

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

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JAN 25 1993
FIRST COMMITTEE
38th meeting
held on
Monday, 23 November 1992
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PATOKALLIO (Finland)
(Vice-Chairman)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.1/47/PV.38
22 December 1992

ENGLISH

92-61962 3115V (E)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Patokallio (Finland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 66

GENERAL DEBATE, CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION ON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS ON THE QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, this morning the Committee will begin its general debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions on agenda item 66, the question of Antarctica.

You may recall that this item was included in the agenda of the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, in 1983. At each subsequent session the Assembly has been seized of the question of Antarctica, a subject that has assumed great importance in our interdependent world.

At the last session of the General Assembly, three reports of the Secretary-General on the subject were considered by the Committee: A/46/512, which related to participation in the meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties; A/46/583, which related to the establishment of the United Nations-sponsored station in Antarctica; and A/46/590, which related to the state of the environment in Antarctica and its impact on the global system.

(The Chairman)

At its last session, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 46/41 A and 46/41 B. In that connection, I invite the attention of delegations to the reports of the Secretary-General in documents A/47/541, A/47/542 and A/47/624, called for by those two resolutions. The reports address the particular concerns expressed in the resolutions.

I should also like to point out that, in pursuance of paragraph 8 of resolution 46/41 A, the Department of Public Information has continued to explore the promotion of public awareness of Antarctica and its ecosystems. In this respect, the Department published a background paper in August 1992 entitled Protecting the Earth's Last Great Wilderness: Antarctica (DPI/1222).

As members of the Committee are aware, the Antarctic environment and its dependent ecosystems are increasingly vital to life on this planet. The record reflects that the Committee's proceedings have made an important contribution to the safeguarding of this fragile, complex and multifaceted region.

Accordingly, it is my hope and that of the Chairman of the Committee that our debate concerning the future of Antarctica will be pursued in a constructive manner: that would indeed be in the best interests of all nations. Undoubtedly, cooperation in this pristine region is imperative since Antarctica should for ever be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and should never become the scene of international discord. Moreover, Antarctica should be maintained as a nuclear-free zone of peace, free of military activity.

Before calling on the first speaker, I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that the Committee will have at its disposal three days - a total of six meetings - for the completion of this agenda item.

(The Chairman)

It was decided by the Committee that the list of speakers for the general debate on agenda item 66 will be closed today at noon and I therefore urge delegations to inscribe their names as soon as possible. It was also decided that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under agenda item 66 is today at noon.

Mr. REDZUAN (Malaysia): At the outset, allow me on behalf of the Malaysian delegation to thank you for your very constructive opening statement.

My delegation is pleased that the question of Antarctica, which has been debated in the Committee for the past 10 years, continues to be a subject of growing interest in the international community. World-wide recognition of the need for concerted international action to protect Antarctica's environment parallels widely evident international concern over the massive problem of the environment, which is at the centre of the attention of the international community at the present time. Antarctica has gained a special place in peoples' hearts and minds; international cooperation could build on mankind's conscience to protect this last great wilderness from greedy human exploitation. At the same time, protection of the environment of Antarctica and of its unique position as a storehouse of mineral, marine and other resources is being seen as a crucial part of protection of the global ecosystem. There can be no doubt that the adoption of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in October 1991 and the widely acclaimed outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in June this year demonstrated the commitment of the international community to undertake the measures necessary to tackle the environmental problem for the betterment of the future. My delegation wishes to see the Committee build on this common

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

and serious concern to bring about the participation of the entire international community, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to consider and decide on the future of Antarctica.

My delegation would like to applaud the agreements reached at the Rio Summit which recognized the value of Antarctica as an area for the conduct of scientific research essential to the understanding of the global environment. We believe that this recognition is important, taking into consideration the fragility of the environment and ecosystems existing in Antarctica, where the activities and results of the scientific research community could produce results of global significance. On this note my delegation would like to emphasize that, following the decision reached at the Conference in Rio, data and information from this research should be made available. In this regard, we remain convinced that only the United Nations has the capability, with its world-wide networks, to provide excellent service in receiving and distributing this information to Member States and non-governmental research organizations. The international community should build on the positive developments of the Rio Summit to promote the importance of safeguarding the environment on Antarctica and its impact on the global environment. Accordingly, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties should, on the basis of the agreement reached at the Rio Summit, hold an annual seminar or symposium on the subject.

