for its own purposes. But States which are party to the Antarctic Treaty are obliged to go there only without arms, not to test nuclear weapons, and to undertake peaceful scientific research with regard for the environment. The Antarctic Treaty provides the world with a valuable guarantee that Antarctica will not be used for any sinister purpose.

New Zealand would welcome the accession to the Antarctic Treaty of African and Arab States. We urge all those with a serious interest in Antarctica to become involved in the Antarctic Treaty system. Thirty-two States are now parties, including, as has been pointed out before, States from East and West and North and South.

It is quite unfair to maintain, as some here have, that "something more must be done than proclaiming the virtues of the Antarctic Treaty system and inviting the accession of other States". There is no reason why the resources of the United Nations should be diverted to the establishment of a forum in which to discuss Antarctica when there is a completely successful forum already established under the Antarctic Treaty. We invite those who are interested to participate in the existing forum. It is difficult to see how any objection could be held to accepting a Treaty which protects Antarctica from conflict and which maintains each participant's legal and political position vis-à-vis the question of sovereignty.

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IF it is now reasonably clear to most non-Treaty countries that it is not possible to change the fundamentals of the existing legal régime without destroying it, it is equally clear to Treaty countries that there is a growing interest in Antarctica and the Antarctic Treaty system on the part of countries that have not yet acceded to the Treaty. This is where what is perhaps the Treaty's most notable feature - the development of the process of consultation and co-operation among its members - is likely to continue to prove its greatest strength. The Treaty has a dynamic quality that enables it to adapt to changing circumstances and new challenges. It is this quality, in particular, that in recent years has led an increasing number of States from different parts of the world and at different stages of development to conclude that the Treaty can meet their concerns and those of the wider international community.

This ability to evolve is evident in the steps recently taken to broaden participation in Antarctic Treaty meetings. It is also reflected in the discussion under the first two substantive agenda items at the 13th Antarctic Treaty consultative meeting, recorded in paragraphs 7 to 33 of the report of that meeting, which concerned ways of responding to the desire for greater availability of information about activities under the Antarctic Treaty system. In our view the Treaty system is capable of continuing to evolve as the range of both activities and interests in Antarctica increases.

To conclude, what we have in the Antarctic Treaty is a system that operates by consensus, that is founded on co-operation and mutual forbearance, that is open, that is responsive to change and that, above all, serves the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We believe that consideration of this item in the United Nations should again this year be marked by the same emphasis on reconciling differences, on co-operation rather than confrontation, that is the hallmark of the Antarctic Treaty system itself.

Mr. ALI (Bangladesh): The General Assembly, for the third consecutive session, is considering the agenda item, "Question of Antarctica". The participation of a large number of speakers on this item at preceding sessions clearly demonstrated the interest of the international community in Antarctica. It may be recalled here that the question of Antarctica has also been under consideration by the United Nations intermittently in the past.

Our current deliberations on this item, however, began at the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly following the seventh summit Conference of non-aligned countries, held in New Delhi, which comprehensively deliberated on various aspects of the issue. The first two debates in the General Assembly provided useful opportunities for all Member States to analyse in depth several aspects of the question, particularly those relating to options for the future of Antarctica and to a review of the operation of the existing Treaty system.

The Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/77, which was adopted by consensus, submitted a very useful report on the subject last year. The views communicated by a large number of countries, including my own, Bangladesh, have been duly circulated with that report. Those documents and the wide-ranging participation in the last two sessions demonstrated that, while there exists much similarity of views regarding the objectives of a régime in Antarctica, there are differing and often divergent views regarding the specific nature and operations of such a régime. Our common endeavour at the current session, therefore, should be to give close consideration to those similarities as well as those differences, with a view to evolving a concrete course of action, preferably by consensus, for international co-operation in Antarctica for the benefit of humanity at large.

Antarctica, which has been termed mankind's last frontier on earth, occupies some one tenth of the surface of the globe and a strategically important part of

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the world. The vast territory of Antarctica has rich marine and, probably, mineral resources. In other words, the territory has particular significance for international peace and security, economy, the environment, meteorology, scientific research, telecommunications and so forth. Bangladesh firmly believes that in the interest of all mankind Antarctica should continue for ever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord.

Given this particular significance of Antarctica in terms of international peace and security, as well as in terms of global co-operation in various fields, it is only logical that mankind as a whole should have a legitimate interest in Antarctica. The issue, therefore, calls for an in-depth evaluation of the situation in Antarctica from a global perspective at the United Nations. Let me clarify here once again that it is not the intention of my delegation to criticize the existing Treaty system or to undermine its achievements in any manner. We are fully conscious of the fact that the States parties to the Treaty have been able to set up a régime which is an outstanding example of international co-operation and amity, a truly nuclear-free zone that is completely demilitarized. The existing co-operation of the two super-Powers in this area is a matter of great satisfaction for all of us. We are, however, quite puzzled by the views expressed by some Treaty parties that the mere consideration of this item at the United Nations would destroy the existing régime.

