



President: Mr. Imre HOLLAI (Hungary).

AGENDA ITEM 140

Observance of the quincentenary of
the discovery of America

1. The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Ecuador to introduce the draft resolution.

2. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to submit for the consideration of the General Assembly draft resolution A/37/L.36, sponsored by all the countries of the Western hemisphere as well as by Equatorial Guinea, Italy, the Philippines, Portugal and Spain, on the observance of the quincentenary of the discovery of America, commemorating an event which is perhaps the most significant in world history. The representative of the Dominican Republic, which took the initiative in this matter, will also be making a statement on the subject.

3. It can be said that, barely five centuries ago, the fact that this planet was round was confirmed and the American continent began to emerge in the world as then known, giving rise to a complete reappraisal of values in the history of mankind, which thus entered the modern era. It can also be said that at the end of 500 years of universal presence, unresolved problems remain among the American peoples, as proved by the agenda for this session of the Assembly.

4. The historical event referred to in the draft resolution, namely, the arrival in America of the three Spanish caravels, under the command of the visionary and determined Admiral of the High Seas Christopher Columbus, in San Salvador in the Bahamas of today, formerly known as Bajamar, was a decisive step in evolving an overall picture of our planet.

5. On the other hand, the "discovery" in its turn represented a stage in the whole chain of explorations and voyages, studies and beliefs which had taken place in oceans and countries. The world as conceived by the Babylonians and Phoenicians, the voyages of the Egyptians and the Romans, and the Atlantis of the Greeks, right up to the voyages of the brave Vikings such as the Norwegian Eric the Red, who visited North America, the mythical voyage of the Irishman Saint Brendan, whose name is commemorated in so many places in our America, the voyages of Marco Polo, the Asian migrations and the voyages between the Pacific and Polynesian continents: all of that culminated in the fascinating adventure of Columbus in the unknown seas. Thus, what is known as the "dis-

covery" was a meeting of history and geography of tremendous consequences for humanity.

6. Spain's role in the discovery was decisive in the year during which the political, although not the cultural, presence of the Arab peoples ceased in the Iberian peninsula, a year in which stress was laid on the humanism—also universal—of the European Renaissance. Examples of Moorish art brought by the Spanish ships survive among the Latin American peoples in architecture, decoration, science, poetry and in the language itself.

7. Furthermore, it was not just a matter of a "discovery", a word derived from Europe and maintained by tradition, out of respect for historians and custom. An even more important aspect was the encounter between two worlds: the new world immediately began to make its contribution in the form of civilizations, peoples and climate, distinctive and different products, and opportunities which opened up further horizons both for the Americans themselves and the Europeans, and the nations of other continents.

8. In the same way, our peoples in the Americas, by a gradual revelation of their mystery and their ages of evolution for the enlightenment of the Western world, brought the multiplicity of their civilizations, such as the Aztec, the Inca and the Maya, with personalities like Montezuma and Atahualpa, the last Inca of Quito, and the contribution of the Caribbean peoples, the North American peoples, the Quitus and the Andean Chibchas, the Guarani and Araucanian Indians and the other peoples of South America. But beyond the exploits of Balboa and Magellan, there were the Philippines, before we were at last to complete the circling of the globe and discover the western route to China and India.

9. Thus began a new stage in the history of the world, one marked, it is true, by wars and injustice, but also by achievements in law, science, art and progress, in search of ever more equitable ways of coexistence, right up to the present day, the day of international law, of the United Nations and of planetary exploration.

10. The spiritual traditions transmitted to the peoples of America from overseas civilizations merged with the contributions of our world to the culture and well-being of the human race, and we thus form part of the great treasure represented by the cultural and artistic heritage of our time, which is becoming increasingly interdependent and universal.

11. The adventure of Columbus's voyage had the effect of determining the true form and dimensions of the earth. But the goal of the Admiral—a visionary and a genius, as is shown by the fact that inspiration could prevail even over the established scientific and ecclesiastical opinion of the time—was precisely that of reaching Asia by the western route of Europe.

Therefore, to this knightly quest of an ideal, which was fervently believed in, encouraged and supported by the great Spanish Queen Isabel the Catholic, he gave the name "the Undertaking of the Indies". He therefore sought the lands of the Great Khan and thus believed he was in the fabulous regions of China and Japan of which Marco Polo had spoken 230 years before. It was then that America entered the pages of history and took its place in the progress of the world.

12. Columbus, that extraordinary navigator, with wide experience in cartography and the maritime skills acquired in Portugal and Genoa, also carried out a careful exploration of the Americas in the Caribbean region, where the legendary Antilles were located. Names which are still maintained today were given by him to such places as Dominica, Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Santa Maria of Montserrat, Santa Maria la Antigua, Trinidad, which was the site of the earthly Paradise; and there were others which later changed their names but not their significance, such as San Juan Bautista, or Puerto Rico; Hispaniola, or the Dominican Republic and Haiti; Juana Island, which today is Cuba and which Columbus believed to be the peninsula of an Asian continent; or the noble island of Cipango, mentioned in Toscanelli's map; apart from the great group of islands which Columbus called overall the Eleven Thousand Virgins.

13. Since that time, the Caribbean has in its turn been the theatre of a whole era of explorations and discoveries or of new endeavours to improve the knowledge of our hemisphere and to succeed in opening up the lands that were on the other side of our America by the Pacific Ocean routes to Asia, Africa and once again back to the Old World, Europe.

