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**President: Mr. Rüdiger von WECHMAR**  
(Federal Republic of Germany).

**AGENDA ITEM 113**

**Draft World Charter for Nature**

**AGENDA ITEM 120**

**Historical responsibility of States for the preservation  
of nature for present and future generations**

1. The PRESIDENT: I would recall that at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 1980, the Assembly decided to consider the two items now before us as separate items in the course of the same debate. Therefore, at the conclusion of the debate I shall put before the Assembly draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1, which has been submitted under agenda item 113, and call on those, if any, who wish to explain their vote before and after action is taken on that draft resolution. Thereafter, we shall proceed in the same way regarding draft resolution A/35/L.7, which has been submitted under agenda item 120.
2. Mr. FEDOROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Soviet Union has proposed for consideration at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly an item entitled "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations" [see A/35/194], thus logically developing its own policy of consistent and purposeful attempts to find solutions to the most important global problems of mankind on the basis of international co-operation.
3. It is noteworthy that another State, situated in a different geographical area and having a different social system, the Republic of Zaire, has presented at this session a proposal which is also prompted by concern to preserve the natural environment [see A/35/141].
4. Before proceeding to describe the essence of the Soviet proposal, I should like, not as a diplomat but as an expert involved in the study of the problems of the interrelationship and interaction of man and nature,

to draw the attention of members to this problem as a whole.

5. The development of civilization has today reached such a level that the impact of man on nature is comparable in scope to elements of natural phenomena. In a number of instances, it leads to negative changes in the natural environment.

6. The greatest alarm at the present time is being caused by the pollution of the atmosphere and waters and the possibility of the supplies of some natural resources being used up; and in a few decades, I believe, the expected beginnings of climatic changes on the planet will acquire considerable significance.

7. Let us consider pollution. As members know, this has reached a considerable level throughout the world and in many industrial centres and large cities has taken on dimensions which are proving dangerous for human health and for the vegetable and animal world.

8. For our discussion, the international aspect of this problem is of particular interest. For example, there is a serious problem in connexion with the transmission of sulphur particles between countries. Rain that is impregnated with sulphur leads, as members know, to considerable damage. According to the data published by the West and East European Centre for Monitoring the Atmosphere, which was established in accordance with the decisions taken at the European Conference on the Preservation of the Natural Environment, approximately 100,000 tons of sulphur settle every year on the territory of Norway, for example, sulphur that is drawn in from other countries. On Sweden, approximately 225,000 tons of foreign sulphur wastes fall every year. Noticeable changes have occurred in the composition of the planet's atmosphere as a whole as a result of the activities of all countries. Of particular significance is the heightened concentration of carbon oxides, which occur whenever any fuel apart from atomic fuel is consumed.

9. There is also a global problem of the pollution of the oceans by petroleum products. We know the catastrophic consequences of accidents involving tankers and oil-drilling rigs. The world's oceans and seas also receive a great many waste products from chemical plants, as well as radioactive products. As members know, there is a high level of pollution in many rivers which flow through densely populated areas with developed industry.

10. Now one may wonder whether the pollution of the environment is, as has frequently been suggested, an inevitable consequence of scientific and technological progress. It is not, because the same degree of progress presents a genuine possibility of avoiding pollution, first, by a wider use of anti-pollution devices which have been devised and can be applied to various

technological processes; and, secondly, by means of introducing so-called clean or waste-free technology.

11. However, setting up these anti-pollution devices and changing over to a clean technology requires tremendous expenditure. In the socialist countries where the State is equally responsible both for effective production and for preserving the health of the population, measures and expenditure to preserve the environment are regarded as necessary and desirable.

12. Article 18 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union is devoted to a frugal and careful attitude towards preserving the natural environment and provides that "In the interests of the present and future generations, the necessary steps are taken in the USSR to protect and make scientific, rational use of the land and its mineral and water resources, and the plant and animal kingdoms, to preserve the purity of the air and water, ensure reproduction of natural wealth, and improve the environment."

13. Despite the fact that pollution of the environment in our country is considerably less than in other industrially developed countries, it has been quite justly criticized by public opinion and its prevention is a subject of serious concern for the State. Large appropriations are made every year to deal with this matter. As a result, there has been a systematic lowering of the level of pollution in waters and rivers and of the pollution and contamination of the atmosphere by many substances. In particular, steps have been taken to preserve unique natural phenomena, in particular the basin of Lake Baikal. As the economy of the USSR develops and becomes stronger, the protection of the environment becomes more and more sophisticated.

14. If an industry is under private ownership, then its owner is not particularly concerned about observing the requirements for preserving the environment and carries them out simply under the pressure of world public opinion and governmental organs. It is noteworthy that, in order to avoid extra expenditure, many Western firms are trying to transfer their dirtiest production activities to the developing countries. In this connexion, we might refer to statistics that have been published by the United Nations, but I should like, by way of example, to refer to an article by Warren Hoge in connexion with pollution in the area of the Brazilian city of Cubatão that was published in the *International Herald Tribune* on 25 September this year.

15. The author of the article quotes from a statement made by Mr. Franco Benoffi, Executive Director of the FMB Steel Company that is part of the Fiat group:

"Foundry work is unavoidably polluting work, and it is no longer accepted by highly organized workers of the so-called developed countries. ... In view of these considerations, the iron foundry is an activity more suitable to third world countries."

This was a statement made by a competent businessman and it hardly needs any further comment.

16. What expenditure is necessary in order to convert contemporary industry into an ecologically "clean" method of production? According to the calculations of specialists for the United States, which spews out

into the natural environment approximately one half of the world's total pollution, the transformation required would cost approximately \$600 billion. Of course this is a tremendous sum, but it is equivalent to the military budget of that country for only four years.

17. Contamination is only one of the many deleterious consequences of man's interaction with nature. I should like to draw attention to a few others as well: the destruction of tropical forests, desertification and anthropogenic changes in the climate. Trees are a very important source of oxygen for the atmosphere. A number of developed countries at the present time have achieved a balance between the use and the growth of timber. However, in the tropical areas forests are being cut down over an area of more than 20 to 30 hectares every minute. This means that these will be completely wiped out in 40 or 50 years, which would have a considerable impact on the balance of oxygen in the atmosphere. It is obvious that the intensive felling of timber can be explained by the urgent needs of the developing countries, which are obliged to make use of their valuable and sometimes limited natural resources in order to obtain manufactured products from the West, and it is only by introducing a system of more just economic relations between countries that the situation in this regard can be corrected.

18. The loss of agricultural products as a result of desertification has threatened the well-being and sometimes even the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Calculations have shown that to put an end to this process and to make those lands fertile, a yearly expenditure of approximately 1 per cent of the present world military expenditures would be required over a period of 20 years.

19. Finally, in recent decades the impact of mankind on the climate has become more and more significant. Here I should like to refer to the results of the work done by the World Climate Conference which was convened by WMO at Geneva in 1979. The participants were the most highly qualified scientists from various countries and they pointed out that the increasing use of energy and the corresponding production of heat had already led to local changes in the climate and might in the future have even greater effects on the climate, and also that a world thermonuclear conflict would lead to serious changes in the climate. The Declaration adopted by the Conference includes the following words:

"The nations of the world must work together to preserve the fertility of the soils; to avoid misuse of the world's water resources, forests and rangelands; to arrest desertification; and to lesser pollution of the atmosphere and oceans. These actions by nations will require great determination and adequate material resources, and they will be meaningful only in a world at peace."<sup>1</sup>

20. The negative consequences of the rapidly growing and varied influence of mankind on the natural environment at the present time are causing alarm, which is felt by larger and larger segments of the population. Public organizations and political parties are emerging which are making efforts to preserve the environment.