It may be recalled that when the Antarctic Treaty was concluded, in 1959, its principal purpose was to protect this unknown continent from all kinds of nuclear weapons and to prevent the use of its territory for nuclear testing. The Treaty provided for co-operation in scientific research and for the exchange of information and scientific data for peaceful purposes. However, it did not

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contain any provision governing the exploration and exploitation of any resources of Antarctica. Consequently, in 1980 the States parties to the Treaty negotiated and concluded two international Conventions, on Antarctic seals and on marine living resources. Since 1982 the Treaty parties have been trying to negotiate an agreement on the exploration and exploitation of the oil and mineral resources of the continent. Let me underline here that there is no internationally accepted agreement on the issue of sovereignty over Antarctica. The Secretary-General's report has also pointed out that even 25 years after the signature of this Treaty sovereignty claims still exist. It is true that there has been no armed conflict over such disputed claims, but a mere suspension or freezing of those claims and counter-claims would not resolve the issue of sovereignty for all time.

As I mentioned earlier, the Treaty itself does not provide a régime for governing the exploitation of the continent's resources. Furthermore, it is not possible to negotiate a just and reasonable minerals régime within the existing Treaty system. My delegation therefore believes that in the absence of any indigenous population in Antarctica and in view of its rich mineral and fossil resources, a global régime for Antarctica should be established on the principle of the common heritage of mankind.

While on the subject of the equitable sharing of the resources of Antarctica on the principles of the common heritage of mankind, my delegation would like to emphasize that in the recent past the United Nations succeeded in reaching agreement on a Convention on the Law of the Sea and a Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, commonly known as the outer space Treaty. The cardinal principle of the common heritage of mankind was clearly the prime motivating factor in the conclusion of those important agreements, by

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consensus, for the exploration and exploitation of those areas in the interest of humanity at large. The realization of that principle has been one of the most important developments in contemporary international law, which must be sustained. My delegation therefore believes that any future agreement for the exploration and exploitation of the resources of Antarctica must be based on those principles.

(Mr. Ali, Bangladesh)

Preceding speakers have already dwelt at length on the organizational structure of the current régime. At the moment, the Treaty has 18 Consultative Parties and 14 non-consultative parties. However, the decision-making process under the current system has been restricted to the members of the Consultative Council. It has been pointed out - even during the current debate - that any State Member can join the Treaty and become a non-consultative party. But we should closely examine the role of such parties. It is true that since 1983 the non-consultative parties have been allowed to take part as observers in the biennial meetings and other negotiations. However, they do not have any decision-making power and have little influence on the deliberations of the Consultative Parties. Under the existing arrangements, on the basis of the criteria determined by the Consultative Parties the vast majority of countries Members of the United Nations are excluded from participating in any exploration and scientific research in Antarctica. Consequently, the overwhelming bulk of the membership of the current Treaty system consists of developed countries, both East and West. It is particularly disturbing to note here that the universally condemned racist apartheid régime still continues to enjoy the status and privileges of a Consultative Party on the basis of the existing criteria. The racist régime has been suspended from participation in the United Nations General Assembly, and it is our earnest hope that the Consultative Parties, in turn, would exclude the Pretoria régime from participation in the Antarctic Treaty system at the earliest possible date.

During the course of this year we have witnessed further proof of increasing international interest in Antarctica. The Summit Meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held at Abbis Ababa last July spoke out very clearly and cogently on this issue and declared Antarctica to be the common heritage of

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mankind. The Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Countries, at their Conference held at Luanda also expressed the conviction that the international community's interest in Antarctica can be enhanced by keeping the United Nations fully informed of developments there. That meeting also considered that the General Assembly should remain seized of this question and expressed the hope that the United Nations study would be examined comprehensively at the current session of the General Assembly with a view to taking appropriate action after taking into account the concerns of the members of the Movement. In addition to those important meetings, a number of meetings, seminars and symposia were held in various parts of the world on this issue.

My delegation supports the position taken at the seventh summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries at New Delhi and the Luanda Conference of Foreign Ministers of those countries, namely, that the issue of Antarctica should remain within the purview of the United Nations. That does not in any way mean that we are rejecting or undermining the existing Treaty system. On the contrary, we feel that, given the international community's interest in Antarctica, an institutional mechanism will have to be set up at the United Nations for thorough consideration of this item.

It is in that context that a proposal was made for setting up of an ad hoc committee. The basic objective of such a committee could be to conduct a thorough examination of the relationship between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations system, to identify possible ways and means for enhancing that relationship. My delegation supports that proposal. However, in consideration of the reservations expressed by some Consultative Parties to such a proposal, my delegation believes that at this early stage of our deliberations on this issue we should proceed with the utmost care and caution and make every possible effort to

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evolve a consensus course of action. It is, however, our sincere hope that all parties will consider the various possibilities with an open mind in order to achieve a consensus modality which would enable all of us, both Treaty Parties and other members of the United Nations, to deliberate on this issue on an equal footing.

My delegation once again expresses its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and his deputies for having submitted a detailed report on this item. We feel, however, that certain parts of that report should be expanded and updated, particularly those relating to the availability of information from the Treaty Parties on their respective activities and the existing contacts between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations. That would enable us to have a better understanding of the current activities in Antarctica. The relevant interaction between specialized agencies and other international organizations with the Antarctic Treaty system also needs to be elaborated upon.

Further, we should take into account the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in the southern ocean, particularly as it relates to possible exploration and exploitation of its mineral resources. We therefore feel that the Secretary-General should be requested to ascertain views from Member States and other concerned specialized agencies on this issue and to submit an updated and expanded report for further consideration at the next session of the General Assembly. Similarly, the Treaty Parties may be requested to keep the Secretary-General informed on their meetings and current negotiations, as well as on other activities in Antarctica.