14. In the United Nations we deal with current notions of international law and human rights. It is therefore appropriate to recall here that gradually there emerged from the New World new juridical and philosophical notions. Columbus's first letter to the Spanish kings spoke of having met peoples who lived in a state of happiness because they were free and cordially disposed—notions which caused considerable surprise in what was then still the semi-feudal environment of Europe. Later on it was necessary to establish legislation with a clear orientation towards human rights to stop abuses and exploitation, as was done by the Laws of the Indies. Here in the New World parliaments and councils emerged, anticipating the era of the republics, and here was lit the flame of political liberties, whose ardour generated the process of independence of the American peoples until, with the contributions of other regions, it achieved its most recent creation, the United Nations, which we hope will advance towards complete realization of global interdependence.

15. In this process of particular significance for us in the Americas who speak Spanish, it should be pointed out that, once we had overcome the problems of our own epic and of our own political independence, we looked fraternally and with solidarity, in our culture and the progress of our destiny, to our mother country, Spain, in the full conviction of the significant contribution of the Spanish language and the Christian faith, which we have shared throughout three centuries of coexistence and share today, in a new era of

co-operation among the autonomous and sovereign Iberic-American peoples, with similar concern for the defence of freedoms, with modern systems of government, respect for sovereignty and the peaceful solution of disputes and observance of the norms of law and international co-operation.

16. It is therefore timely that in the General Assembly, which has as its symbol, on the flag of the United Nations, an azimuthal view of the world seen from the north, we should stress the concern of the peoples which from the south are seeking a consolidation of the global development of our planet in the 500 years of its geographical consolidation by the stepping up of the North-South dialogue in which we are involved. Therefore, taking a break from the torrent of confrontation, tension and condemnation which sometimes bedevil our debates, the peoples of the world, the peoples of the United Nations here, we who have undertaken in our Charter "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" must seek unanimous support for the draft resolution, which, I repeat, emerged from the initiative of the delegation of the Dominican Republic and which highlights one of the major events in human history, does not exclude any other voyage or discovery, but is simply a cordial statement on the part of the peoples of the New World to the whole international community of the United Nations.

17. Mr. del ROSARIO CEBALLOS (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Dominican Republic, part of the old Hispaniola, one of the first discoveries in America, is particularly honoured and grateful that its Government's idea about observing the quincentenary of the discovery of America should have received such a warm reception on the part of Spain, our mother country, all the Latin American countries, the Philippines, Italy, Portugal, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea and other countries members of the General Assembly.

18. It was of particular satisfaction to us to hear the speech of the Foreign Minister of Spain, Mr. José Pérez Llorca, when he said,

"On 12 October the decade that will culminate in 1992, the date which will mark the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, will begin. When on that dawn in 1492 the three Spanish vessels reached the coast of America, communication was established between the old lands of Europe and a fabulous continent which its discoverers called the New World. The earth became round and history became universal.

"Let me recall that event to the Organization the very aim of which is universality. The role played by Spain in that discovery justifies my mentioning to the Assembly now a proposal by the Dominican Republic that the Assembly declare the year 1992 the year of the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. The Spanish Government supports and welcomes that initiative without reservation.

"We believe that the responsibility for commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery should be universal, so as to bring to every corner of the world and to the mind of all the memory of the American past, its present reality

and its future promise—a future in which Spain sees one of the great hopes of our time.” [9th meeting, paras. 245-247.]

19. Also, our Foreign Minister, Mr. José A. Vega Imbert, in his statement to the Assembly [33rd meeting], expressed his gratitude to the Foreign Minister of Spain for that reference to the Dominican Republic’s initiative.

20. We have been able to note with great satisfaction that draft resolution A/37/L.36 obtained the immediate support of 37 countries, and we would like in particular to refer to the proverbial enthusiasm and dedication given to this idea by the representative of Ecuador, Mr. Albornoz.

21. In taking the initiative to submit the draft resolution to the current session of the General Assembly, the Dominican Republic did so in the light of the great importance for humanity of the fact that a man convinced the Spanish Crown to sponsor his adventurous voyage in the search for new horizons, principally commercial ones, in the direction of the East Indies.

22. Christopher Columbus, that intrepid mariner, altered the course of history in attempting to find the shortest and most direct route to the East Indies in search of legendary spices which were important to trade at the time.

23. In requesting the support of other delegations in the Assembly, we should like to point out that we consider it just and significant that the Dominican Republic, the first bridge of culture and civilization from the Old World to the New, took the initiative in proposing the observance of the quincentenary of the discovery of America. I say “significant”, because it was precisely on the island of Santo Domingo, discovered by Christopher Columbus in the course of his first voyage in 1492, that the first European colony in the New World was founded. This island flourished in the sixteenth century and was the centre from which emerged the *conquistador* spirit of Spanish civilization and its later spreading to other islands of the Caribbean and the American continent.

24. Santo Domingo de Guzmán was the gateway through which the thinking and new forms of Western life entered and spread to all parts of America. It was Spain’s gateway to the New World. We believe it is right that that country which Philip II called “the keys of the West Indies” should be the first to raise its voice to pay tribute to a man who so well deserves it.

25. The inhabitants of our island of Santo Domingo feel very proud that in its heartland are deposited the remains of the illustrious navigator Christopher Columbus, who wrote in his diary about the beauty of its mountains, its valleys and its woods as “the most beautiful land upon which human beings have ever laid eyes”. The island of Santo Domingo was also the place to which he sent his son Diego as the first Viceroy of the West Indies; thus was established the first viceroyalty on American soil; and we still preserve in all its splendour the fortress in which he resided.