<sup>1</sup> See E/1979/84.

21. Serious investigations carried out in recent years by scientists in various countries have shown that the rational utilization of the resources of our planet and the preservation or very careful transformation of the environment would provide ample opportunity for the growth and development of mankind in harmony with nature. However, this development should be based on co-operation between countries and should be in accordance with an agreed programme of a comprehensive nature. Such conclusions have been reached in a number of these studies. Such conclusions have been reached in a number of these studies.

22. At the same time it is clear that not only the carrying out of such a global programme but also its establishment will require the co-operation of all States, regardless of their social structures. This will be possible only provided that the arms race is ended and that durable peace and disarmament are achieved. I should like to recall in this connexion the words of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mr. Brezhnev, in the statement he made at the Congress of peace-loving forces in Moscow in 1974:

“Peace is not a question of security alone. It is the most important prerequisite for tackling the major problems of contemporary civilization. It is something that affects the very future of mankind, the future of our planet.”

23. Recent historical experience has borne out the correctness of those words. It is precisely when there has been relaxation of tension that it has been possible to undertake substantial international steps to study and to preserve the environment and to free it from certain forms of warlike activities. We might refer to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies [*resolution 2222 (XXI), annex*] and the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water.<sup>2</sup> Of importance also is the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques [*resolution 31/72, annex*], adopted on the initiative of the Soviet Union, and also the European Convention on Measures to Prevent Pollution of the Atmosphere.

24. In addition to submitting proposals for broad international agreements relating to the environment, my country is endeavouring to develop bilateral relationships in this field and has relevant agreements with many countries. On the basis of these, joint work on the preservation of the environment is being successfully carried out with Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and a number of other countries.

25. It is quite natural that the Soviet Union pays particular attention to co-operation with countries that are members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance [CMEA]. Thus, in 1974 it developed a programme of co-operation with CMEA member countries and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in regard to the environment and the

rational utilization of natural resources. More than 360 scientific research institutes and other institutes in the countries that are members of CMEA are taking part in this project.

26. The Soviet Union is actively participating in steps to prevent damage to the environment, in accordance with the plans outlined at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held at Helsinki in 1975, and particularly in the activities of UNEP and other international, intergovernmental and scientific organizations. It can be asserted that in recent years very useful experience has been accumulated regarding international co-operation in preserving the environment. This would indicate that we can tackle this problem on a planet-wide basis with the united efforts of all countries of the world. This task concerns one of the most important global problems which the facts of life themselves oblige us to consider from a purely practical angle.

27. The problem of preserving the environment of our planet has another important aspect to which the Soviet delegation would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly. Quite apart from the catastrophic consequences for both mankind and its environment if a new world war is not averted, the environment is even now being damaged, possibly irreversibly, by the military preparations of States.

28. Mr. Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of our Party has said “Saving our earth and handing it over to the next generation in all its richness and beauty, undistorted by the flames of a nuclear holocaust, is, we are convinced, something towards which the thoughts of mankind should be directed.”

29. What is necessary in order to do that? First and foremost we have to put an end to the arms race, which is continually being intensified. It is well known that it consumes huge sums of money and natural and other material resources, which thus cannot be used for the development and protection of the environment and the tackling of other important problems.

30. In this connexion, particular danger is presented by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm in 1972, proclaimed the principle that:

“Man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means of mass destruction.”<sup>3</sup>

31. In the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, on disarmament, it is stated that “Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization” [*resolution S-10/2*]. The fact that there are such weapons in the arsenals of States means that there is a risk of causing grievous and sometimes irreversible and irremediable damage to the human environment.

32. At the beginning of the 1960s atomic and nuclear tests led to the steady radioactive pollution of the entire surface of the earth. After the conclusion in

<sup>3</sup> See *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.73.II.A.14 and corrigendum), chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 480, No. 6964, p. 43.

1963 of the Moscow Treaty prohibiting nuclear tests in three environments, the pollution was reduced.

33. However, the danger of radioactive contamination of the planet has not been completely removed. We were reminded of that when, on 16 October of this year, China carried out a nuclear explosion of great power in the atmosphere. That explosion caused radioactive products with a long half-life to be scattered over the earth, possibly endangering the health of the populations and natural environments of many countries in addition to China's neighbouring States. Also as a result of the radioactive pollution of the atmosphere, a great danger was created for civil aviation. It should be emphasized that China is the only State which, despite broadly recognized international norms and requirements, continues to carry out nuclear tests in the atmosphere.

34. We also know that United States aircraft have lost atomic bombs near the coasts of Greenland and Spain, and that aircraft carrying nuclear weapons have crashed. And quite recently there was the incident of the American Titan II missile.

35. The war industry has contributed enormously to the pollution of the environment. Considerable damage was caused to the people of Indo-China as a result of the widespread use of toxic chemical substances. As a result, in the southern part of Viet Nam alone, about 40 per cent of the timber and forest land was destroyed. In Indo-China the United States army employed various methods of ecological warfare, making wide use of herbicides, defoliants and very potent toxic chemicals. That was the first time that artificial control of weather, i.e. rain producing, was used for military purposes.

36. As has recently become known, hundreds of military servicemen of the United States became seriously ill as a result of the effects of those toxic chemical substances. But what can we say about the tens or even hundreds of thousands of members of the civilian population of the countries of that area who were on the spot when those substances were being used?

37. In present circumstances, even the preparation and accumulation of chemical means of warfare represent a growing threat to mankind and his environment. The development and emergence of new forms of weapons of mass destruction and systems of such weapons could undoubtedly have even more pernicious effects on the environment.

38. Thus, conservation of the environment is very closely linked to the solution of the most important problem of the present day—that is, ending the arms race, preventing a world conflict, intensifying détente and developing co-operation among States. Therefore, motivated by such humanitarian concerns and considering the interests of all mankind, the Soviet Union has at this session put forward a proposal on the historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations and has submitted a draft resolution on this question [A/35/L.7]. In view of the fact that at the present time man's impact on the environment has become extremely significant and in many cases even endangers his existence, we propose that the historical responsibility

of States for preserving the environment of the earth for present and future generations be proclaimed.

39. We consider it important to draw the attention of States to the fact that the continuing arms race has extremely detrimental consequences for the human environment and makes it more difficult to find opportunities for international co-operation in preserving nature on our planet. We believe that a study of this matter is desirable and therefore that the Secretary-General should be requested to consider this, with the assistance of the Executive Director of UNEP. May I in passing say that the Executive Director has already done a certain amount of work along these lines.

40. We also believe that all States should be invited to take the necessary steps to preserve the environment and help to promote international co-operation in this field. The problem of protecting the environment on a global scale is complex and multifaceted. Therefore we have not seen fit at the present time to put forward a proposal on specific ways and means of tackling this problem. Such proposals should emerge as a result of further consideration by the United Nations of the views of States Members of the Organization.

41. We are very pleased to welcome the draft resolution on a draft World Charter for Nature [A/35/L.8/Rev.1]. We believe that the proposal of the Republic of Zaire is motivated by concern for nature and so we shall support that draft resolution.