In conclusion, my delegation firmly believes that the process of dialogue and discussion that began only two years must be sustained. Our deliberations on this item in the past two years have made a positive contribution to our better

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understanding of each other's position on this important question, and every effort should be made to bridge our disagreements in order to usher in a new era of global co-operation. In view of the importance of the item, it is our sincere expectation that all Parties will rise above their narrow self-interests and demonstrate understanding, moderation and wisdom for a greater cause, namely, the common benefit of mankind.

Mr. SWELL (India): As the representative of Bangladesh has just said, for the third time in succession we are discussing the question of Antarctica. But this time, our deliberations are reinforced by the Secretary-General's study on Antarctica, for which the General Assembly has expressed its appreciation.

The Secretary-General has reaffirmed the objectives for Antarctica, namely, that it should always be used for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all mankind, free of all international discord, and he has acknowledged the contribution made to this end by the Antarctic Treaty system. There is, therefore, practically nothing new to be said. Yet there are certain things that bear repetition.

The vast, frozen continent of Antarctica is the largest reservoir of fresh water in the world. Some arid countries have toyed with the idea of towing icebergs from Antarctica as a means of meeting their fresh-water requirements. Studies have been made and tentative conclusions arrived at that such towed Antarctic icebergs would be more economical than desalination plants.

As many as 200 kinds of minerals are believed to be in Antarctica, in addition to huge living resources such as krill, which may be an answer to mankind's need for nutrition. Conditions in Antarctica have a direct bearing on climatic conditions all over the globe. If, for any reason, large areas of Antarctica were to melt, the sea coasts of the world could be inundated to a depth of several feet by the rise of the ocean surface. Global havoc of unforeseeable magnitude may thus occur.

(Mr. Swell, India)

For us in India that scenario is of most immediate concern. Unlike the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, which open out on both ends, to the Arctic in the north and the Antarctic in the south, the Indian Ocean opens out only to the Antarctic, blocked as it is on the north by the Himalayan mountain range and the Asian continent. For the same reason, Antarctica seems to derive most of its fertility and energy from the Indian Ocean.

(Mr. Swell, India)

Consequently Antarctica has been a subject of absorbing interest to us. But it took us some time after our independence to gear ourselves up for a study of Antarctica and the mounting of expeditions. We made a tenuous start as a member of other countries' teams. But since then Indian science has gathered experience and developed expertise in various branches of geology, geophysics, oceanography, meteorology, astrophysics, space and communication science. So far we have sent out four scientific expeditions, beginning in 1981-1982; in 1983-1984 we set up a permanent manned scientific station named "Dakshin Gangotri". The areas covered by the studies made by these expeditions and the permanent manned station include meteorology, marine biology, microbiology, magnetic surveys, the upper atmosphere, chemistry, glaciology and the possible environmental effects of man-made changes on the Antarctic system. Our modest research work and studies are available to our friends in the developing countries who might like to share them.

Today India is a member of the Antarctic Treaty, and, by dint of the scientific studies it has made on its own, it is now also a Consultative Party to the Treaty. Although the Antarctic Treaty itself came into existence in 1959, India acceded to the Treaty only on 19 August 1983, 24 years later. This time lag was accounted for by the fact that we wanted to observe how the Treaty was working.

The positive points we noted were that the Treaty froze all territorial claims in Antarctica by nations that had been active in the continent before the Treaty; that it called for the area to be used for peaceful purposes, for the preservation and protection of the fragile environment of Antarctica, for international co-operation in scientific research under conditions of peace and tranquillity; and that it prohibited measures of a military nature. Lastly, the Treaty introduced a system that was not exclusive, but open to all States to accede to, and it was an evolving system that had worked satisfactorily and was responsive to the viewpoints of all States.

(Mr. Swell, India)

In this connection it is my great pleasure to welcome China and Uruguay as Consultative Parties to the Treaty. We look forward to more States acceding to the Treaty. In addition I welcome the decisions of Consultative Parties to invite acceding States not possessing consultative status to attend, as observers, meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties and the ongoing minerals régime discussions.

We have noted with great interest the replies sent by various States in response to the Secretary-General's request for assistance in his study, and we have greatly benefited from them. But, specifically because the Antarctic Treaty system is evolving and responsive and provides for a review of its working and amendment of its provisions, we should be careful about any step that may have the effect of undermining the system. Such a step may well be counter-productive and could lead to international discord and instability and also the revival of territorial and other claims.

Lastly, we urge that draft resolutions relating to Antarctica be adopted by consensus.

Mr. CULLEN (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation has already had the opportunity in this Committee to emphasize the fundamental importance my country attaches to the question of Antarctic continent. We have already explained our links of sovereignty, history and geography with the Antarctic continent, and the main elements of our activity and rights in the area can be found in our Government's reply to the inquiry of the Secretary-General.

We are convinced that the Secretary-General's report, the opinions of Governments and the debates that have been held have clearly emphasized the importance and effectiveness of the system established by the Antarctic Treaty over a quarter of a century ago. Since its signature the activities of countries in

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Antarctica have been conducted within the framework of the Treaty, and an unprecedented system of international co-operation has been developed. That system has made it possible to achieve a series of objectives as well as equilibrium and flexibility that reaffirm the principles and purposes of the United Nations in the area.