26. An idea that at one point in history attracted great attention and universal enthusiasm was the construction in our country of a monument to that

illustrious navigator, which would be known as the “Columbus beacon”. It was called a beacon because from that monument, constructed in the form of a cross, there were to rise to the sky rays of light projecting onto it the sign of the cross which Columbus was the first to bring to this part of the universe.

27. Circumstances prevented this idea from being fully realized, but the base of that monument was constructed. Perhaps this is the right time to return to this old idea so that there can be engraved in American stone the gratitude of this continent and the whole universe to that great navigator and to the Spanish Crown which sponsored his voyage.

28. We hope that other voices will join with ours and the other 36 countries which have so spontaneously associated themselves with us in paying a tribute to Admiral Christopher Columbus and the Spanish Crown in observing the quincentenary of such an important historic event, by adopting the draft resolution that we have submitted for the consideration of the Assembly.

29. Mr. de PINIÉS (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In 1992, the quincentenary of the discovery of America by Spain will be observed, an event in history which constitutes an achievement with the most important consequences for history and which provided an opportunity for contact and understanding between different civilizations and peoples on earth, according to an ideal of universality which underlies the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

30. I should like first to thank the 30 countries which signed the request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the current session, entitled “Observance of the quincentenary of the discovery of America”. In this request, contained in a letter dated 15 October 1982, the following is stated:

“The historical event of the arrival in America of the three caravels, flying Spanish flags and commanded by Admiral Christopher Columbus, was a decisive step towards a clear conception of our planet and opened up opportunities for contact and understanding between the various civilizations and peoples of the earth, culminating in the ideals of universality reaffirmed in the era of the United Nations.” [A/37/244, p. 1.]

31. As a consequence of this initiative, adopted unanimously by the General Committee and then by the General Assembly, we have before us a draft resolution in whose operative part it is decided to declare 1992 as the Year of the Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of America and in whose preamble are recalled the decisive role played by the Spanish nation and Crown in this discovery, as well as the growing contribution by the peoples of the New World to progress and understanding among nations.

32. It is important to recall that the arrival in the New World of the three Spanish caravels under the command of Christopher Columbus and their dropping anchor at the island of San Salvador on 12 October 1492 was a collective exploit, in which the main actors were Spain and the peoples with which there then began a fruitful human, cultural and political exchange that was to bear mature fruit in the centuries to come. In celebrating the quincentenary of the discovery of

America, Spain is celebrating five centuries of common life with the Latin American peoples.

33. When the three Spanish caravels reached the islands of the Caribbean a new period in history was begun, in which America and Europe, through Spain, entered into fruitful contact. At that time, Christopher Columbus himself named some of the Caribbean islands that are today sovereign States; he established the first administrative centre of the Spanish Crown in the island of Hispaniola, today shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Various expeditions set out from there to explore and incorporate into the Hispanic world the old cultures that had already flourished in the New World, promoting in their turn other expeditions that culminated first in the exploration of the whole of America, and then in the crossing of the Pacific Ocean to the Philippines and the circumnavigation of the planet.

34. Therefore it can be said, as stated in the preamble to the draft resolution we have before us, that the arrival of the three Spanish caravels in the New World, under the command of Admiral Christopher Columbus, constituted "a decisive step towards the achievement of a clear conception of our planet".

35. The undeniable primacy of the Spanish nation and Crown in this discovery should not, of course, lead us to adopt a rigid or monolithic view of history. The vast enterprise of the discovery and colonization of America should be understood by us in terms of the diversity and relativity represented by the humanist Christianity of the Renaissance.

36. As His Majesty the King of Spain said, when he was invested with the degree of Doctor *honoris causa* of the University of San Marcos, referring to the Hispanic world:

"We are one world, the world of the language and culture we have created together down many centuries, that comes from Greece, from Rome, from Christian tradition, from Jewish and Muslim contributions, from the whole of the very rich history of America, fragmented until it came together with the history that came from Europe, in an original and now indivisible creation of mutual historical cross-fertilization."

37. Recognition of the differences involved in the diversity of the peoples that make up our fatherland is perhaps something that is followed with the greatest of interest by the Spanish both in America and in Spain itself. In this sense, the mingling of blood, a fundamental element of the Latin American heritage, must be defined not only as a biological and cultural fact, the fruit of centuries of coexistence, but as a result of the intermingling of different creeds, races and ways of life. The great historic Spain which we are all descended from is the eternal enemy of all racism and can take pride in the mingling of bodies and spirits. It would be over-simplistic to conceive of Latin America as the result of two components—the indigenous and the Iberian. In the first place, we are dealing with a vast continent of great internal variety. The indigenous component found by the discoverers of the New World was absolutely heterogeneous from both the racial and cultural points of view. For their part, the peoples that came from the Iberian peninsula, although they brought with them a more homogeneous

culture, represented quite considerable differences; the culture of the people from Catalonia, from the Basque country, from Extremadura, from Andalusia, from Galicia and from Portugal each brought their own special contributions which often mingled with the different indigenous ethnic strains.

38. This fruitful cultural heritage would not have been possible had it not been born of Christian humanism, which saw the world in the measure of man. Therefore, other types of colonizing processes that came later, particularly in the nineteenth century—or even some at earlier times—whose strongest motives were economic and expansionist, were based on more rigid principles and never achieved such a high degree of cultural integration.

39. The medium-term plan of UNESCO for the period 1977 to 1982 states:

"Cultural régimes rarely coincide with political frontiers, and that is why there are adaptations, exchanges and cordial relations between countries that share a common cultural heritage even though there are differences in certain economic, social or ideological aspects."