42. The problem of preserving the environment, like other global problems, can be solved only by means of joint and serious efforts on the part of all States, in close co-operation. Only if the arms race is ended and if détente is expanded will it be possible fully to carry out such co-operation, to draw up global programmes for dealing with the problem and to find the necessary funds for their practical implementation. These problems are daily becoming more acute and any delay in action will lead to serious crises for all mankind in the span of a few decades.

43. The preservation of nature is a problem for all mankind, a problem that concerns the future. We are certain that the question will attract the attention of all States Members of the United Nations and that States will make efforts to solve it in the interests of both present and future generations.

44. The PRESIDENT: I now call on the Commissioner of State for Environment and Preservation of Nature and for Tourism of Zaire, Mr. Kamitatu Massamba, who will introduce draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1.

45. Mr. KAMITATU MASSAMBA (Zaire) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, since this is the first time I have spoken in the debates of the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, I should like to convey to you my warmest congratulations on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I should also like to express the gratification of my country at seeing in your lofty office the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, a friendly country with whom we enjoy excellent relations of co-operation.

46. At the same time, I hope I may be permitted to pay a well-earned tribute to Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the outgoing President and a worthy son of our continent.

47. In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly we had the privilege and honour of submitting on 11 June 1980 the required explanatory memorandum in support of the inclusion on the agenda of the item entitled "Draft World Charter for Nature" [A/35/141, annex I], which deals with the background and scope of and the need for a world charter for nature and I believe that it is sufficiently explicit to make it unnecessary for me to go over the question here.

48. Nevertheless, I should like to stress and highlight the fact that the prodigious scientific and technological adventure of mankind, the capacity of man to control nature and the environment to satisfy his needs—in other words, man's ability to be and remain a creator of civilizations and cultures, of all the artistic work which today constitutes the pride of mankind, in a word, the creative genius of man would not exist, could not be, without nature, that is apart from nature. The life of man itself, as it exists on earth, cannot be imagined without or apart from nature.

49. From this to the affirmation of an intimate, indissoluble link between nature and the life of man, with all that the latter implies in terms of achievements and cultural values is a short step, which we take the more happily in that that affirmation is not a subject of controversy.

50. To eliminate nature or significantly to destroy or alter it, directly or indirectly, would be to that extent to affect the normal life of man on earth; it would even put an end to it by destroying his ability to exist and to remain a creator of civilizations and cultures. In those regions of the world where the savannahs and forests have been eradicated before by the advance of desertification and droughts, man is already in search of new sites for his existence and sustenance. To preserve and protect nature is therefore also to maintain and prolong the life of man on earth and above all to ensure the continuity of his creative genius.

51. Therein lies the deep meaning, the true significance of the draft World Charter for Nature, which we have the honour and privilege of submitting for the approval of the international community. It is a code of conduct within the framework of which all the activities of mankind should take place. What we are asking is that all the nations of the world, all Governments, all men carry out their activities in recognition of the supreme importance of protecting natural systems, maintaining the balance and the quality of nature and of preserving natural resources for the very survival of the human being and of future generations.

52. The Republic of Zaire belongs to a group of developing countries whose every effort is bent towards organizing the progress of their peoples, towards the acquisition of abilities and capabilities that will allow them to control the environment and to transform it constructively for the satisfaction of their basic needs—in a word, towards their development.

53. But history teaches that in that process of transforming nature for the satisfaction of man's basic

needs, one must be responsible. That is to say, abuses must be avoided along with anything that might provoke the collapse of the economic, social and political structures of civilization. It is a question actually of controlling progress and avoiding useless destruction.

54. Pollution, destruction, alteration of nature attributable to wars, to acts of hostility that do not spare the environment or to excessive growth for the sake of growth are today evils that beset all mankind.

55. It is therefore the duty of each member of the international community to see to it that nature, which is the first condition of life and of the existence of man on earth, be preserved, maintained and renewed on a permanent basis while it is being used to meet the needs of man.

56. As far as we are concerned it is not a question of stopping progress, of prohibiting anyone from taking the measures necessary for development, nor of directing our action against a particular plan or activity of any country. It is a question of stressing the balance of the ecosystems which must be maintained and protected if we are to safeguard the nature of our species.

57. I therefore appeal to all Member States, in the interest of the survival of our species and the preservation of man's creative genius, to support the draft World Charter for Nature and draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1, which we have submitted.

58. The delegation of Zaire believes, moreover, that the draft resolution on the question of the historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations, which is the subject of agenda item 120 [A/35/L.7], takes an approach slightly different from ours, because, on the one hand, it places the emphasis on the individual responsibility of States—that is, national legislative and other measures that States may be encouraged to take—and, on the other hand, it highlights one of the many possible causes of aggression against nature—that is, the arms race—to the exclusion of other causes. Hence, that draft resolution complements ours.

59. If it were only a question of the individual responsibility of States to respect not only their obligations concerning the protection and preservation of nature, but also the purposes and principles pursued by the United Nations to ensure a world of peace and international co-operation based on justice, equity and the right of peoples to self-determination, in order to avoid the scourges they have experienced, as well as other foreseeable catastrophes, it would not even have been necessary to establish the United Nations. The measures that States can take on the national level must be based on the principles of conservation and an international code of conduct. That is embodied in the present draft World Charter for Nature, a new instrument of its kind, when compared to all the other existing instruments in this field.

60. Therefore, while the attention of States must be drawn to their individual responsibility to preserve nature, it is urgent, indeed imperative, that, on the international level, a code of conduct be adopted that would enable the world community to see how all States are conducting themselves in regard to the

conservation of nature and their resources, in order to avoid all kinds of harmful effects.

61. The draft resolution we have submitted on behalf of some 40 Member States is extremely important. It has a bearing on the short-term and long-term future and well-being of mankind. We ask all Member States to give their support to draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1, in the obvious interest of mankind.

62. Mr. FRELEK (Poland): The protection of the human environment is one of the crucial subject-matters of international co-operation. And, indeed, during the last decade some important efforts were undertaken by nations on a bilateral, regional and international scale. However, we remain at the initial stage when it comes to tackling seriously the world's most pressing environmental ills. Thus the motto "Only One Earth" is even more relevant today than it was in 1972, during the Stockholm Conference.

63. Since the environment is the sum total of physical and social resources available for the satisfaction of human needs, our deep conviction is that all natural resources of the earth must be safeguarded for the benefit of the present and future generations, that the earth's capacity to produce vital renewable resources must be maintained and, wherever practicable, restored or improved, and that the non-renewable resources must be employed in such a way as to guard against their future total exhaustion.

64. Future generations will most probably judge our activities on the basis of how far we succeeded in solving the problem of protecting the environment. I am afraid that that judgement might be very negative unless more rigorous efforts are made by the international community.

65. That is why we welcome the initiative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It adds a new dimension to the pressing question of international co-operation in the field of the environment.

66. Today as never before we are acutely aware of the increasing interrelationship existing between various aspects of politics, economics, science, technology and culture. We face global problems. These problems, including those related to the environment, can be solved only by international co-operation which is closely linked to the climate of the over-all relations among States. There is no doubt that that climate depends on the maintenance of peace and international security, and particularly on the halting of the arms race. That, practically speaking, is the prime condition for the successful solution of all global problems.

67. During the current session of the General Assembly, and especially in the general debate, there has been reflected the growing and widespread concern of the international community at the fact that vast material and intellectual resources are being diverted from peaceful pursuits, in the area of socio-economic development, to wasteful military programmes.

