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LETTER DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1976 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I.
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the letter which the Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Council on 29 January (S/11954).

In that letter the Permanent Representative of Iceland attempted to refute the following passage in the statement of the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom in the Security Council on 16 December 1975 (S/PV.1866, p. 13):

"During the 1960s the Icelandic fishermen seriously overfished the herring stocks around its shores, which by 1967 had sunk to a critically low level."

The United Kingdom Government stand by that statement. The herring stock off Iceland is a mixture consisting partly of fish spawned off the coast of Norway and partly of fish spawned off the coast of Iceland. The latter formed the major part of the total herring catch in waters around Iceland during most of the years during the 1960s, and it is they which were, in the view of the United Kingdom Government, overfished by Icelandic fishermen. A recent Icelandic assessment of "Icelandic herring" contains the following paragraph:

"It appears that the dramatic decline of the Icelandic herring stocks was primarily due to a recruitment failure during a period of high fishing mortality and the stocks were reduced to such a low level that they became virtually unable to produce average or large year classes." (Document CM1973/H:4 of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.)

The annex to the letter of 29 January 1976 from the Permanent Representative of Iceland consists of an extract from a report by the Liaison Committee of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea which, in its own words, "deals solely with the Norwegian spring spawning component of the Atlanto-Scandian stock" (see para. 69 of the Report). The statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom on 16 December 1975 concerned Icelandic spawned herring, not Norwegian.

An account of what in fact happened in connexion with the Atlanto-Scandian herring was set out in the Memorial submitted by the United Kingdom Government to

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the International Court of Justice on 31 July 1973 in the Fisheries Jurisdiction Case (United Kingdom v Iceland) (I.C.J. Pleadings, Fisheries Jurisdiction Vol. 1, at pp. 294-296). Paragraphs 85 and 86 of the Memorial refer particularly to the destruction of Icelandic spawned herring.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) James MURRAY
Chargé d'Affaires