40. The Latin American community is clearly, in our view, one of those cultural régimes or frameworks. It can therefore be considered on three different levels or dimensions: the cultural identity of Latin America as an entire area; the cultural identity of each of the nations that make up that area; and perhaps, as an intermediate concept, the regional cultural identity, examples of which could be found in the Andean area, the West Indies or Central America, where there are cultural links which enable nations to identify themselves as members of the region in question.

41. This diversity within the common Hispanic origin is what has resulted in the most mature fruits of Latin American culture, whose predecessors had already marked out important steps in the world of arts and letters. Specifically, in the literary field we can point to the publication of very important works that have achieved universal and unanimous recognition, thus handing back to Western culture the torch kindled by a Garcilaso or a Cervantes.

42. The unifying link and the vehicle of this culture is Spanish, our common language. The dignified Spanish language arose among the stones of a vast plateau with distant horizons, was enriched and softened in the mouths of men who people thick forests, high mountain ranges and mighty rivers, people who today number some 300 million.

43. I have referred so far to what I consider to be fundamental characteristics of the Hispanic phenomenon—identity of race, culture and language—but I should like to refer here, if only briefly, to the fact that, on the basis of historical and cultural links, Spain has sought to articulate a new policy which seeks, in the better service of our respective peoples, the achievement of concrete results and the setting in motion of living and working realities. This policy is designed to bring about concrete forms of co-operation, both bilateral and multilateral, and to develop all the existing possibilities not only in the cultural field but also in the commercial field and in the field of scientific, financial and technological co-operation.

44. As regards bilateral co-operation, we should highlight the visits made by Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain to a large number of countries on the Latin American continent. While we wanted previously to highlight the role in the discovery of America of the Crown, that symbol of permanence and incarnation of the State, those visits by His Majesty the King represented the continuity of the process begun in 1492. They have served to build up modern relations on the basis of equality, and they have been developing further day by day into a proliferation of links of all kinds and agreements with the various Spanish-speaking countries.

45. From the multilateral point of view, Spain wanted to be part of those bodies which constitute the most important forums for Latin America. Here we should like to point out the broad and fruitful co-operation that Spain has maintained with the Organization of American States, in which we participate as Permanent Observer. We should also like to point to the fact that Spain has been given the status of Observer in the Andean Pact. Spain is also the only country without territory in America which is part of ECLA. Since 1978, Spain has been a member of the Board of Directors of the International Monetary Fund and of the World Bank, as head of the northern area group of Latin America.

46. This political will for co-operation, which has become reality in various international forums, has been given concrete expression every time Spain has had to defend the just causes of sister peoples which our country defends as its own. Both in the Assembly and in the Security Council when Spain is a member we have tried to defend the Latin American nations in dealing with their problems with an interest in keeping with the identity of our peoples and cultures.

47. To the traditional celebration of 12 October, which every year commemorates the discovery of America, there is now added, with the celebration of the quincentenary of the discovery, a new and important milestone. We therefore regard it as a very happy initiative that from now on we should include this item on the agenda of the General Assembly and, in accordance with paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, request the Secretary-General "to prepare the appropriate observances ... so that the United Nations and those Member States most directly concerned may co-operate in a dignified commemoration of this great event".

48. Mr. LA ROCCA (Italy): The Italian delegation is particularly happy to support the draft resolution concerning the celebration of the quincentenary of the discovery of America, an event which, as the preamble indicates, represented a decisive step towards the achievement of a clear conception of our planet. The draft resolution rightly reminds us that the discovery made by Christopher Columbus represented the climax of an era of travels and explorations led by many nations.

49. No one can ignore the great contribution made by Italy to that daring and fruitful activity, and particularly to the exploration of America, through its great navigators. Together with Christopher Columbus, I wish to mention here, Amerigo Vespucci, who gave his name to this continent, Giovanni Caboto,

who explored Newfoundland and Labrador, his son Sebastiano, who went as far south as the Río de la Plata, and last but not least, Giovanni da Verrazano, who explored the waters surrounding the very island where we are meeting today.

50. In the centuries which followed, millions of Italians came to the New World, both to the North and the South, to find in these hospitable lands a new home and to contribute to the development of American civilization.

51. It is because of those links of blood and history that Italy feels particularly close to the countries and peoples of America, whose growing contribution to progress and understanding among nations we fully acknowledge and appreciate.

52. In history, the date of 12 October 1492 has been hailed as the commencement of the modern age. This is an age of great, astounding progress in every field of human thinking, of science and technology, and an important part of that progress received a decisive contribution right here, in America. But it is also an age of challenges and anxieties without precedent in the history of man, and it is our duty to seek adequate answers to them.

53. The Italian delegation hopes that the celebration of the quincentenary of the discovery of America will mark the beginning of an age in which the great scientific, economic and social progress hitherto achieved may be accompanied by a correspondingly greater respect for the mutual values of the peoples of the earth, which the discoveries and the inventions of recent centuries have brought closer together, and a deeper awareness of the common goals shared by all of us, which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

54. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The right of the Philippines to co-sponsor, with the sovereign countries of America, draft resolution A/37/L.36, advocating the declaration and observance of 1992 as the Year of the Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of America, can be summed up in a single word—Spain. For, according to civil law, the heirs are perforce those that receive the heritage handed down by their forefathers, as is the case with the Philippines, a country of South-East Asia, and its people, who, by historic right are the true heirs to the historic, spiritual and cultural values of Spain. In affirming this truth, I am at the same time proclaiming our Asian origin and identity.

