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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE
STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Thirty-fourth year

Letter dated 13 February 1979 from the Permanent Representative of
Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 14 February 100 years will have elapsed since a war of conquest as a result of which Bolivia, which formerly had 400 kilometres of sea coast, was left completely surrounded by the Andes and has ever since suffered the serious consequences of a process of spoliation which has most adversely affected its development and which, unfortunately, has not yet been redressed.

In the light of United Nations doctrine, which expresses the principles of justice which now inspire the international community, Bolivia's land-locked status is a monstrous injustice and a continuing challenge to peaceful coexistence, to which the people of Bolivia has resolutely dedicated itself.

For these reasons, on this solemn and melancholy anniversary the Government of Bolivia, expressing the feelings of its people, felt it to be its duty to issue the attached statement. Because I believe that this statement reflects the nation's feelings on recalling this painful event in our history, I request you to arrange for it to be distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mario ROLON ANAYA
Ambassador

ANNEX

Statement by the Government of Bolivia

Today marks the one hundredth anniversary of a sad day in the annals of the history of the Americas. On 14 February 1879, with no prior declaration of war, the Chilean Navy invaded the defenceless Bolivian port of Antofagasta, thus initiating a long-planned war of conquest. This conflict led to the loss of all 158,000 km² of the Bolivian coast, with the ports of Antofagasta, Mejillones, Cobija and Tecopilla.

Bolivia's rights to this territory are indisputable and have been fully recognized by Chile, as is proven beyond all doubt by, among other documents, the political constitutions promulgated in that country up to 1833, which expressly stated that Chilean territory "extends from Cape Horn to the Atacama Desert". All the contemporary maps confirm that fact.

When Bolivia became independent, its frontiers, as laid down by the "uti possidetis juris of 1810", extended to Latitude 27° south. Under the pressure of Chilean expansionism, it had to give up a segment of its sea coast extending over three degrees of latitude under the Treaty of 1866.

Bolivia's maritime sovereignty is also confirmed by several frontiers treaties signed and ratified by both countries, including the 1874 treaty establishing an immutable frontier at Latitude 24° south.

The discovery of guano, nitre, copper, silver and other natural resources in that region of Bolivia and regions of southern Peru aroused the covetousness of the Chilean oligarchy, with its links to interests outside the continent, and paved the way for aggression. Faced with this threat, and as a purely defensive measure, Bolivia and Peru concluded the Treaty of Defensive Alliance of 1873.

Bolivia's pacific and conciliatory attitude was not shared by Chile, which already had a plan of conquest in readiness.

The Pacific War started with the occupation of Antofagasta, exactly a century ago, and Chile's military action against two poorly-equipped adversaries culminated in the occupation of the entire Coastal Department of Bolivia and of important and extensive areas of Peru, including the taking of Lima.

The invader imposed the 1883 Treaty of Ancón on Peru and the Truce Pact of 1884 on Bolivia. Under the latter instrument Bolivia was forced to accept the occupation of its coast by the Chilean army until such time as a frontier treaty "signifying a firm and lasting peace" was signed.

On 20 October 1904, confronted with the Chilean threat to renew hostilities, Bolivia had to consent to sign the inappropriately named treaty of "peace, friendship and justice".

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As evidence of the aims that Chile was pursuing in the Pacific War, it is useful to quote from a note addressed to the Bolivian Government on 13 August 1900 by the Minister Plenipotentiary of Chile, Abraham Konig, which states "Our rights derive from victory, the supreme law of nations; we already knew that the coast is rich and is worth many millions. We are keeping it for its value; if it were not valuable, there would be no advantage in keeping it".

Mr. Konig was right. The wealth of the Bolivian coast laid the foundations for Chile's economic development. The nitre and copper mined in that region have been its chief export products throughout this century.

Today, with the huge copper resources of Chuquicamata, situated in territory that used to belong to Bolivia, Chile ranks second among the world's copper producers and first among copper exporters, with about 40 per cent of world reserves.

The foregoing is a summary of the history of Bolivia's loss of its outlet to the Pacific, a situation which has for a century prevented its free and sovereign access to the major ocean highways and obstructed its economic and social development.

Public opinion throughout the Americas and the world has acknowledged the justice of Bolivia's cause in innumerable statements and declarations, and with this moral support Bolivia reiterates its steadfast determination to regain its access to the sea in conformity with the spirit of justice and peace by which international relations must be guided.

Bolivia does not and will never give up its vital right to regain access to the sea.