68. The world is now spending well over \$500 billion on the arms race, which means about \$1 billion a day. At the same time, in the developing parts of the world, malnutrition afflicts a quarter of all children, infant mortality rates are about eight times those in

industrialized countries, while less than half of primary-school-age children attend school.

69. Even a small reduction of the military programmes would go a long way towards solving some of these problems. One modern bomber costs on the average as much as it did to eradicate smallpox over a 10-year period. The cost of one tank would be roughly sufficient to construct several dozen modest schools.

70. The Assembly declared in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session, the first special session devoted to disarmament, that "Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger... to the survival of civilization". The 40,000 to 50,000 nuclear weapons which, according to some sources, are now in the arsenals of States would be sufficient to produce over 1 million Hiroshima-type bombs, representing something like 3 tons of TNT for every human being on earth.

71. Over and beyond that unimaginable overkill, nuclear weapons pose a very real threat to nature. *The New York Times* of 17 October 1980, in an article entitled "Limits of Military Power", stressed *inter alia* that

"... in a major nuclear war, the earth's ozone layer would be damaged and this would persist for years, resulting in such intense ultra-violet irradiation of the earth's surface as to cause crop failure by direct damage to plants and by major alterations of climate, and to induce intense sunburn in a few minutes and markedly increase the incidence of skin cancer in those exposed".

72. The apocalyptic development would be in addition to the well-documented deleterious effects of radioactive fallout on present and future generations. As is well known, the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific is still hardly habitable decades after the nuclear test explosions in that area.

73. But it is not only nuclear weapons that are or can be destructive of nature. There are areas in the world in which the massive use of herbicides and defoliants have left cultivable land scarred and denuded of life for years. What is particularly dangerous is the production and stockpiling of various kinds of chemical weapons.

74. The Polish delegation shares the view of the delegation of the USSR that it is the immediate and pressing duty of the United Nations and the international community at large to pay attention to our common historical responsibility for safeguarding and preserving nature in the interest of present and future generations. Indeed, present and future generations have one earth only, which is our common heritage.

75. Basing ourselves on the same premises, our delegation welcomes with great interest draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1, concerning agenda item 113, put forward by the non-aligned countries.

76. In that draft resolution the "destruction or alteration of natural systems, resulting, *inter alia*, from excessive consumption and abuse of natural resources, from conflicts and from wars" is deplored.

77. We are sure that the threats engendered by the arms race will be fully taken into consideration in the preparatory work on a draft world charter for nature.

78. The Polish delegation is deeply convinced that the draft resolution submitted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and so ably introduced this morning by Mr. Fedorov emphasizes the most important points and should be considered as a guideline for any further work on the problems of the environment. Its adoption and implementation would serve the best interests of all mankind.

79. Mr. DOMOKOS (Hungary): In recent decades man has been witnessing a world-wide deterioration of the environment, with oil tankers sinking, aircraft equipped with nuclear warheads crashing, toxic chemicals being dispersed over inhabited areas, flora and fauna being destroyed on a mass scale and pollution increasingly becoming a factor directly responsible for the deaths of human beings, while the indirect effects cannot even be assessed as yet.

80. These adverse phenomena have been followed by wide-ranging measures in many countries, with a growing number of scientists and institutions engaged in seeking their causes and searching for ways and means of solving the problems. Some countries set up new authorities and adopt more stringent regulations in an effort to control environmental damage, but new sets of environmental problems are nevertheless emerging.

81. While environmental measures can be taken mainly at the national level, the implementation of policies for the protection of the environment and the preservation of nature is no longer possible by national action alone. What is involved is global concerns which not only know no national boundaries but also perforce bring the inhabitants of far-away continents nearer together. It is becoming increasingly obvious that only planned, co-ordinated and thoroughly prepared co-operation can create favourable conditions for countries to carry out their national tasks effectively and take an active part, according to their means, in the concerted effort to combat pollution, which has come to threaten mankind as a whole.

82. It is precisely on the basis of these considerations that my delegation assigns great importance to the inclusion of the item entitled "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations", proposed by the Soviet Union for inclusion in the agenda of the present session of the General Assembly.

83. International co-operation for environmental protection produced significant results in conditions of détente in the 1970s. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held at Helsinki in 1975, adopted a broad programme, including measures which might most effectively prevent environmental damage and proclaimed the necessity of preserving the ecological balance. In November of last year a High-level European Meeting within the framework of ECE on the protection of the environment was convened in response to an initiative of the Soviet Union in accordance with the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. At that Meeting a new and successful step was taken in the adoption of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution<sup>4</sup> and the Declaration on Low-Waste and Non-Waste Technology.

84. My Government is highly appreciative of those instruments and it accordingly deposited the instruments of ratification not long ago with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Similarly, we attach great significance to the ECE Declaration of Policy on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, including Transboundary Pollution<sup>5</sup>, which was adopted at this year's session of ECE. It is our belief that this activity of ECE will be properly appreciated at the second review session of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is scheduled to begin in a few days at Madrid.

85. In welcoming the results achieved in an atmosphere of détente, we must emphasize that the magnitude and urgency of the problem call for continued action, because whatever effort has been undertaken at the national and international levels so far may be deemed to have produced but limited progress, which, it is true, slows down the process of deterioration of the environment but cannot halt and reverse it. At the same time, however, the existing results may serve as a basis for the further development of co-operation at the global and regional levels.

86. Given its geographical situation and economic conditions, Hungary has a special interest in co-operating to the extent of its potential, with other countries, near or far, in taking action to protect the environment, prevent pollution, reduce the effects of the damage already caused and safeguard assets. Our specialists play a significant part in the realization of the CMEA programme for the protection of the environment. A number of relevant agreements, based on reciprocal advantages, are being elaborated within the framework of good-neighbourly relations. We are willing to develop co-operation with all interested countries in the preservation of nature.

87. In our opinion, the significance of the Soviet initiative consists primarily in that it not only stresses the general importance of the problem but also calls attention to the close interrelationship of international co-operation for the preservation of nature and the efforts to restrain the arms race and to uphold and increase the results of détente. In this context, the draft resolution submitted likewise concentrates attention and action on the need to eliminate the harmful effects of military activities.

88. The consequences of the continuing arms race have adverse effects on the natural environment of mankind even if there is no war raging or if hostilities are confined to relatively small areas. Both the use of modern means of warfare and the testing of weapons almost always entail a deterioration of the environment. The hazards of nuclear test explosions are common knowledge. One cannot but emphasize once again the demand for atmospheric explosions to be discontinued once and for all and for the conclusion, with the participation of all nuclear military Powers, of an international convention which will ban for ever nuclear-weapon testing in all environments.

89. Also, military experts agree that some of the possible new types of weapons of mass destruction, that are not subject to the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environ-

<sup>4</sup> See E/ECE/1010.

<sup>5</sup> See E/ECE/1014.

mental Modification Techniques may be governed by laws of physics whose application is likely to destroy life together with the human environment or to render nature useless for or inaccessible to man for tens or even hundreds of years to come. For clarification of that point it will suffice to refer to radiological weapons, the use of which is for the time being not prohibited by an international agreement in force.

90. The doubtful results of past military intervention are shown by studies which give clear evidence of how the use of certain weapons fostered desertification in several parts of the world, particularly in the developing countries that fell victim to imperialist aggression.

