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QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

Letter dated 3 December 1984 from the Permanent Representative of  
Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a communiqué issued on 1 December 1984 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium concerning the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the text of this communiqué to be circulated as a General Assembly document under agenda item 66.

(Signed) E. DEVER  
Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative of Belgium  
to the United Nations

ANNEX

COMMUNIQUE OF THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

ISSUED ON 1 DECEMBER 1984

Twenty five years ago, on 1 December 1959, 12 countries, including Belgium, signed the Antarctic Treaty in Washington.

This Treaty was of a very innovative character and was signed at a time when the great polar continent appeared likely to become a source of future conflicts.

The most important provision declared the region south of the 60th parallel to be a non-military zone, prohibited weapons of any kind there and provided for monitoring of implementation by any signatory State.

It also established total freedom of scientific investigation and co-operation toward that end.

It prohibited any nuclear explosion for peaceful purposes and the disposal there of radioactive waste material.

It shelved claims to sovereignty; it established the practice of consultative meetings for the purpose of proposing concrete measures on the basis of unanimity.

Twelve consultative meetings have taken place and have led to the adoption of 138 recommendations covering a wide range of problems, in particular, the protection of the environment on the continent and in the neighbouring seas.

The Treaty has operated harmoniously for a quarter of a century and there has been an ever-increasing number of accessions, which testify to the international community's interest in it.

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