55. As has already been said, throughout the history of our planet, with the exception of the advent of Christ, our Lord, no event has so changed the destiny and the face of mankind as the discovery by Christopher Columbus of this world which, because it was unknown, is new and is called America. For, as draft resolution A/37/L.36 so rightly says:

"... the arrival of the three Spanish caravels in the New World, under the command of Admiral Christopher Columbus, and ... his landing on the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas on 12 October 1492 constituted a decisive step towards the achievement of a clear conception of our planet, as well as an opening up of opportunities for contact and understanding among the various civilizations and peoples of the Earth, and was also a

culmination of an era of explorations, travels and oceanographic studies by several countries.”

56. The feat of Columbus was a gigantic step forward which would make it possible for Magellan in 1521 to reach, also in Spanish caravels, the beaches of the Philippines. In its turn, this exploit completed the great adventure of Christopher Columbus and Magellan, who, supported by the faith and valour of Isabel the Catholic of Spain, demonstrated once and for all that the world was round.

57. The world, our world, has never been the same since that exploit of Columbus. From the embrace of two continents, Europe and America, there emerged new races, sons not only of the union of Europeans and Indians but also of the mixing of various peoples of Europe. That brought to life new ideas and concepts at once bold and valuable, the realization of which was irresistible. From all those races another emerged, which, using the felicitous word of the Mexican philosopher, José Vasconcelos, we might call cosmic, a race whose sons are known as Juárez, Jefferson, Bolívar, Washington, San Martín, Lincoln, Martí, Darío and Bello.

58. Twice in our lifetime the great colossus of this continent, the United States, has gone to the rescue of the civilization and spiritual values of the Old World and in so doing generously offered the blood of its sons.

59. This new continent—new only in terms of our knowledge of it—also became the cradle of the libertarian ideas and democratic concepts that have sown hope in and given life to our terraqueous globe, not to mention the ideas, discoveries and advances in science and technology, trade, industry and agriculture.

60. By the sweat of its sons and the fertility of its lands, America, the whole of America, has become, in the words of the great Rubén Darío, “the granary of the needy of our world”.

61. The great achievement of Christopher Columbus can never be too highly praised. An intrepid navigator, he was convinced that by travelling towards the west he would reach the east, where lands bore names such as Ormuz, Cathay and Cipango, from which he would follow the enchanted route to the Spice Islands. Furthermore, he hoped to see a marvellous world of cultures and civilizations never imagined by the men of his time. But, as with any prophet, no one believed him. His prodigious vision came up against the indifference and incredulity of his peers, until one day he was received by Isabel the Catholic, who shared his beautiful vision of reaching a new world. And so great was the faith of Isabel in this vision that she pawned her jewels to secure the funds necessary to buy the ships, provisions and equipment for Columbus to make his voyage into the unknown, into the void. And thus were fulfilled the beautiful words of Saint Augustine concerning faith: “Faith is believing what we cannot see, and its reward is seeing what we believe”. Isabel the Catholic and Christopher Columbus had faith in their vision of a new world beyond the shadows, and their reward was to see the enchanted world of America emerge out of the clouds. What a beautiful example for us all struggling for peace and harmony among the peoples of our planet. Although

we are very often frustrated and more often dispirited, let us have the faith of Isabel and Columbus, for the reward of this faith will be, as Saint Augustine foresaw, a world of peace and felicity for our sons and their sons.

62. Mr. President, in view of the desire that draft resolution A/37/L.36 be adopted by consensus, and after having consulted other sponsors, my delegation would earnestly request you not to put it to the vote today, so as to give us a few more days to include certain elements that would make it easier to achieve the consensus which is desired.

63. Mr. DORR (Ireland): The draft resolution before us would have the General Assembly declare 1992 the Year of the Fifth Centennial of the Discovery of America. It would ask the Secretary-General to prepare the appropriate observances to commemorate this great event, and it would request him to submit an annual report on the progress achieved.

64. The draft resolution, like the original request to inscribe the item on the agenda, has wide sponsorship. The list includes many countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, the countries of North America and some countries among those in Western Europe with a history of seafaring and exploration.

65. No one could wish to deny the historic importance of the voyage of Columbus, or the fact that it was indeed, as the draft resolution says, “a decisive step towards the achievement of a clear conception of our planet”. We certainly would not wish to deny the “contribution by the peoples of the New World to progress and understanding among nations”, and any draft resolution which has such a wide and disparate sponsorship and which brings together certain countries from North America and the Caribbean that are otherwise hostile to each other should be given the most careful consideration.

66. Nevertheless, despite our good will towards all of the countries which have sponsored it, we have some doubts about the wisdom of the adoption by the Assembly of the present draft resolution. The draft proposes the commemoration of 12 October 1992 as the five-hundredth anniversary of “the discovery of America”. It is true that the landing by Columbus on the island of San Salvador on 12 October 1492 was an important event, but is it not something of an exaggeration to speak so confidently of it as “the discovery of America”? For one thing, there were already at that time indigenous inhabitants in America, North and South. They had lived here for many thousands of years; they had diverse and highly developed cultures of their own—some of which had waxed and waned well before the arrival of Columbus; and their descendants today might well have their own very particular view of the significance for their peoples of that historic event.

67. Furthermore, even if one speaks of the first European contacts with the Americas, it is by no means clear that the record begins only in 1492. There is reasonably good evidence that the Norsemen, and in particular Leif Ericsson, discovered the New World about the year 1000 and established some settlements in North America.