Under the Treaty system, Antarctica has been used exclusively for peaceful purposes. It has been kept out of the arms race and free of any militarization, which, as is affirmed in the Secretary-General's report,

"is one of one of the significant post-war contributions towards averting nuclear weapon proliferation and halting the nuclear arms race".

(A/39/583, (Part I), para. 170)

International co-operation, exchanges of information, untrammelled scientific research and the protection of the environment are other examples of the substantial contribution the Treaty is making to the international community. It is vital that this system should be preserved and strengthened. That is why my delegation is convinced that the interest shown by this Organization in the question of Antarctica and the greater understanding that these debates can bring about should lead to the confirmation and development of the existing system and should in no circumstances give rise to proposals that might affect the balance achieved.

In this connection we would refer briefly to a few opinions that have been expressed on the Antarctic system and to some ideas that have been put forward on possible changes to the Treaty system.

As regards territorial claims, we believe that the system established by article IV constitutes the best possible balance that could be achieved between the rights and interests of the parties. Argentina maintains a firm claim of

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sovereignty and has none the less assumed commitments under the Treaty, since it is aware that it is thus contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. There is ample evidence that that is the case. For my country that point is of basic importance, and we could never accept the application of other formulas that run counter to our sovereign rights.

(Mr. Cullen, Argentina)

Because of the existence of those claims of sovereignty, the comparisons that have been made with outer space and the sea-bed are also unjustifiable. Antarctica is not a res nullius, nor is there any legal vacuum to be filled by systems devised for other situations. Here there is already in place an effective legal system to which all States can accede.

Another concern that has been expressed by some delegations concerns the allegedly closed nature of the Treaty and the difficulties certain States might have in acceding to it and keeping informed of its deliberations. My delegation considers that, on the contrary, its open structure is one of the most striking characteristics of the Treaty and that it has made it possible for it to remain effective. All States that want to accede to the Treaty can do so. Furthermore the status of Consultative Party can be granted to all States that show their special interest through their activities in Antarctica. In last year's debates my delegation reiterated its complete readiness to co-operate with all those countries that might like to develop scientific activities in Antarctica. At that time we stated that that co-operation, carried out both on our continental territory and from our Antarctic stations, could be particularly useful for the developing countries. We are pleased at this time to confirm our co-operation with two new consultative members of the Treaty, which we now welcome.

We co-operated with Uruguay throughout the stage prior to the establishment of the first Antarctic base this year, especially through our advisory services and the participation of Uruguayan nationals in a number of Argentine Antarctic expeditions, including that of the 1984-1985 season. We have co-operated with the People's Republic of China with logistic support, the provision of services and advisory services, also in the preliminary stage prior to its first Antarctic expedition of 1984-1985.

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Similarly, guest scientists from Spain, Peru and Canada participated in the Argentina Antarctic expedition of 1985-1985, and scientists and experts from Italy, Uruguay and Chile will participate in that of 1985-1986.

Moreover, in order to provide broader information on the continent and the Antarctic System, journalists from other countries are invited on our expeditions.

We are confident that all the States of this Organization that have expressed a particular interest in Antarctica will join the Antarctic countries and that their concerns will be channelled and incorporated through the Treaty System.

As far as access to information is concerned, a system to publicize widely what has been studied and decided on at Antarctic meetings has been established, and many States attend meetings of the Consultative Parties as observers. It should be pointed out here that the Secretary-General has already been sent a report on the deliberations at the thirteenth consultative meeting, held recently in Brussels.

Some States have also referred to negotiations on mineral resources, and they have expressed their concern at the possibility of their being excluded from the system that may come about as a result, which they would consider to be an undue appropriation of those Antarctic resources. We believe that there is here a mistaken notion of the objective of those negotiations and also a lack of information on the nature and sense of the talks that have been held. Though it is as yet unknown whether mineral resources actually exist, and though there are great doubts as to the viability of their exploitation, the Consultative Parties wanted to move forward in formulating a system to protect the existing balance and the environment. There already exist within the system effective examples of that protection, in particular the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The principles to be followed in the negotiations on minerals were approved at the Antarctic Consultative Meeting of 1981, which was held in

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Buenos Aires. They indicate that the system shall be open to all States that pledge to fulfil and respect the principles and objectives of the Treaty and that it shall not be established to the detriment of the international community.

In conclusion we should like to refer to the idea of the establishment of an ad hoc committee of the United Nations to be entrusted with studying the subject of Antarctica. In our opinion such a body is completely unnecessary, given the existence of the Treaty and the forum and mechanism it provides. Furthermore the institutionalization of a parallel body would be against the unanimous will of the Antarctic countries and could lead to ill-founded decisions that might affect the present balance. It has already been emphasized that in the system established by the Treaty decisions are adopted by consensus and that therein resides its greatest strength. We believe that the same spirit of consensus should prevail here, and we are pleased to note that that is the general view expressed in these debates.

Mr. HUANG Jiahua (China) (interpretation from Chinese): Since I am speaking for the first time in this Committee, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and to express to you our conviction that under your able guidance the Committee will bring the deliberations on the question of Antarctica to a successful conclusion.

This is the third time the question of Antarctica has been before the Committee since the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Before the United Nations began its deliberations on this question, the non-aligned countries, at a summit meeting in March 1983, proposed to conduct a comprehensive study on Antarctica in order to expand international co-operation on the continent. Last year the Secretary-General, as requested in a General Assembly resolution, prepared a report on the question of Antarctica, putting in a nutshell its historical background, its status quo and the relevant views and positions of various

(Mr. Huang Jiahua, China)

countries. In July last, at the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, some proposals were put forward regarding the question of Antarctica. All these developments indicate that, with the growing recognition and understanding of that continent and of its very important scientific and economic significance, the entire question of Antarctica is attracting more and more interest and concern within the international community.