Another development which my delegation wishes to emphasize is this year's important contribution by the Secretariat and the Department of Public Information in producing a background document on Antarctica. It is a commendable effort indeed to have produced concise and useful information on this subject. We certainly believe this excellent effort should continue as

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there are so many aspects of the question of Antarctica that could be publicized for the benefit of delegations and the public at large. We also believe that the Department of Public Information should further promote and publicize the issue of Antarctica, with the purpose of achieving better understanding on the part of the international community. We believe that through educating and informing the masses, concern over environmental problems, as in the case of Antarctica, would be galvanized that would, in turn, trigger greater governmental attention and action. We maintain that it is important for the United Nations to take the lead in promoting public awareness. At the same time, it is the expectation of the international community, in the light of the present international political climate, that the United Nations will give equal importance to issues such as the environment, which have a direct impact on future generations.

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

My delegation regrets that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have yet to appreciate fully the important role of the Secretary-General on the issue of Antarctica. Despite our numerous calls in earlier years, the Consultative Parties failed to extend an invitation to the Secretary-General or his representative to attend the recent Seventeenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held at Venice from 11 to 20 November 1992. From the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/541), which highlights the report of the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting held at Bonn in October 1991, it is clearly evident that there were important agenda items to which the Secretary-General could have contributed or been a party in the discussion of, for example, the items on the human impact on the Antarctic environment and on the promotion of international scientific cooperation. These are important topics on which the United Nations has the necessary expertise, and the United Nations should therefore be fully involved in the discussions. It is pointless, on the one hand, to agree on the important link between the Antarctic continent and the global environment, a topic of massive importance on the agenda of the General Assembly, and, on the other hand, to note that the discussions among the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties did not include the Secretary-General or his representative.

Having said that, my delegation noted with appreciation the positive move by the Consultative Parties to provide the Secretary-General with the report of their sixteenth meeting. That demonstrates the type of cooperation one could build on to bring about international cooperation and consensus in the future. The report is indeed a great help in understanding the various aspects of the activities of the Consultative Parties, which are of relevance to the rest of the international community, for example those regarding the

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

question of environmental monitoring, international Antarctic scientific and logistic cooperation and air safety in Antarctica. We have noted the report of the sixteenth meeting of the Consultative Parties and the sentiments expressed in the opening statements of the participants, which clearly reflect the common desire and interest in safeguarding the Antarctic environment, a responsibility that my delegation strongly believes should be shouldered by the entire international community under the umbrella of the United Nations. It is wrong to say, as the Consultative Parties do, that since more and more people have been visiting, exploiting and leaving traces on Antarctica, responsibility for the effect of these activities on the continent has accrued to them. With the ever-increasing prospect of more tourists visiting this remarkable place, which has the inviting and unique characteristic of being mankind's wilderness, surely the responsibility for it would be better managed and handled in the spirit of the international cooperation under the banner of the United Nations.

In a more positive tone my delegation takes note of the involvement of the United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization, at the invitation of the Consultative Parties, to participate in the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting at Bonn last year. It was very encouraging indeed for experts from those United Nations agencies and programmes to be invited to the Bonn meeting. My delegation remains hopeful that invitations for future meetings could also be extended to the Secretary-General or his representative.