91. There is one further aspect of the interrelationship between environmental action and disarmament. Everyone knows that the solution of environmental problems, which is one of the prerequisites for development, involves enormous costs, usually requiring large investments which entail high increases in production costs. It is clear that, given the scarcity of financial resources indispensable for development in the present-day world, even the most necessary investments suffer delay, and this can often lead to situations in which failure to act might entail irreparable damage to nature. It is only through the use of funds to be released as a result of the cessation of the arms race that a larger share of the material and intellectual resources of mankind can be earmarked for nobler purposes, among them the protection and improvement of our environment. It is only in this way that in addition to meeting pressing daily problems man will be able to devote considerable means to the carrying-out of long-term tasks that serve to lay firm foundations for the future.

92. Therefore, the report of the Governing Council of UNEP to the General Assembly at the present session is correct in stating that the

“... successful implementation of UNEP’s goals and effective international co-operation could only be achieved through universal, just and lasting peace in the world, through peaceful coexistence among States with different social, economic and political systems and at different levels of development, and through the strengthening and widening of international détente.” [See A/35/25, para. 60.]

93. My delegation is of the view that the protection of the environment is not an ecological question only; it has a political nature, as it is closely linked to the struggle for peace, social progress and the liquidation of colonialism. The preservation of nature is a long-term task. The question of the historical responsibility of States arises in that context. The problem can only be solved at the level of inter-State co-operation, because the cessation of the arms race requires joint political decisions, while rational utilization of natural resources presupposes constant co-ordination and the provision of guarantees of implementation through appropriate institutions, more international agreements and new and additional national regulations.

94. We are convinced that scientific-technical advances can and must be harnessed for the preservation and improvement of nature and that the Organization has an important role to play in the conservation of nature as the essential prerequisite for human life.

The preparation by UNEP of a report on the harmful effects of the arms race on nature and the compilation of the views of States on possible measures to be taken at the international level to preserve nature, as proposed by the Soviet Union, may be useful as a take-off point for the determination of the action to be undertaken jointly in the future.

95. In this context, preparation of a draft world charter for nature, as proposed by Zaire, deserves our attention as one of the possible steps in this direction.

96. Mr. DIDIER (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): When in 1975 the President of Zaire took the initiative, in addressing the twelfth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, at Kinshasa, of proposing the preparation by that organization of a draft world charter for nature, the nine countries of the European Community, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, immediately supported it.

97. The European Community has always encouraged studies aimed at promoting the preservation of nature, particularly within the framework of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, concluded in Washington, the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and of the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Another more extensive European framework is the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, which also deals with environmental matters.

98. The European Community in 1973 adopted its first programme of environmental action, which was followed in 1977 by a second similar programme. Among other measures, this programme contains measures to be taken against pollution of the water and the air, as well as a directive for the protection of birds within the European Community.

99. At the eighth session of the Governing Council of UNEP, the delegation of Zaire stated that the objectives of the draft World Charter can be considered as complementary to those of the World Conservation Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

100. I should like to say that in the eyes of the nine members of the Community, the draft Charter could elaborate and stress certain important aspects of the World Conservation Strategy. It is not only today that the nine members of the European Community have recognized the importance and benefits to be derived from preserving nature. Their being parties to a number of conventions, both regional and worldwide, is adequate proof of this. By the same token, their interest in this question has been shown in the adoption of national laws that each of them has promulgated.

101. Within this context, we accept the principle of the permanent sovereignty over natural resources,

<sup>6</sup> *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*, prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, with the advice, co-operation and financial assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wildlife Fund and in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1980.



but we should like to recall that that principle must be applied within the framework of the principles of international law.

102. The nine members of the European Community agree with the procedures proposed in draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1, in particular that the Secretary-General should address Member States and ask them for their views and observations concerning a draft world charter. By the same token, the co-operation and the recommendations of UNEP and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources will obviously be a major contribution.

103. The nine members of the European Community commit themselves to devoting their entire attention to this subject at this very moment, and we assure the Secretary-General of our full co-operation in order to enable him to submit to the General Assembly at the thirty-sixth session a constructive document that will certainly permit us to make significant progress in the field of the conservation of nature and natural resources.

104. Mr. KLISHIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR attaches major importance to the item now being discussed at the initiative of the Soviet Union at this session of the General Assembly entitled "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations", since this is one of the most important problems of mankind of world-wide scope.

105. The heightened interest in this problem takes many forms. It is primarily caused by the fact that at the present time growing use is being made of natural resources which is leading to their depletion, since many of them are non-renewable, and also by the concomitant increase in the pollution of the natural environment. According to the calculations of specialists, the earth's atmosphere alone absorbs hundreds of millions of tons of carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide and other harmful substances. The contamination of air and water masses and also of the soil by industrial wastes has a deleterious effect on many ecological systems and the deteriorating living conditions have an irremediable influence on human health. Tremendous damage has been caused to the natural environment as a result of military activity, the arms race and nuclear tests in the atmosphere. The most recent example of this was the high-powered nuclear explosion carried out by China this month, whose radioactive cloud at the present time continues to threaten the health of the inhabitants of many countries over whose territories it is passing.

106. Tremendous and irreparable losses have been caused by the predatory exploitation of natural wealth that is the result of the private-enterprise, capitalist economic system and also by the uncontrolled exploitation by monopolies and corporations in Western countries of the natural resources of the developing countries. In this connexion, the profit motive precludes any frugal attitude regarding natural resources or any concern about their conservation and renewal for the good of present and future generations. The transnational corporations transfer their "dirty" businesses—dirty in both the literal and the figurative

sense—from the developed capitalist countries to the developing countries.

107. The necessary conditions for an optimum relationship between mankind and the environment are created by the socialist system of production which is based on public ownership of the means and tools of production. In organizing the material means of production in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the workers, socialist society at the same time guarantees a highly responsible attitude towards the natural environment.

108. In our country, these activities are based on constitutional requirements. Article 18 of the Constitution, or Fundamental Law, of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic says:

"In the interests of the present and future generations, the necessary steps are taken in the Byelorussian SSR to protect and make scientific, rational use of the land and its mineral and water resources, and the plant and animal kingdoms, preserve the purity of air and water, ensure the reproduction of natural wealth, and the human environment."

Particular attention in this connexion is devoted to the land as the basis of the entire agricultural system, which is the very foundation of our life. In article 12 of the Constitution, it is pointed out that

"Collective farms, like other land users, are obliged to make effective and thrifty use of the land and to increase its fertility."

The Constitution also contains a special article that makes it binding on all members of society to deal carefully with the environment. Article 65 reads:

"Citizens of the Byelorussian SSR are obliged to protect nature and conserve its wealth".

109. On the basis of these constitutional principles, a wide-ranging system of legislation has been devised and is in operation to define and regulate ways and means of preserving and utilizing the earth and its mineral, water and timber resources and the vegetable and animal world.

110. All this has yielded positive results, as is convincingly demonstrated by the experience gained in the Byelorussian SSR. In the Republic, a whole range of scientific, technical, economic and social and other measures have been taken aimed at preventing and removing any possible threat of pollution of the natural environment and providing for the most rational utilization of natural wealth. These steps are an integral and organic part of the State's plans for economic and social development. They are being implemented with the active participation of both State and public organizations and the citizens themselves. The Republic has projected forecasts up to the year 2000 relating to possible changes in the biosphere as a result of the development of various branches of the economy and also forecasts relating to the rational utilization and conservation of individual types of natural resources which will create suitable conditions for us properly to plan, project, build on and use various sites.

