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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

Letter dated 28 April 1983 from the Permanent Representative
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United
Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made by the Soviet Government on 23 April 1983.

I request that you arrange for the text of this statement to be circulated as an official General Assembly document under item 31 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) O. TROYANOVSKY

* A/38/50.

ANNEX

STATEMENT MADE BY THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT ON 23 APRIL 1983

The United States Administration has made a statement concerning its policy in matters relating to the use of the world's oceans and their resources.

In the statement the United States indicates that it still has no intention of signing the new United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and announces its intention of using its own discretion in matters relating to the resources of the world's oceans. In essence - and it is quite frank on this point - they would like to have a régime that would be free from any political and economic restrictions on the extraction of minerals from the sea-bed and ocean floor in areas not under the jurisdiction of any particular country.

Showing its disregard for the collective opinion of the overwhelming majority of States that participated in the elaboration of the Convention and have signed it, the present United States Administration openly proclaims that the United States monopolies will, in a wilful and uncontrolled fashion, appropriate the mineral and other resources of the world's oceans.

At the same time, the United States has proclaimed the establishment of an "exclusive economic zone", extending to a width of 200 nautical miles along the coast of the United States, within which it will exercise full ownership rights over the living and non-living resources of the sea.

The assertions in the statement to the effect that Washington will comply with individual articles of the Convention should not mislead anyone.

This is no more than an unseemly manoeuvre. While not signing the Convention and not assuming any of the obligations deriving from it, the United States nevertheless wishes, where this coincides with its own narrow interests, to take advantage of the rights and benefits conferred by the Convention on its signatories. It is thus disregarding the indisputable fact that the Convention is one and indivisible. It constitutes a carefully considered "package" of agreements on all the closely interrelated problems of the régime of the seas and the use of the living and mineral resources of the oceans. Any attempt arbitrarily to single out individual provisions of the Convention and reject others is incompatible with the legal order of the seas laid down in the Convention and is inimical to the legitimate interests of other States.

It is quite obvious that, having been one of the few States to refuse to sign the Convention, the United States is now doing everything it can to create a semblance of a legal justification for its unilateral acts and to attempt somehow or other to legitimize its totally unlawful claims on the world's oceans and their resources.

It is well known that during the many years of work of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, the United States of America made numerous

attempts to obstruct the achievement of balanced compromises, and to bring about the establishment of a special régime for itself governing the world's oceans. Washington was guided by a single purpose - to grab as much as it could. These claims were rejected by the participants in the Conference.

The Convention, which has now been signed by more than 120 countries, takes account of the interests of all States and groups of States equally. It is also worth recalling that a number of its provisions are based on proposals originally put forward by the United States itself. But it is clear that for the present United States Administration it has become a general rule of conduct to cancel earlier agreements. For the benefit of the large United States monopolies which are seeking unlimited access to the resources of the sea, the United States Administration is trying to undermine the Convention and to impose its obstructionist approach on other States as well. It is certainly no accident that the decisions of the President of the United States were announced just as the Preparatory Commission whose task it is to consider practical questions relating to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention concerning the use of the resources of the sea-bed, was beginning its work.

The actions of the present United States Administration are nothing but an attempt to create confusion in matters pertaining to the use of the seas and undermine the foundations of mutually beneficial co-operation between countries in this vitally important field of human activity; this cannot but cause serious concern to the majority of States. The Soviet Union shares that concern and, together with other countries, firmly repudiates the policy of arbitrary action which the United States of America would like to pursue in this field as in others.

Attention must also be drawn to the fact that while seeking special unwarranted privileges for itself in the world's oceans, the United States is also trying to strengthen its unlawful claims to island Trust Territories and thus to the seas surrounding them, which the United States monopolies have coveted for a long time.

The people in Washington will have to realize that their policy of boycotting and undermining the new comprehensive United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and of taking arbitrary action in connection with the resources of the sea-bed is in conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of States and is resolutely condemned by them. The legal order laid down in the Convention concerning the régime of the seas applies to all States, and this cannot and must not be disregarded by any State, including the United States.