My delegation notes with deep appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the state of the environment in Antarctica (A/47/624),

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which touches on the efforts undertaken in various quarters on the protection of the Antarctic environment. However, my delegation wishes to express its concern over the delay in distributing this document, which was not available until 19 November 1992 although it is officially dated 11 November 1992. The lateness of the distribution of the document seriously impairs our ability to obtain assessments from our capitals. However, after looking through the report my delegation fully concurs with the views expressed by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, as stated in paragraph 14 of the report, that environmental monitoring remains a fundamental element of Antarctic research, environmental management and conservation. We also noted the statement:

"It is also significant that while some environmental monitoring has already been undertaken by various operators in the Antarctic, there seems to be a lack of standard protocols." (A/47/624, para. 16)

This is precisely what my delegation has been stressing all along, namely, the need for full international participation, under the mandate of the United Nations, in the consideration of matters of this importance, since monitoring the impact of human activities on the environment is an important process in the protection of the Antarctic environment. Certainly, the lack of standard protocols in this area is a grave concern to us. The report also indicates that:

"SCAR also noted a lack of global environmental databases with respect to the Antarctic, despite the fact that many concerned non-governmental organizations and individuals had access to important and relevant data." (A/47/624, para. 15)

My delegation is fully aware of the need for Member States to receive available data in order fully to understand and comprehend the situation on

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

the ground. On this note, my delegation wishes to request the Secretary-General to make available as official United Nations documents the extracts of data received by the Secretariat from various organizations in the course of the preparation of future annual reports.

Last year, the Malaysian delegation welcomed the positive step of the signing of the Antarctic Treaty Protocol on Environmental Protection in Madrid in October 1991, despite that document's many shortcomings. We recognized that the Protocol is a measure to protect the environment of Antarctica against the destructive consequences of human activities on that fragile continent. It is a very important document indeed, especially when we consider that three years ago the same countries that signed the Protocol had earlier signed another convention to open up the continent for mineral exploitation. There is a general interest in seeking the speedy entry of the Protocol into force. However, we understand that to date only Spain has ratified the agreement - in July of this year. A few other States have stated their intention to ratify the Protocol later this year or next year, but judging by the current rate of adherence it may be many years before the Protocol is legally binding. In addition, it should be borne in mind that it takes only one of the Consultative Parties to rescind the Protocol by refusing to ratify it - as was the case with the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resources Activities (CRAMRA). Thus, the ability of the Madrid Protocol to protect the environment in Antarctica effectively offers little assurance that the provisions will be implemented at all at this present juncture.

It is evident from what has occurred here in the Committee that the signatory countries are not moving in the direction of the provisions of the

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Protocol to set up key institutions such as a secretariat and a committee for environmental protection. This raises serious questions on the immediate and effective implementation of the Protocol as envisaged by the world community late last year. From the information we have received thus far it is apparent that at the recent Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting at Venice the member countries failed to address the key issue of liability and were sidetracked on the question whether a further annex to the Protocol is needed to cover tourism. I have touched on this issue earlier, and the Malaysian delegation is pleased to note that the Consultative Parties are fully aware of the consequences and problems created by the ever-increasing number of tourists going to that continent. My delegation and many others wish to be reassured by the Consultative Parties that all these developments are not mere smokescreens to delay the important objective of the implementation of this Protocol, which is to ban mining.

My delegation recognizes the weaknesses in the Madrid Protocol, but it is our utmost desire to see that the Protocol meet its objectives in all seriousness for the sake of the protection of the environment in Antarctica. It is a milestone on the road to permanent protection for Antarctica, and it is our earnest hope that the Consultative Parties will dedicate themselves to swift ratification and full implementation of the positive measures contained in the Protocol. We also urge the Consultative Parties to continue to strengthen the provisions of the Protocol, to develop new annexes as warranted, to negotiate a liability regime and, most important, to agree to a permanent ban on all commercial mineral-resource activities in Antarctica. At the same time, we call on the Consultative Parties to involve the United Nations in the process of strengthening the Madrid Protocol.

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

My delegation notes with deep regret that South Africa has yet to be excluded from participation in the meetings of the Consultative Parties. We regret that the repeated appeals by the international community to the Consultative Parties to exclude South Africa from participation at meetings of the Consultative Parties have continuously been ignored by the Parties.

(Mr. Redzuan, Malaysia)

In conclusion, I should like to underline that Malaysia is, on the whole, encouraged by the increasing international cooperation on environmental and scientific research in Antarctica. With the gradual involvement of the United Nations we believe this will help strengthen the overall climate of peace and cooperation in Antarctica.