111. We are also making large-scale efforts for land reclamation particularly in the Poles'ye area of

Byelorussia, which until recently was simply an impassable swamp. Now, instead of the swampy lands there are major specialized State farms in operation which are processing livestock products. From these reclaimed lands the Byelorussian SSR also now obtains one quarter of its entire annual vegetable production. Considerable success has also been achieved in the recultivation of worked-out peat beds and reworking of non-metallic mineral deposits, and a great deal has been done to preserve and increase timber resources by means of increasing productivity and improving the quality of the timber. Specific and purposeful activity is going on in our Republic to preserve water resources, the atmosphere and the animal world, and considerable importance is attached to anti-pollution devices and the recycling of water supplies at industrial sites.

112. The fact that daily attention is given to the preservation of the environment is shown by the growth in the appropriations for this purpose. Under the current five-year plan, environmental measures, including land reclamation, have cost the Republic more than 1 billion roubles.

113. At the same time, it is quite obvious that, in order to ensure proper conservation of the environment, one State or even a group of States cannot maintain the purity of the atmosphere, the earth and the oceans. This is a global task, one that is incumbent on all States without exception, and we are convinced that, provided there is good will and a rational approach to this problem, taking into account the objective circumstances, it is one that can and should be solved.

114. In this welcoming address to the participants in the High-level Meeting within the Framework of ECE on the Protection of the Environment, which was held last November at Geneva, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mr. Brezhnev, emphasized:

“We are not only carrying out a broad programme of protection of the environment and the rational utilization of its resources in our own country; we are actively co-operating and prepared to develop further co-operation with other countries to preserve the environment.”

115. It is understandable that such a major task as preserving the earth's environment for present and future generations can be effectively tackled only provided that there is peaceful coexistence among States, provided that there is détente and a constant and steady slackening of international tension, and provided that the arms race is ended and disarmament is achieved, as was so convincingly argued by the representative of the Soviet Union in his statement today.

116. The peoples should condemn and counteract the heedless actions of the aggressive forces of imperialism and hegemonism which are trying to undermine the process of détente. They have overtly embarked on a policy of encouraging an escalation of the arms race, thus increasing the danger of the outbreak of nuclear war, which would have catastrophic consequences for the entire planet.

117. The arms race in itself causes tremendous damage to nature. It is well known that the increasing production of the most sophisticated types of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction, is accompanied by an increase in dangerous fall-out, which contaminates water and air space and also the soil.

118. A real danger is involved in the stockpiling and transportation of large quantities of new weapons. Reference has already been made to several accidents which have occurred in the past few years involving military aircraft which were carrying nuclear weapons on board. Another ominous incident occurred during the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, when in the United States, in the state of Arkansas, there was an explosion of an intercontinental missile of the Titan II type equipped with a nuclear warhead 700 times as powerful as the bomb launched by the United States on Hiroshima. Furthermore, the Senate Armed Services Committee of the United States Congress, as recently reported in *The New York Times*, revealed that the North American Defence Command alone in the space of one and a half years, from January 1979 to June 1980, had recorded a total of 151 serious instances of military alerts and also 3,703 other such instances which proved to be false but which, nevertheless, led to an increase in the state of military readiness of the armed forces of the United States. Such incidents could in the long run lead to the outbreak of nuclear warfare, with all the consequences this would entail for the environment as well as for everything else.

119. There is great danger inherent in the fact that Western countries are planning further programmes for the development of chemical weapons which will affect the environment. Thus, last month the United States passed a bill making massive appropriations for modernizing and expanding its arsenal of chemical weapons. Not restricting themselves to the boundaries of their own country, the imperialist circles in the United States are placing weapons of mass destruction in the territories of their allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], thus extending the area subject to the danger of pollution.

120. The arms race is a tremendous burden on mankind. From 1960 to 1978 alone the military expenditures of the member countries of NATO increased threefold, but even that tremendous increase does not satisfy the insatiable appetite of the imperialists. Under Pentagon pressure, in 1978 the NATO countries undertook a programme for the further building up and modernization of their armaments to cover a period of 10 to 15 years, the total cost of which would be \$80 billion. Plans are being imposed on Europe for the stationing of new medium-range United States missiles equipped with warheads, and there is also a constant threat of the development of a neutron weapon.

121. It is easy to imagine what progress could be achieved in improving the material living conditions of people, including the preservation of the environment, if it were possible to devote to these ends the billions now being spent on the arms race. The arms race does not only swallow up colossal material resources. In the military branches of industry it takes up the talents of an army of scientists and engineers and millions

of highly qualified workers whose labours are so necessary for peaceful purposes.

122. Finally, the arms race harms nature inasmuch as it poisons not only the earth's atmosphere but also the atmosphere prevailing in international relations. It engenders mutual suspicion and increases mutual distrust. Thus it is becoming more difficult to find an opportunity for the undertaking of joint actions by States. It is essential that States unite their efforts in tackling tasks of a global nature and environmental protection is precisely that kind of task.

123. Therefore the delegation of the Byelorussian SSR considers that the General Assembly should focus the attention of the States Members of the United Nations on the catastrophic consequences which would result for man and his environment were there to be war with the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the fact that the ongoing arms race, including the testing of weapons of various types, particularly nuclear weapons, and the accumulation of chemical or toxic substances have a deleterious effect on the human environment and an unfavourable impact on the plant and animal worlds, and on the fact that the arms race absorbs material and intellectual resources and diverts them from the solution of urgent problems relating to the protection of the environment.

124. The proper implementation of the environmental protection programme would be helped by the universal use and observance of existing international agreements and treaties relating to the protection of the environment, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [*resolution 2373 (XXII), annex*]; the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water; the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof [*resolution 2660 (XXV), annex*]; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction [*resolution 2826 (XXVI), annex*]; the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques; and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, to which the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic is a party.

125. In our opinion, this would make it possible to take immediate steps to decrease the danger of war, particularly by the conclusion of an international treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests and agreement among the nuclear Powers that for a year from a given date no nuclear explosions would be carried out, as is provided for in the proposal submitted at the present session of the General Assembly by the Soviet Union under item 121, on urgent measures to reduce the danger of war [*see A/35/241*].

126. Equally appropriate are the proposals contained in the memorandum of the Soviet Union, on peace, disarmament and international security guarantees [*see A/35/482*], which is before the present session of the General Assembly under item 48. These include, among others, the cessation of the

production of all forms of nuclear weapons and the gradual reduction of stockpiles until they are completely eliminated; the limitation and reduction of strategic weapons; the strengthening of the non-proliferation régime; the prohibition of chemical weapons; the prohibition of new forms and systems of weapons of mass destruction; the reduction of armed forces and conventional weapons; the cessation of the arms race and disarmament on a regional basis; the reduction of military budgets.

127. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR considers that the adoption by the General Assembly at this thirty-fifth session of the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union on item 120 would be an important step towards the achievement of tangible results in organizing joint action by all countries to protect the natural environment.

128. We believe that the United Nations should solemnly proclaim the historical responsibility of States for the preservation of the earth's environment for present and future generations. In the words of the draft resolution, all States should be urged "to demonstrate due concern and take the measures, including legislative measures, necessary for preserving nature, and also to promote international co-operation in this field". We also support the proposal that the Secretary-General be requested, with the assistance of UNEP "to prepare a report on the pernicious effects of the arms race on nature". For its part, since it is a member of the Governing Council of UNEP, the Byelorussian SSR intends to make its contribution to the efforts of the Organization to carry out its task of preserving nature for present and future generations and making rational use of it in conditions that will eliminate war from the life of mankind.