68. I am reluctant to appear in any way nationalistic or chauvinistic in speaking of such a matter, but I can-

not refrain from mentioning also Irish stories and legends which received wide currency in Europe in the Middle Ages in the Latin text known as *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, which suggest that Irish monks may have made the dangerous crossing of the North Atlantic as early as the seventh century. This has been referred to already by Mr. Albornoz, of Ecuador, with his customary generosity. It is perhaps not clearly established whether Saint Brendan the Navigator, the Irish monk in question, was a historic figure or whether he did in fact complete such a voyage as the medieval text credits him with—though I would not like to dispute the fact in County Kerry where he is the local patron saint. Within the past few years, a modern adventurer has built and sailed a similar boat from Ireland to North America along the route which Saint Brendan might have taken and has thus proved the voyage to be at least possible.

69. Perhaps to avoid appearing too nationalistic I might quote from an eminent and detached historian. The historian is Samuel Eliot Morison, who wrote as follows on page 18 of his monumental work *The Oxford History of the American People* as follows:

“... Norsemen discovered the New World about the year 1000 and an unknown Irishman probably did so even earlier.

“It is an historical fact that Irishmen discovered and settled Iceland when it was empty of human life, and that Norsemen expelled them about A.D. 850. The same sagas which describe the Norse discoveries call certain lands west of Greenland ‘White Man’s Land’ or ‘Ireland the Great’ and add a few interesting details.”

I must admit that on the following page Morison detracts a little from the assurance of that quotation when he says the following:

“Some day, perchance, authentic Irish relics will be found in north-eastern Canada; but until that time comes we have only these elusive stories of an Irish Colony glimpsed vaguely through the northern mists.”

70. To say all of this—to mention the earlier indigenous inhabitants, the legends of Irish monks and the more solidly attested evidence of Viking discoveries—is not in any way to grudge or lessen the importance of the landing by Columbus in 1492. For one thing, there is another story—apocryphal, no doubt—that Columbus actually stopped on the way in Ireland to pray in the Church of St. Nicholas in Galway. More seriously, however, the historic links in recent centuries of Ireland and Irish immigrants with all of the countries of the New World—of North and South America and the Caribbean—have been particularly close, and I recognize that. I do feel, however, as the Assembly is about to adopt a decision in triumphal terms calling for the commemoration 10 years hence of the voyage of Columbus, that the points I made earlier should at least be mentioned before we proceed to vote.

71. Beyond this, and allowing for the understandable desire of the countries of the Americas and other great countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Philippines, to celebrate Columbus’s epic voyage, I wonder if it is necessary for the Assembly to act 10 years in advance of the date of the proposed commemoration.

In particular, is it wise or necessary for us to ask the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly over each of the next 10 years an annual report on the progress achieved in preparation for this commemoration? In the case of other draft resolutions requesting the Secretary-General to undertake new activities, amendments have been put forward by some delegations requiring that the new activity be limited to what can be done within the limits of the existing two-year programme budget. I would naturally hesitate to put forward such an amendment to the present draft resolution; but I do think it is not a wise idea to ask the Secretary-General to report each year for 10 successive years on preparations for a commemoration—however important it may be to many delegations—to be held in 1992.

72. In conclusion, I must emphasize again that my delegation does not deny the historic importance of Columbus’s voyage to the New World, nor, as the draft resolution says, “the ... role played by the Spanish nation and Crown in this discovery”, nor, as it also says, “the growing contribution by the peoples of the New World to progress and understanding among nations”. We recognize and acknowledge all these things, but we felt that before the Assembly adopts the present draft resolution it should be reminded, however briefly, that the New World was already inhabited at that stage and that other voyagers from Europe had probably reached there by then, even if they made little of their discovery.

73. We felt, too, that it was necessary to make the point that to ask the Secretary-General to submit an annual report each year for 10 years would seem somewhat exaggerated.

74. For these reasons, the Irish delegation feels it necessary to express certain doubts on the draft resolution and at least to mark our position at this point. At the same time, we recognize that the draft resolution will most probably be adopted by the Assembly. If it is, we wish every success to the proposed observance in 1992 of the historic voyage of Admiral Christopher Columbus. We express our good wishes to all of the countries which have joined in sponsoring the present draft resolution, despite serious political difficulties between them in certain cases. And we hope that the amity and the unity of purpose which they have shown in asking the Assembly to commemorate 1492 in 1992 will be evident in their approach to the other urgent problems of 1982.

75. Mr. HELGASON (Iceland): In my country, in a very prominent place in the capital, there stands a large statue of a Viking. On the platform on which the statue rests the following inscription can be read:

“Leif Ericsson, son of Iceland, discoverer of Vinland. The United States of America to the people of Iceland on the one thousandth anniversary of Althing. Anno Domini 1930.”

76. That statue was a present from the Congress of the United States, one of the countries sponsoring the draft resolution before the General Assembly. Thus, the United States has recognized the historical fact that America was discovered by Leif Ericsson, an Icelander of Norwegian descent, in the year 1000.

77. Each year, the President of the United States dedicates a day to the commemoration of this event.

It is true that the Norsemen who participated in the expeditions did not succeed in colonizing the north-eastern region of America. It was not because of incompetence or lack of navigational skills; it was due to the simple fact that they were so few in number.

78. We in Iceland have always known of this discovery of the land in the west. Two sagas have been written about the voyages. The first saga was written in Iceland about 1190 and the second about 1260.