Mr. HURST (Antigua and Barbuda): Five hundred years ago, in 1492, two worlds collided. That collision completely altered the fate of human civilization. It also set in motion a drive to conquer powerless peoples and govern resource-rich lands, vast oceans away from the kingdoms of the explorers. My Caribbean was at the epicentre of the 1492 collision. The small islands of our Caribbean were systematically denuded of their forest cover to allow for the planting of sugar cane, cotton and tobacco. Because of our tropical resilience, the beauty of our Caribbean islands has returned and remains legendary, attracting millions of visitors to our shores each year.

Antarctica is also beautiful, but it has no forests: it is certainly not tropical, and it is clearly not resilient. Antarctica, vast in its icy expanse, is indeed fragile and it is of critical importance to our planet and our daily lives equal to that of the Earth's rain forests. Our intention is to help place the United Nations in a favourable position that would result in the preservation of Antarctica for our benefit and for that of future generations.

For 500 years, from Columbus to Rio, man's history in the pursuit of wealth has been brutish. The knowledge of that history stirs fear in the hearts of my countrymen. We see the United Nations as bastion of good, capable of responding meaningfully to harmful threats which mankind will continue to create for itself. In the course of the next 10 minutes or so, I

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

shall therefore share with this body our major concerns regarding Antarctica and our proposals for successfully addressing them in this forum.

One year ago, during the debate on Antarctica in this Committee, the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda expressed its appreciation and acclaim for the response by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to one of the many concerns expressed by the States not parties to the Treaty. I refer to the prohibition of mining and oil exploration in Antarctica. The Madrid Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty is a framework agreement made up of 27 articles and five annexes; it was signed by the 26 voting parties to the 32-year-old Antarctic Treaty in Madrid, Spain, on 3 October 1991.

It may be recalled that the express objective of the Madrid Protocol is to protect the unspoilt environment of Antarctica from the destructive consequences of human activities. When that agreement banned all mining and oil exploration in Antarctica for 50 years it annulled the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities, which had previously allowed mineral exploration in Antarctica. We were pleased.

Antigua and Barbuda regards the Madrid Protocol as a positive first step by the Consultative Party States. It consolidates environmental measures under the Antarctic Treaty into a single document and leads us to conclude that environmental measures which were largely recommendations under the Antarctic Treaty will now become legally binding. Furthermore, the Protocol calls for increased cooperation among Consultative Party States on environmental matters. It establishes a Committee on Environmental Protection and provides for procedures for the settlement of disputes.

Nevertheless, the provision of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection which enables 19 of the 26 Consultative Party States to overturn

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

the ban after 50 years has caused, and still causes, considerable concern among States non-Consultative Parties. My delegation reiterates its call to the Consultative Party States to reconsider this provision. Antigua and Barbuda is of the view that Antarctica's virginal tundras, unpopulated and undisturbed, ought never to be violated. A temporary alternative to a ban in perpetuity will, we hope, be a provision to ensure that the agreement of all 26 Consultative Party States is obtained before the ban can ever be lifted.

Quite frankly, given the critical importance and the unique attributes of Antarctica, we reject the exclusive and perhaps discriminatory arrangement which places the fate of Antarctica and, consequently, that of the rest of the world in the hands of 19 States. Our objection is based on two factors. First, the high price of entry into the Antarctic Treaty "club" is beyond the means of most States. Consultative Party "club members" are required to maintain an active scientific station in Antarctica. Secondly, not only is the exercise expensive and, hence, exclusionary, but it has also resulted in overcrowded conditions in several of the more accessible ice-free areas on that pristine continent. This crowding has led, in turn, to an increased accumulation of atmospheric pollution from vehicles, the disposal of more solid and toxic wastes and the accumulation of other common forms of pollution from human settlements and activities. How reasonable is it to expect 153 other States to join in this massively destructive rush?