To date, the only existing multilateral treaty on the legal status of Antarctica is the Antarctic Treaty. It was signed in the late 1950s, in December 1959, in Washington DC, by Argentina, Australia and 10 other countries. Judging by its historical background, its present problems and its future developments, the Treaty is of course neither perfect nor flawless. However, more than 20 years of implementation have amply demonstrated the validity of its purposes and principles. It has indeed played a positive role in preserving Antarctica for peaceful purposes, prohibiting all activities of a military nature, preventing it from becoming the scene or object of international discord, and in particular in promoting international co-operation in all Antarctic activities. All of this has been confirmed by the international community.

(Mr. Huang Jiahua, China)

It is natural that, during United Nations deliberations on this question in recent years, countries should have put forward many views and opinions reflecting differences in their understanding and assessment of the question. It is to be expected that an understanding of Antarctica by mankind will require exploration over a long period of time. Among all those views and opinion, however, we detect many points of convergence or near-convergence. For instance, all have agreed that Antarctic activities should conform with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, that the entire region should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, that its natural resources and ecosystem should be protected, that international co-operation in Antarctic activities should be expanded and strengthened, and so forth. All those are points of convergence. We maintain that, if we entertain the same hopes, concentrate on our points of convergence and put aside our difficulties, we shall eventually come to a reasonable solution of the question of Antarctica.

The Chinese delegation has always held that serious consideration should be given to all reasonable proposals which aim at promoting the thorough implementation of the purposes and objectives of the Antarctic Treaty, at improving its régime and at expanding international co-operation for the greater benefit of all mankind. It is our earnest hope that all countries, in a spirit of pragmatism and accommodation, will consult fully on the basis of the points of convergence mentioned above, will seek to understand each other, and will co-operate in good faith in order to find ways and means of resolving reasonably the question of Antarctica.

(Mr. Huang Jiahua, China)

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to scientific research on and the peaceful uses of Antarctica. Since we joined the Antarctic Treaty, our scientists have been conducting large-scale comprehensive surveys and research there. They have collected a considerable amount of first-hand information and have established there a permanent scientific research station. Since October last China has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty. The Chinese delegation would like to express here its gratitude to those Governments and scientists who have assisted, supported and actively co-operated with us in our Antarctic activities. Our participation in such activities and our accession to the Antarctic Treaty as a Consultative Party are aimed at further exploring, better understanding and, eventually, knowing Antarctica, and at the same time at promoting friendly co-operation among States in our common endeavour to foster Antarctic scientific research. The Chinese Government hopes, while working together with other States, to make its own contribution to safeguarding the purposes and principles of the Antarctic Treaty and to helping Antarctica better serve world peace, scientific progress and the common interests of mankind.

Mr. GROOT (Denmark): Participating in this debate for the first time since the question of Antarctica was put on the agenda of the General Assembly, my delegation would like to state that the Danish Government recognizes the legitimate interest of the world community in Antarctica, and welcomes this opportunity to discuss the question.

Indeed, my Government has declared its support for efforts aimed at introducing greater openness in international co-operation concerning Antarctica, provided that neither the basic principles of the Antarctic Treaty nor the positive results of present international co-operation are jeopardized.

(Mr. Groot, Denmark)

Relevant and readily available information about the Antarctic Treaty system is an important prerequisite to the achievement of greater openness and thus to the improvement of the accountability of the Treaty system. In this respect, my delegation would like to express its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for the excellent work he has done in preparing the report on the question of Antarctica. That study has provided us with a broad range of information about the complex issues of Antarctica. In our view, it is a comprehensive, factual and understandable presentation bringing together political, legal, economic, environmental and scientific aspects of the Antarctic Treaty and related issues.

The Danish Government is firmly convinced that, during its lifetime of more than a quarter of a century, the Antarctic Treaty has proved its significance to the benefit and interest of mankind as a whole. It has provided a legal régime on Antarctica which has removed the potential for disputes relating to the exercise of sovereignty, and has guaranteed peace and stability in the region. In the view of the Danish Government, it is of particular importance that the Treaty prohibit any military use of the region and guarantee Antarctica's status as a nuclear-weapon-free area. Furthermore, the Treaty has provided an exemplary framework for free scientific research and has created the basis for extensive international co-operation to protect the environment of Antarctica.

Denmark is, to a large extent, a polar country. My country has a long-standing tradition of polar scientific research. Danish scientists have, of course, concentrated on research activities in our own polar regions - Greenland - but have on various occasions participated in the Antarctic research activities of other countries, in which their Arctic experience has proved valuable.

(Mr. Groot, Denmark)

So far, Denmark has not sought to qualify for consultative status. We therefore welcomed the admission of Non-Consultative Parties as observers at regular and special consultative meetings. The introduction of this observer arrangement serves to demonstrate that the Antarctic Treaty system is a dynamic structure which can be adapted to changing realities without prejudice to the principles of the Treaty. Furthermore, the admission of observers is, in our view, one of the best and most efficient means of achieving greater openness and accountability.

