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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF A SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM IN THE AGENDA
OF THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

DECLARATION AND TREATY CONCERNING THE RESERVATION EXCLUSIVELY
FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES OF THE SEA-BED AND OF THE OCEAN FLOOR,
UNDERLYING THE SEAS BEYOND THE LIMITS OF PRESENT NATIONAL
JURISDICTION, AND THE USE OF THEIR RESOURCES IN THE INTERESTS
OF MANKIND

Note verbale dated 17 August 1967 from the Permanent Mission of Malta
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Malta to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to propose under rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly the inclusion of the following item in the agenda of the twenty-second session of the General Assembly: "Declaration and treaty concerning the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and of the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind".

An explanatory memorandum is attached in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure.

MEMORANDUM

1. The sea-bed and the ocean floor are estimated to constitute approximately five-sevenths of the world's area. The sea-bed and ocean floor, underlying the seas outside present territorial waters and/or the continental shelves, are the only areas of our planet which have not yet been appropriated for national use, because they have been relatively inaccessible and their use for defence purposes or the economic exploitation of their resources was not technologically feasible.

2. In view of rapid progress in the development of new techniques by technologically advanced countries, it is feared that the situation will change and that the sea-bed and the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond present national jurisdiction, will become progressively and competitively subject to national appropriation and use. This is likely to result in the militarization of the accessible ocean floor through the establishment of fixed military installations and in the exploitation and depletion of resources of immense potential benefit to the world, for the national advantage of technologically developed countries.

3. It is, therefore, considered that the time has come to declare the sea-bed and the ocean floor a common heritage of mankind and that immediate steps should be taken to draft a treaty embodying, inter alia, the following principles:

(a) The sea-bed and the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, are not subject to national appropriation in any manner whatsoever;

(b) The exploration of the sea-bed and of the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, shall be undertaken in a manner consistent with the Principles and Purposes of the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The use of the sea-bed and of the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and their economic exploitation shall be undertaken with the aim of safeguarding the interests of mankind. The net financial benefits derived from the use and exploitation of the sea-bed and of the ocean floor shall be used primarily to promote the development of poor countries;

(d) The sea-bed and the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, shall be reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes in perpetuity.

4. It is believed that the proposed treaty should envisage the creation of an international agency (a) to assume jurisdiction, as a trustee for all countries, over the sea-bed and the ocean floor, underlying the seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction; (b) to regulate, supervise and control all activities thereon; and (c) to ensure that the activities undertaken conform to the principles and provisions of the proposed treaty.