79. We feel that the historical fact of Leif Ericsson's discovery is so totally ignored in the absolute wording of the draft resolution that we cannot vote in favour.

80. Should this draft resolution, the first one in the history of the United Nations to commemorate colonization, be adopted—and I expect it will be—the Assembly may expect in the year 2000 a parallel proposal from Iceland for the commemoration of the one-thousandth anniversary of the discovery of America. The preparation for that celebration would have to last 20 years and would of course not have any financial implications. We might even express appreciation of the fact that the Norsemen gave up the idea of colonization.

81. Mr. SORZANO (United States of America): I was not going to speak, because I would think that the historical record speaks for itself. Nevertheless, since there have been such eloquent speeches made this afternoon, I think it proper that I say a few words.

82. In 10 years we shall be celebrating the arrival of Christopher Columbus upon the shores of San Salvador half a millennium ago. From some perspectives that may seem a significant span of time; yet, on a historical scale, 500 years is a comparatively brief time.

83. Traditionally referred to as the New World, America is still a young continent. There are still frontiers to be fully explored, and we still receive reports that, thanks to modern technological means, new rivers and even new mountain ranges are being discovered in our own time.

84. But America is not just a geographic entity. More important, it is a shared dream, a common history and a common desire held by its amalgamation of peoples from literally all corners of the world. Our diverse backgrounds have not precluded a common desire for human dignity, individual liberty and economic prosperity—nor, by the way, have they precluded our joining in sponsoring this draft resolution.

85. By virtue both of geography and of sharing these common ideals, the United States is proud to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/37/L.36, calling for a celebration of the historic arrival of Christopher Columbus on American shores. We are also confident that this draft resolution can be implemented within available resources.

86. The PRESIDENT: As members are aware, the representative of the Philippines, on behalf of the sponsors, has requested that action on draft resolution A/37/L.36 be postponed for a few days. Could we be more specific? Would it be possible to take up the draft resolution by 3 December at the latest?

87. Mr. del ROSARIO CEBALLOS (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We should

like the postponement to be until next Monday, 6 December.

88. The PRESIDENT: Then I put the question to the Assembly: is there any objection to the request that action on draft resolution A/37/L.36 be postponed until Monday, 6 December? As I hear none it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

89. The PRESIDENT: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of their right of reply.

90. Mr. de PINIÉS (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation was somewhat surprised that some of the representatives who spoke after me referred to previous expeditions to this continent. We have never denied that there were such expeditions, nor do I think that historically it is possible to do so. What we are trying to commemorate here is the quincentenary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus on these shores and the fact that the new arrivals left settlements, brought about a merging of races and established the first universities, the first cultural centres and the first churches.

91. I do not know what has been left on this continent by the peoples of Ireland or of Iceland. It is very possible that we may find some remains at certain sites, but up to this point the only thing that I have found from Ireland, with all due respect, is the well-trained police force in New York City and some distinguished Irishmen who belong to the Irish American and European communities. As for Iceland, I do not know what its people has left behind, but what is not acceptable to my delegation is for anyone to say that we came here to set up colonies in the pejorative sense, which some representatives have tried to imply by their applause.

92. Spain did not send its people to establish any colonies in the sense referred to by the United Nations, that is, in terms of decolonization. The Spanish people came here to merge their race with the indigenous people of this continent. The proof is that in Latin America there are completely mixed peoples produced by the mixture of the Spanish and indigenous peoples, whereas in the other part of the American continent, to the north, there was no such mixing of races.

93. I should like to remind all these gentlemen that the first proponents of decolonization as conceived 160 years later, in resolution 1514 (XV), came from the countries of this continent, which rose against Spain because Spain was under occupation at that time. We feel very proud that they rose up against foreign domination and formed themselves into true nations. These countries, some 20 or 21 in number, were the pioneers of decolonization at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the fathers of decolonization in the twentieth century. The decolonization of the African and Asian continents had already had its pioneers in all those countries with which my country, among others, feels a bond of brotherhood. Thus, when they refer to the mother country, we too refer to the same mother country, which was their motherland as much as ours. That is why today we call ourselves brothers, and that is the justification for the submission of the draft resolution by the Latin Ameri-

can countries, of which we are genuinely proud, and we have joined those other countries as a sponsor.

94. All we have to do now is to celebrate the quincentenary of the discovery of America. If others wish to claim that they discovered these shores, this continent, it was not America, and they left no settlements. What we are so proud of is what we built here, which the Latin American countries have welcomed, have worked on and have improved.

95. Mr. DURÁN DUSSÁN (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My country rightly bears the name of Colombia, a name adopted in freedom and sovereignty in honour of the discoverer of America, Christopher Columbus. Consequently, we are surprised and disturbed when objections are raised in the General Assembly of the United Nations to the observance of the quincentenary of the discovery of America. We can speak here on behalf of more than 300 million Latin Americans. We are not representing some small island with a population of 300,000 or 500,000, but the vast and important region represented by the countries whose language is Spanish or Portuguese. We speak for Latin America, one of the most important continents.

96. The historical event that took place in 1492 is undoubtedly one of the most important in the millennium. No other event has had such economic, social and political consequences in the world of today. We do not understand why a mockery should be made of the Latin American proposal to celebrate this quincentenary with honour and with great pride, because it was at that time that Latin America became one with the rest of the world as one of the most important and significant continents.

97. It is worth recalling that at the first session of the General Assembly, out of 51 members more than 20 were Latin American States.