It must, however, be stressed that observer status is meaningful only if it ensures that Non-Consultative Parties can participate in Antarctic co-operation in a manner corresponding to the obligations that they, as Contracting Parties, have assumed under the Treaty. So far we have found that the observer arrangements work well. Observers have been able to participate actively in discussions, and have been able to submit papers and proposals during consultative meetings. They have been heard, and account has been taken of their views.

Surely, the present observer arrangements could be further improved. In that context my delegation would like to make a couple of points. First, as decisions within the Antarctic Treaty system are taken by consensus, the influence of observers on the decision-making process may in practice be significant. In fact, my delegation believes that the distinction between Consultative and Non-Consultative Parties is likely to become progressively less marked.

Secondly, it is not enough that acceding States should have the right to speak and to submit papers if those States are not kept well informed. In principle, information on almost any Antarctic matter is freely accessible. The problem, very

(Mr. Groot, Denmark)

often, is to make relevant information readily available at the right time and place. Such information is necessary in order to bring influence to bear when decisions are made, thus ensuring that the interests of acceding States are taken into account as well. My delegation welcomes the fact that so much time and effort was spent this year once again within the Treaty system with a view to improving the dissemination of information on Antarctic matters.

Much has been said about the need to protect and preserve the very vulnerable frontier environment of the Antarctic. As a zero environment, it is of extraordinary value to scientists. We know too that the Antarctic has a substantial impact on the climate of a wide zone of the globe. Furthermore, the Antarctic oceans are increasingly seen as the source of important food resources for mankind.

(Mr. Groot, Denmark)

The question of protecting and preserving that environment is a matter of great concern for my country as well. It is our impression that this issue enjoys top priority not only at the regular consultative meetings but also at the negotiations on a minerals régime. In fact, the main purpose of the latter negotiations, as we see it, is to ensure that unregulated activity regarding minerals does not - if ever - take place in a way which could prove environmentally harmful, adversely affect other uses of the continent, or lead to renewed contention.

Apart from any future minerals exploration and exploitation, which may never take place, it has to be recognized that the Antarctic is the scene of an increasing number of often competing uses, and that the present measures of environmental protection are not sufficient; they require both extension and consolidation. However, the mechanism already tested within the Antarctic Treaty system provides a good basis for both.

Thus far, the Antarctic Treaty system has proved its value for the benefit and interest of mankind as a whole. It has set an example of international co-operation which has on the whole succeeded in terms of its purposes. Those purposes, as stated in the preamble to the Treaty, are in conformity with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. The Treaty itself is open for accession by all Members of the United Nations. All Contracting Parties now have the opportunity of defending their interests within the Treaty system.

Even if the Antarctic Treaty is no longer a youngster, its system has demonstrated a dynamic ability to cope with modern challenges. In the view of my Government, international co-operation concerning Antarctica should, therefore, be pursued within the framework of the Treaty. My Government is prepared to work for improvements in the system, so long as neither the basic principles of the Treaty nor the positive results achieved thus far are jeopardized.

(Mr. Groot, Denmark)

It is the hope of my delegation that our debate will serve to create a better understanding of the Antarctic Treaty system and to stimulate an interest, among a growing number of States concerned about Antarctic matters, in joining the Treaty. Such a development would be warmly welcomed by my country.

Mr. OMER (Sudan) (interpretation from Arabic): This is the third year this Organization has addressed the question of Antarctica, which is testimony to the interest of the international community in this important issue and in maintaining the continent as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, free from political, military or economic conflict among nations.

Thus, we support the initiative of Antigua and Barbuda and Malaysia to allocate time for consideration of this vitally important question. The environmental, climatic, scientific and economic characteristics of Antarctica, and its potential for the entire world, justifies an examination within the United Nations of the possibilities for increased international co-operation in that continent, since that is not assured by the existing Antarctic Treaty system. We do not call into question the purposes and goals of the Treaty; it has contributed thus far and in many ways to keeping the continent free from military conflict and from nuclear weapons, and has helped preserve the unique and special environmental characteristics of the area.

But we would note that only Consultative Parties to the Treaty enjoy the right to take decisions on all aspects of the administration of the continent. Moreover, participation in decision-making is subject to meeting conditions which most countries cannot afford to do. We consider that the protection of major international interests can be assured only with the participation of all nations, many of them having emerged on the international scene since 1959, when the Antarctic Treaty was signed.

(Mr. Omer, Sudan)

We face many unanswered questions about the effectiveness of the Antarctic Treaty as a comprehensive instrument for preserving forever the unique characteristics of the continent. At present, the situation appears to be reassuring, but it could be completely different when countries claiming sovereignty over Antarctica - which have frozen their differences for now - begin to exploit its economic, scientific and natural resources, particularly in the absence of a fully effective international régime governing such questions.

Many wonder about the effectiveness of the Treaty in seriously promoting the interests of all humanity regarding this great heritage of mankind. That becomes more of a problem regarding dissemination of information on the continent and in the sphere of environmental protection. We wonder still more about existing machinery governing environmental affairs in Antarctica and about the elaboration of effective international means to exploit the mineral resources with which Antarctica abounds.

It is significant that a State such as South Africa - which our international Organization has condemned for its repugnant policy of apartheid - should continue to enjoy active membership of the Antarctic Treaty. That casts grave doubt on the credibility of the Treaty and on its effectiveness as an international legal instrument governing a region which today commands the attention of the entire world. The racist régime of South Africa has never shown any respect for international or regional instruments, and it will never do so in the future. Therefore, it is inadvisable to depend upon its upholding the purposes and goals of this or any other Treaty on Antarctica now or in the future. The racist régime of South Africa has ignored all the resolutions of this international Organization concerning the denuclearization of Africa, which deepens and strengthens that conviction.