129. We appeal to all delegations to support draft resolution A/35/L.7, of which the Byelorussian SSR wishes to become a sponsor.

130. The delegation of the Byelorussian SSR also supports draft resolution A/35/L.8/Rev.1 on a draft World Charter for Nature, which has been introduced today by the representative of Zaire.

131. Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of the German Democratic Republic welcomes the discussion here in the General Assembly of the item that has been proposed by the Soviet Union, entitled "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations".

132. The idea underlying this agenda item is in full accord with the purposes of the United Nations, for the intention is to develop international co-operation to serve mankind. The task of conserving the environment is becoming ever more significant. That was emphasized in the general debate by the representatives of many States, particularly States of the African continent.

133. At present, as it will be in the future, the environment is an irreplaceable material foundation for the existence of mankind. For science, culture, sports and tourism, the natural environment is and will continue to be an irreplaceable field of activity. As a source of leisure and rest for mankind, nature is unique. There can be no doubt, however, that the danger that

threatens nature is increasing. Mankind's intervention has had profound effects on nature, and in the past there have been serious concomitant effects. The fact that for many centuries there has been destructive exploitation of forests has seriously disrupted the ecological balance and has led to the growing erosion of the subsoil and, in the final analysis, to deserts.

134. At the present time, manufacturing processes, transportation and the process of human settlement are the prime causes, not only of dangerous contamination of the natural environment and a noise level injurious to the health of mankind but also of a considerable degree of impairment of the normal circulation of biological elements.

135. Furthermore, in its turn the arms race has a very detrimental effect on the natural environment. Modern weapons, particularly nuclear, chemical and other forms of weapons of mass destruction, when they are tested, when they are stockpiled, and when accidents occur, directly threaten the natural environment—not to mention the impact of their use in war. In this connexion we may recall the Viet Nam war, in which defoliation was carried out with the use of military chemical means that not only harmed the health of many persons and damaged agriculture for many years to come but also caused widespread soil erosion. That was the main cause of the creation of the conditions that led to the tremendous floods that occurred subsequently.

136. A growing understanding of this danger threatening the natural environment has prompted States to pay more attention to environmental matters in their economic and social development. The number of steps which are being taken to tackle such problems on a national level have increased. For example, in the German Democratic Republic, pursuant to the law on the protection of the environment, success has been achieved in preserving the water quality, reducing the emission of dust and in the preservation and effective utilization of available land as well as in the recycling of waste matter.

137. Further steps are being taken at the present time, in particular to reduce the overloading of sewage pipes, to lessen dust, noise and thermal overload and to rework former open-face quarries.

138. Some of those problems have been partially solved on a national basis, but a number of other problems have arisen in connexion with the over-all preservation, the preventive safeguarding and the improvement of the natural environment, which can be effectively tackled only in the context of close international co-operation. That is true, for example, of the preservation and utilization of maritime resources, the atmosphere and the biosphere and the efforts to combat desertification, to name but a few instances.

139. In the atmosphere of political détente of the 1970s, rather favourable conditions arose for the taking of international steps. I should like to recall the establishment of UNEP, which is now an effective instrument for the co-ordination of such activities and which, indeed, is making a positive contribution to international co-operation.

140. The signing of the Helsinki Final Act led to the successful holding of the High-level European

Meeting on environmental questions and to the conclusion of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. It has also resulted in the adoption of the Declaration on Low-Waste and Non-Waste Technology and on the recycling and reutilization of waste products.

141. As a result of the steps taken to curb the arms race and the conclusion of the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof in 1970, it has been possible to protect two thirds of the earth's surface from the effects of the arms race and from the damages it causes to the natural environment.

142. The signing of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959<sup>7</sup> has meant that an entire continent will be used only for peaceful purposes and thus for purposes which do not constitute a threat to nature.

143. The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, of 1963, has led to a noticeable drop in the radioactive contamination of the environment. May I point out, in passing, that between 1963 and 1969 the concentration of radioactive strontium in milk in the Berlin area fell to one third of its previous level.

144. The Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques, which came into force a few years ago, is of particular importance for environmental protection. However, that Convention is aimed simply at forestalling the utilization of specific techniques in warfare or other hostile activities.

145. The problems posed in the effects of the arms race on nature, however, still remain unresolved.

146. The incompatibility of the arms race with the vital interests of mankind is a widely acknowledged fact. Not only does the arms race reduce the actual security of States and deprive mankind of huge resources for its economic and social development, but it also represents a serious threat to the natural environment. That danger appears in two forms: first, the arms race causes damage quite directly to the natural environment and, secondly, the arms race makes it impossible to make available the funds which are so sorely needed to protect, to preserve and to improve the natural environment. That finding was borne out in the 1980 report of UNEP on the state of the environment.<sup>8</sup>

147. For example, It would be possible to prevent such harmful effects on the natural environment to a considerable degree if negotiations were to be successfully concluded on the prohibition of all nuclear-weapons tests and the prohibition of radiological and chemical weapons. A beneficial effect on the natural and human environment would undoubtedly result from urgently needed steps to halt the production of nuclear weapons and cutting back stockpiles thereof and at prohibiting the development of new forms and systems of weapons of mass destruction.

148. The funds thus made available could then be utilized for long-term work on guaranteeing the very

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 402, No. 5778, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> UNEP/GC.8/3 and Corr.1.

foundations of man's existence. According to international calculations, approximately one third of the funds projected for the creation and positioning of the American nuclear mobile land-based MX weapon systems, planned at a cost of at least \$33 billion, would be sufficient to finance: an international programme for maintaining the purity of the air, at a cost of \$5 billion; providing pure water to 1 billion people in rural areas and 200 million people in urban areas in the developing countries, at a cost of \$4 billion; and the development of renewable energy resources, at a cost of \$3 billion.

149. Those figures alone indicate the magnitude of the problems that could be solved if it were possible to put an end to the arms race and to cut back military budgets, primarily among the nuclear and other major military States.

150. Nor should we overlook the fact that the arms race actually reduces opportunities for international scientific and technological co-operation for the purpose of preserving the environment, since it threatens political détente and creates an atmosphere which is hostile to international understanding.

151. The delegation of the German Democratic Republic is particularly concerned about the protection of the environment, and primarily for the following reasons. The high density of our population—that is, 157 inhabitants per square kilometre—means that very careful use has to be made of a rather reduced area of the natural environment; it means that all avoidable damage must indeed be avoided. Furthermore, the largest accumulation of weapons exists in the centre of Europe, creating an incalculable threat to the natural environment of that region. Therefore, the people of my country are vitally interested in securing the greatest support for international preventive measures to preserve the environment; they are vitally interested in actively promoting the implementation of such measures.

152. For all those reasons, the German Democratic Republic decided to become one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/35/L.7.

153. In conclusion, my delegation would like particularly to stress that this draft resolution covers the full range of issues involved in the question of environmental protection—that is, it takes account of the allied political, economic, military and moral aspects. The purposes pursued by that text are in consonance with the vital interests of all peoples and States. It is our hope that this draft resolution will win broad support among delegations present here, and that we shall immediately get down to tackling its implementation.

154. Mr. KUČERA (Czechoslovakia) (*interpretation from French*): The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of the present session of a new item entitled 'Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations', which was proposed by the delegation of the Soviet Union.

