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PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE THIRTEENTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY: ITEM PROPOSED BY INDIA

THE QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

Letter dated 15 July 1958 from the Permanent Representative of India
to the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 15 July 1958

Under instructions from the Government of India, I have the honour to refer to rule 13 (e) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, and to request you kindly to include the following item in the agenda of the thirteenth regular session of the General Assembly:

"The question of Antarctica."

An explanatory memorandum relating to the above item is enclosed herewith.

(Signed) Arthur S. LALL

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of India to the U.N.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Antarctica which covers a vast area of about 6 million square miles has considerable strategic, climatic and geophysical significance for the world as a whole. Numerous scientific and other expeditions have recently ventured far into this area. It has been a major region of activity throughout the International Geophysical Year. The mineral wealth of the land mass is believed to be considerable and its coastal waters contain important food resources. With the development of rapid communications, the area is coming to have practical significance to the welfare and progress of all nations. As a result of the activities undertaken during the International Geophysical Year programme, the number of observation posts in the area has more than doubled.

The influence of Antarctica on climatic and related conditions throughout the world is already well-known. Scouting flights undertaken in connexion with the International Geophysical Year have revealed that the most remote interior of Antarctica is probably in the form of a dome of ice about 14,000 feet high. This vast ice cap, dwarfing anything in the north, stimulates and creates currents of cold air that affect the weather all over the world. Other secrets of climatic change may well be revealed by further investigations in this area. The preliminary data already obtained is sufficient to warrant the conclusion that Antarctica plays a major role in influencing the weather of the world. Furthermore, it is estimated that the volume of ice in the ice sheets of Antarctica would, if melted, result in the sea level throughout the world rising by something over a hundred feet.

With many of the aforementioned considerations in view, the Government of India had suggested in 1956 that the United Nations discuss certain problems connected with Antarctica.

In view of the growing interest in and knowledge about the area, and in view of the fact that many countries including India are particularly interested in the meteorological aspects and implications of all that happens in Antarctica, it would be appropriate and timely now for all nations to agree and affirm that the area will be utilized entirely for peaceful purposes and for the welfare of the whole world. It is important for all nations to be assured that no activities in Antarctica will promote a contrary purpose or adversely affect climatic and other natural conditions. /...

As this subject is of great importance to the international community as a whole and not merely for certain countries, the Government of India consider that the General Assembly of the United Nations should call upon all States to agree to utilize this territory solely for peaceful purposes, and in particular to agree that the area shall not be used in any manner that would create or accentuate world tensions or extend to this area the influence and effect of existing tensions. The Government of India believe that this limited purpose can be achieved without any nation renouncing such rights as it may claim in Antarctica, or claims of sovereignty or other rights consistent with the Charter. The Government of India are of the view that the action proposed can only be taken by the world community as a whole, and they accordingly suggest that consideration be given to the question of Antarctica by the thirteenth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.