(Mr. Omer, Sudan)

The Seventh Summit Conference of Non-Aligned countries, held at New Delhi in March 1983, expressed its support for United Nations efforts on Antarctica and called for the preparation of an up-to-date study on that remote continent. The twenty-first Summit Conference of the Organization of African Unity adopted a resolution calling for consideration of Antarctica as the common heritage of mankind.

(Mr. Omer, Sudan)

The political declaration adopted by the ministerial Conference of the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement held at Luanda last September noted an increase in international interest in Antarctica, as reflected in the debates at the last two sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as in the increasing number of accessions to the Treaty. The participants in the Luanda Conference reaffirmed their conviction that Antarctica should be exclusively and forever used for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all mankind, and that it should not become the scene of international discord. They also stated that the General Assembly should be kept informed on the question of Antarctica.

In that connection my delegation expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report in document A/39/583, and commends the General Assembly on its resolution 39/152, which was adopted by consensus at its last session and which we hope will lead to further studies on Antarctica by the United Nations and its competent agencies.

We agree with those who regard Antarctica as a region in which man's tampering with his environment and its delicate balance should stop. We also consider that the continent should be exploited in the context of the new international economic order since it is part of the common heritage of mankind, as in the case of the sea-bed and outer space.

Moreover, Antarctica should be placed under an international régime based on the increasingly important concept of the common heritage of mankind, for the days of the gold rush and claims of sovereignty over remote continents and islands are gone forever.

Mr. MILAD (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (interpretation from Arabic): Three years ago the question of Antarctica was first included in the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly on the initiative of the delegations of Antigua and

(Mr. Milad, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Barbuda and Malaysia, to whom we all owe thanks today for having drawn United Nations attention to this issue and to the importance of examining it. The sixth continent, the polar continent of Antarctica, represents nearly one tenth of the world's land area. That vast region contains enormous quantities of natural gas and oil, as well as metals. Although estimates of Antarctica's natural resources have not yet been confirmed by detailed exploration and research, those resources have nevertheless aroused the interest of commercial circles and multinational corporations have already begun to investigate and develop ways and means of gaining access to the continent, with its difficult terrain and topography, in order to exploit its resources.

The scientific, geophysical, economic, strategic and ecological importance of Antarctica led the Heads of State or Government of the countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement at their seventh Summit Conference at New Delhi in 1983 to declare that the Antarctica continent was of considerable environmental, climatic, scientific and economic significance. They also expressed their conviction that Antarctica's resources should be exploited for the benefit of all mankind and exclusively for peaceful purposes. They further called upon the Members of the United Nations not to allow Antarctica to become the scene of international disputes or discord and to authorize all States and peoples wishing to undertake activities on that continent to do so. This Declaration was endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the non-aligned countries at their meeting in Luanda this year, as well as by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

It is on the basis of this principle that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, is in favour of the equitable international exploitation of that region by all States and peoples of the world, and considers that Antarctica should be brought under the control of the United Nations in accordance with the principle that anything not under the jurisdiction of a

(Mr. Milad, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

specific State is part of the common heritage of mankind. For that reason the Antarctic should be declared a zone of peace, free from weapons of any type and totally demilitarized.

The Antarctic Treaty of 1959, which was concluded in 1959 between 12 States and to which other States have subsequently acceded, sets forth principles governing fruitful co-operation and understanding among countries with different political régimes. The Treaty also prohibits the extension of the arms race to that region, the establishment of military bases and fortifications, as well as the testing of any type of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons.

However, the Treaty was concluded at a time when many States were still living under the yoke of colonialism, and their technological and economic backwardness, poor knowledge of that region and lack of resources made it impossible for them to accede to the Treaty. Moreover, the Treaty grants certain States exclusive decision-making rights by establishing certain criteria which have to be satisfied by any State desiring to accede to the Treaty or to participate in its discussions or in decisions affecting it. In this connection, I should like to mention a point on which the Treaty could be criticized, namely, the fact that the racist régime of South Africa is a party to it; this raises serious doubts about the participation of that régime in international activities conducted exclusively for peaceful purposes in Antarctica, in view of the racist and bellicose nature of the apartheid régime which flouts norms and standards of international law. For this reason, any studies that might be carried out on this question should take into account the need to exclude that régime from participation in any international activities on that continent.

Mr. SAEED (Pakistan): Pakistan attaches great importance to the consideration by the General Assembly of the question of Antarctica. We are grateful to Malaysia for having raised this issue in the United Nations and note the wide interest and attention aroused by the Assembly's deliberations on Antarctica.

There is no disagreement with the proposition that Antarctica is unique. First, it is the only uninhabited continent on earth, with an area that covers nearly 20 per cent of the planet's surface. Secondly, in this day and age, when the dimensions of war are intercontinental and the security of nations is interdependent, the vital strategic importance of Antarctica is evident. Thirdly, any disturbance of the fragile environmental balance in Antarctica would have an adverse impact on the world's environment, with implications that are as yet not fully understood. Fourthly, Antarctica offers extensive opportunities for scientific research in various fields of relevance to all nations. Fifthly, and lastly, Antarctica and the surrounding southern ocean possess rich marine and, almost certainly, mineral resources. All the peoples of the world are entitled to share equitably in the benefits of those resources.