155. Our position on this constructive and obviously useful initiative has already been expressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in his statement in the general debate. He stressed that

"A thorough consideration of this important proposal and the adoption of the necessary decisions would surely benefit the cause of peace, encourage the spirit of détente and contribute to the development of fruitful international co-operation."  
[18th meeting, para. 147.]

It is from that standpoint that we view the basic meaning of the draft resolution that has been submitted, as well as the lofty purpose that our discussions must pursue.

156. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is among those States that have a broad programme for the protection of nature. That is an integral part of our State's policy in regard to the environment. We make as many systematic efforts as we possibly can to obtain the best possible relationship between, on the one hand, our activities in the industrial and other fields and, on the other, nature. We do that in the interest of maintaining ecological stability in the most important spheres. In accordance with the principles of our foreign policy, we stress the development of mutually advantageous and necessary international co-operation. We participate actively in the work of UNEP and other international forums where the problems of the protection and preservation of nature are studied.

157. But that is only one side of the problem, albeit an important one. We feel even greater anxiety now about the dangerous consequences for nature in general, and its living and natural resources, produced by the continuing arms race, military preparations, the testing and perfecting of extremely dangerous weapons, and, particularly, the direct military activities of States. It is precisely to those matters that the Soviet draft resolution draws our attention.

158. In the light of that long, but certainly incomplete, list illustrating the serious consequences that armament entails for nature—and the representative of the Soviet Union and other representatives have already referred to this today—the causes of the deep concern that we share with the entire international community are quite obvious. For today, at a time of peace, armament and other military preparations are causing considerable—and perhaps irreversible—damage to nature and to mankind. A whole series of disquieting facts demonstrates that the mere development and production of all types of weapons—in particular weapons of mass destruction, but also conventional weapons—and their actual use in an armed conflict could not but have disastrous consequences at the present time.

159. In that connexion, we must also draw attention to the deleterious effects of the military industry and the production of various types of armaments, nuclear matériel, chemical substances and other materials, as well as their use and stockpiling. According to our information, for example, because of the contamination by industrial enterprises, the majority of which are involved in military production, the lower Rhine basin each year carries 120,000 tons of iron, 85 tons of mercury, and 1,000 tons of arsenic and other toxic substances capable of destroying the entire life of that waterway, and also the area around the river mouth.

160. An endless series of such examples could be given. Production for military purposes and the military industry are causing serious damage to the nature of

our planet; they contaminate our soil, our water, our atmosphere; they pose an ever-increasing threat to the entire vegetable and animal kingdom.

161. It is common knowledge that, because of man's activities, including the various forms of his military activities, about 200 species of birds and more than 100 species of mammals are threatened with extinction. That irreversible shattering of the balance results basically from military preparations by States.

162. Nuclear-weapon tests, including the latest atmospheric test by the People's Republic of China, continue to poison our planet's atmosphere and cause radioactive fall-out which threatens human life, thus contaminating entire continents and oceans with radioactive materials, including substances with a long radioactive half-life.

163. Industrial wastes, to which the military industry contributes to a large extent, lead to the constant increase of the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which in turn increases the intensity of ultraviolet rays in the upper atmosphere, creating the so-called greenhouse effect. This could also cause irreversible damage. Genetic and other damage suffered by human beings and other living organisms constitute another extremely dangerous threat.

164. We are increasingly concerned over the ever-growing number of accidents either in the sphere of production or, even more dangerous, as regards the means of modern warfare, including nuclear rockets which, being free of any control, are a direct danger not only to nature but also to international peace.

165. In considering the question of the responsibility of States for the preservation of nature, it is impossible to overlook the catastrophic consequences of the American aggression against the fraternal people of Viet Nam and other countries during the years of the so-called second Indo-Chinese war. Great quantities of natural resources and areas of forests were either wholly or partially destroyed through the massive use of chemical weapons, herbicides and other conventional weapons. During that conflict 14 million bombs were dropped on Vietnamese soil. It has been calculated that in order to create a single crater of the kind caused by a bomb of about 240 kilograms, it would be necessary to displace 67 cubic metres of earth, requiring almost 500 man-hours of work. This clearly shows the dangerous effects on nature of the massive use of contemporary methods of warfare, not to mention the human suffering, it causes.

166. If today about 40 hectares of tropical forest, which constitutes the main source of oxygen on our planet, dies every minute, it is understandable that the question of the preservation of nature on our planet focuses the attention of the States of the world on their historical responsibility in this respect, as indicated in the draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union.

167. In these circumstances, everyone understands the importance of measures leading to the curbing of the arms race and disarmament. Practically every international agreement in this field, from the 1963 Moscow Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water to the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification

Techniques, has played an extremely important role in the preservation of the environment.

168. Unquestionably, the struggle to protect the environment is very closely linked to the struggle to achieve disarmament and to do away with the means of waging war. The understanding and the scrupulous application of this principle should, we believe, be the point of departure for the solution of these problems and in order to ensure that all States of the world fulfil their historical responsibility for the preservation of nature on our planet and of all its riches for present and future generations.

169. But, if we do not take into account the other important aspects of this draft resolution, this over-all problem will have limits imposed on it. This is why we wish to stress that we believe that the question of the preservation of nature on our planet is very closely linked to the problems of economic and social development. As is stressed in the draft resolution under consideration, the arms race diverts enormous material and intellectual resources from the solution of the urgent problems of the preservation of nature, and this obviously is a matter of crucial importance as far as development is concerned.

170. Naturally, the arms race diverts enormous resources. Thus, for example, the means used for the extraction of raw materials of military importance could be used much more effectively, in other sectors of the national economy if lasting peace were to be assured. Furthermore, the uncontrolled exploitation of these mostly limited resources leads very often to increasing the economic and political dependence of the developing countries on foreign capital and transnational corporations on the one hand and hinders the reconstruction of their own industries on the other.

171. The Czechoslovak delegation considers that planned and constructive international co-operation is an indispensable condition of an effective solution of the problems relating to the preservation of the environment. Experience has shown that individual approaches based upon different points of departure weaken the over-all efforts of States and prevent the achievement of significant progress. The multilateral and global character and the complexity of these problems emphasize the need for the adoption of common principles and points of departure, in order to ensure co-ordination of the activities of States on the widest possible international basis.

172. We believe that the draft resolution of the Soviet Union quite justifiably requires that the States Members of the United Nations express their views on both appropriate measures of national control and those measures which might be adopted at the international level to encourage co-operation in this field. This would lay a solid foundation for a more detailed consideration at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the question of the historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature.

173. The prospects for the solution of such a vast and universal problem as that which we are now considering depend to a large extent on the strengthening and deepening of the process of international détente, the elimination of the danger of war and the creation of conditions conducive to peaceful development and progress throughout the world. If we do not

eradicate the true causes of international tension, which first and foremost lie in the efforts being made by certain countries to achieve military superiority, the question of the preservation of nature on our planet and the rational exploitation of its resources will become a very difficult problem to solve. At the same time, we greatly appreciate the constructive and humane nature of the present initiative of the Soviet Union, its approach to the strengthening of the bases of peaceful co-operation among the States of the world

and its true significance for the future work of the Organization in one of the most important aspects of international life, namely, the preservation of nature on our planet.

174. For the reasons that I have just given, the Czechoslovak delegation fully supports draft resolution A/35/L.7. We are firmly convinced that it will be adopted unanimously by the Assembly.

*The meeting rose at 1.00 p.m.*