98. Nor should we speak lightly here of colonization and decolonization. We waged wars of independence against Spain some 170 years ago, but we now maintain the closest, most cordial and brotherly links with the country we call our mother country. From that country we inherit our language and our religion, and that country opened up for us the paths leading towards civilization and progress. We do not understand why representatives of other peoples here should consider it appropriate to make light of something which has meant such a gigantic step forward for the world. Let us hope that the peoples of other nationalities and continents will, within a few years, be able to celebrate links of friendship with the peoples who came one day to bring them the fundamental elements of their civilization.

99. Spain did not destroy our people; it joined them and gave their descendants the opportunity to sit here with the other free peoples of the world, with the members of the Assembly, whom we ask to co-operate with us in preparing to commemorate this major historic event which, with or without their vote, we shall commemorate in a worthy manner in 1992.

100. Mr. del ROSARIO CEBALLOS (Dominican Republic) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to endorse what has been said by the representatives of Spain and Colombia. They have already said, more skilfully, what I intended to say. However, in

endorsing what they have said, which I do not want to repeat, I do wish to point out something I find painful, as a representative of a country which promoted the original idea, and was the first European establishment in America: the fact that many friendly and brother countries represented in the Assembly have spoken in an ironic and demagogic fashion about something that represents what we intend to commemorate—decolonization.

101. Today, in this Hall, 157 countries are represented, while at the time when this Organization was founded there were only 51 Member States. Of those 51, at least 24—if my memory serves me well—signed the Charter. On the basis of the positive vote of those 24 countries now sponsoring this draft resolution, 157 countries are now here represented because we opened to them the doors of decolonization. These countries of Africa, Asia and Caribbean America are here because it was we who were the founders of this Organization, so we cannot allow that it should be used demagogically and ironically in speaking about friendly and brotherly countries.

102. Mr. QUIÑONES-AMÉZQUITA (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Spain, not content with the greatness that it had given to the Old World, wanted to augment that greatness and share it with humanity, broadening its natural frontiers and exporting a new language, the eternal word of the ideas of Latin Americans. It taught America to know, to love and to believe in the same God; and in mingling with the ethnic strains of the new continent, the Spaniard created a vigorous race whose culture now influences the ideas of the New World and the Old.

103. The discovery of America marked a fundamental change in the history of mankind, and to deny this is almost like denying the light of day. We Latin Americans are hurt when some doubt is cast on the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Spain, as the colonizing country, left so much to Latin America; in particular, it never tried to destroy the ethnic strains of the Latin American continent. The achievements obtained by America because of Spain are too many to mention. We therefore consider that the mockery offered here on certain aspects of the matter is highly inappropriate.

104. Mr. DORR (Ireland): In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I should like to emphasize, as indeed I tried to do in my statement, that I had no intention of causing any offence to the countries which sponsored the draft resolution or to detract in any way from the importance of the voyage of Columbus or, indeed, the desirability of commemorating his voyage suitably. Ireland has too high a regard for Spain itself, for Latin America and for the countries of the Hispanic tradition generally to do that. I would therefore emphasize my sincere hope that nothing I said in a light-hearted way in referring to earlier voyages or legends be taken as offensive by the sponsors of the draft resolution.

105. Mr. BEAUGE (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation cannot fail to express its surprise and disappointment at the words that were used here today against draft resolution A/37/L.36, which my country sponsored. I have taken note of the statement just made by one of the delegations which

levelled these criticisms against the draft resolution. Nevertheless, I should like to repeat the surprise of my delegation because of the departure here from the style and form that should govern our deliberations.

106. We also consider it surprising that the critics we heard here failed to appreciate the meaning of our draft resolution. We are not trying to make any great historical pronouncement; quite the contrary, what is attempted here is to extol a series of common values, a public dedication to a common origin of which we are all proud and, finally, a body of supreme values of which we are all proud and which we practise.

107. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to associate myself in what I am going to say with all my colleagues from Latin America who have spoken and also with the representative of the Philippines, who so eloquently referred to this significant event. But I should like to stress one thing: we cannot deny that Christopher Columbus demonstrated that the world was round, because up until that point it was believed to be flat. This was on 12 October 1492, when the three Spanish caravels arrived in the New World. This had never been demonstrated, and if the Irish or Nordic navigators visited the northernmost part of the New World, it was never demonstrated until Christopher Columbus did so, not by the very advanced universities of the time nor by Eric the Red nor by the Irish—if, indeed, they did visit the New World they never knew quite where they were. These are the facts.

108. As to what was said by the representative of Ireland, I am happy that his words have been corrected, but there still rings in my ears—and I am very distressed to say this—something that he said: namely, that he could not support in 1982 the proposal that we should celebrate in 1992 something that occurred in 1492. If what I heard is not correct, this can be checked with the records.

109. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines): My delegation is constrained to speak, if only for a few minutes, in order to set certain things straight, and it does so as sponsor of this draft resolution. We are proud—my country, my delegation, my colleagues and I—to have sponsored this draft resolution. It is not for us to judge—and when I say “us” I refer to my countrymen, whom I represent—what were the pros and cons of this great event in history which was the coming of Christopher Columbus to America, and, as I said, making known to Europe the unknown and in that sense it was a discovery. I am not an historian. We do not wish to make any judgements, but in sponsoring this draft resolution, we did not only take into account what happened then and the victory of faith which I have mentioned. We took into account what the Good Book says: that ye shall judge the tree by its fruits. Christopher Columbus came on the wings of hope, propelled by the faith which was in him and in Isabel the Catholic, and the fruits of that hope, of that great event, are seen in the great nations of America.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.