For those reasons, Pakistan endorses the decision of the recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit meeting, which declared Antarctica to be the common heritage of mankind. The summit meeting of the non-aligned countries in New Delhi and the recent Foreign Ministers Conference in Luanda, both recognized the interest of all mankind in Antarctica and the legitimacy of United Nations involvement in the subject. Indeed, the adoption of consensus resolutions on Antarctica at the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions of the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the principle that Antarctica is of interest to all mankind and, thus, the

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

corollary that the activities of States relating to that continent should be in consonance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, especially the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Pakistan does not deny the positive aspects of the Antarctic Treaty system, which has placed the territorial claims of various States over parts of Antarctica in abeyance, ensured the continent's denuclearized status and made possible the pursuit of scientific research. However, Pakistan believes that the seeds of inequity in the system were planted by the onerous conditions prescribed for acquisition of the status of Consultative Party. Accession to the Treaty only secures the second-class status of a non-consultative party. The evolution of the international situation, in both the political and the technological areas, dictates that that built-in differentiation among States parties to the Antarctic Treaty should be reviewed. The acknowledged interest of all mankind in Antarctica implies that the international community should be more fully involved in the administration of and the benefits derived from scientific, commercial or other activities in Antarctica.

Apart from the matter of principle involved, there are more substantive and practical reasons for taking international cognizance of the issues relating to Antarctica. The adoption of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, for one thing, has made it necessary to examine the compatibility of the Antarctic Treaty system with the new law of the sea régime. In addition, there is a general dearth of information about Antarctica from the Consultative Parties. For example, the Principal States that engage in fishing in the southern ocean have not always provided full data on those activities. Nor is it known whether the 1980 Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources is being fully implemented.

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

More important, there is a growing concern about the ongoing negotiations among the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty over a minerals régime. In some of the information made available it has been asserted, first, that there are differences among the Consultative Parties, and between them and the non-consultative parties, on the need for and scope of an agreement on a minerals régime. Secondly, in the package prepared by the Chairman in the negotiations decision-making would be heavily weighted in favour of the Consultative Parties, giving limited powers to the non-consultative parties and none at all to non-members of the Antarctic Treaty system. Thirdly, the claimant States among the Consultative Parties wish to derive economic benefits as a result of their status. Fourthly, the incentives for mineral activities offered by the new régime under consideration could pose a threat to the original values of the Antarctic Treaty.

It is regrettable that there have been no consultations with non-parties of the Treaty. The acknowledged interest of all mankind in Antarctica and its resources cannot be exclusively defined by the Consultative Parties. While the Consultative Parties may contest the proposition that Antarctica is the common heritage of mankind, the international community, as Malaysia noted, does not accept the proposition that Antarctica is the common heritage of the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty. That should be affirmed through a decision of the General Assembly.

My delegation is one of those that feel that the privileged status enjoyed by the racist régime of Pretoria in the restrictive framework of the Antarctic Treaty system is anomalous. The Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was mentioned by Australia, does not accord Pretoria such unequal privileges, nor does it make it difficult for other States to acquire full participation in the legal régime it has established. But even if one were to accept the argument that the Antarctic Treaty

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

also imposes important restraints on South Africa - with regard, for example, to the carrying out of nuclear explosions - is that not another reason for the involvement of the United Nations in activities relating to Antarctica? The United Nations has decided in various resolutions to keep the activities of South Africa under close scrutiny. It must therefore be fully informed of the activities of the racist régime under the Antarctic Treaty system.

It is quite evident that there is need for a full international dialogue on various aspects of Antarctica. We hope that the Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty will find it possible in the very near future to agree to beginning such a dialogue within the United Nations, which is envisaged in our Charter as the centre for concerting the policies of Member States and for the promotion of international co-operation.

At this session we should take a step in the direction of promoting an international dialogue on Antarctica. We should request the Secretary-General to elaborate his earlier valuable study by addressing, first, the availability of information from the Consultative Parties on their activities in Antarctica, secondly, the involvement and contribution international organizations and specialized agencies make to the Antarctic Treaty system and, thirdly, the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in the southern ocean. The examination of these issues will not in any way prejudice the positions of the parties to the Antarctic Treaty. It will be a response to the wider and acknowledged interest of all mankind in Antarctica. In addition, it will enable the General Assembly to adopt informed decisions on the question of Antarctica in the future.

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

It is the hope of the Pakistan delegation that such a constructive approach will enable the Assembly to maintain the tradition of acting on this important item by consensus. A departure from that approach will merely serve to heighten the well-known differences between parties and non-parties to the Antarctic Treaty and prejudice the cause of international co-operation.

(Mr. Saeed, Pakistan)

It is the conviction of my delegation that in the very near future an international dialogue should be started within the United Nations aimed at preserving the advantages of the Antarctic Treaty system, ensuring greater openness in the system and the full exchange of information, evolving internationally agreed measures for the preservation of the Antarctic environment, and building a minerals régime whose benefits will be shared equitably by all States.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to inform representatives that from my consultations with a number of delegations it appears that an extension of the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under agenda item 70 is necessary. I therefore suggest that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions, which was set at 6 p.m. today, Tuesday, 26 November, be extended to 12 noon on Wednesday, 27 November. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees with my suggestion.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.