Human activity in Antarctica results in significant adverse modifications to habitats of species of native mammals, birds and plants. Moreover, permits have been granted for killing wildlife and destroying plants. This is justified, we are told, as the unavoidable consequences of the construction and operation of scientific support facilities. It may be recalled that

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

earlier measures for the protection of fauna and flora did not permit killing for those purposes.

Such wanton destruction in this pristine wilderness is not limited to the land. There has been a dramatic reduction in the population of whales, krill and fish stocks. This observation reinforces the wisdom of the bans and the catch limits which were adopted by the Commission for Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in 1989. Human activity also caused vast numbers of seals, birds and other non-target species to be caught and killed inadvertently, sometimes in the course of fishing and at other times by lost or discarded fishing gear.

It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the Madrid Protocol does not provide a functioning mechanism which protects the fragile terrestrial, glacial and marine environment of Antarctica. Moreover, the Protocol does not envisage a meaningful role for the United Nations or its organs, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, in matters of great importance to that continent's environment; the Protocol does not satisfy the call of the States not Consultative Parties for openness and non-discrimination, since only Consultative Party States are allowed to participate in meetings of its Environmental Committee.

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

While we welcome the decision of the States that are Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the final report of their sixteenth meeting, we regret sincerely their decision to ignore United Nations General Assembly resolutions requiring that the Secretary-General or his representative be invited to meetings of the Consultative Parties.

Antarctica demands a strong United Nations presence. My delegation thus reiterates its call for the establishment of a United Nations research station there and an end to the proliferation of such stations. My delegation is of the firm view that the United Nations is the most appropriate body for control of Antarctica. That being the case, we have repeatedly requested that the Secretary-General be invited to play a leading role in decisions affecting Antarctica.

United Nations supervision of the scientific programmes that are currently under way in Antarctica would end the unnecessary duplication, arrest the generation of waste, and focus the resources that are now available. Research undertaken following international dialogue and negotiations would help to minimize the adverse impact of scientific activities on the continent, while spreading knowledge among States Members of the United Nations.

In this regard, we recall Agenda 21 - the blueprint for action adopted at the Rio Conference. Agenda 21 states:

"In recognition of the value of Antarctica as an area for the conduct of scientific research, in particular research essential to understanding the global environment, States carrying out such research activities ... should, as provided for in article III of the Antarctic Treaty, continue to:

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

"(a) Ensure that data and information resulting from such research should be freely available to the international community;

"(b) Enhance access of the international scientific community and specialized agencies of the United Nations to such data and information, including the encouragement of periodic seminars and symposia."

(A/47/624, para. 18)

We all agree that many environmental problems transcend national boundaries and narrow national interests, necessitating a coordinated effort among States. We agree, further, that the success of national and global environment programmes requires mutually reinforcing strategies and the participation and commitment of all levels of society. Governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, the scientific community and private citizens must all contribute. The time is ripe for universal, concerted effort to address the many issues pertaining to Antarctica, particularly those that have an impact on the global environment.

We now realize that Antarctica is a monitor of the health of the global environment. Because of its remoteness, undisturbed data on past climatic conditions are recorded in its ice cover, and it is therefore an invaluable tool for measuring historical and current levels of pollutants and other global climatic changes. In addition, the Antarctic acts as a giant laboratory for much science that cannot be conducted elsewhere. The discovery of a gaping hole in the ozone layer above Antarctica in 1985 has forced us as members of the international community to pay more attention to our behaviour. We have limited the production and use of ozone-destroying gases, such as chloro-fluorocarbons, and eliminated lead from our gasoline. More - much more - will change with the passing of time.

(Mr. Hurst, Antigua and Barbuda)

As the world's largest wildlife sanctuary, Antarctica is home to over 100 million birds, including seven species of penguins and six species of seals; it is the summer feeding-ground for 15 species of whales; and it supports one of our Earth's unique, highly adapted and specialized ecosystems. Its amazing ice formations, vast penguin colonies, awe-inspiring vistas of mountains and glaciers reinforce my delegation's desire to ensure that this vast continent will remain unspoiled.

Because Antarctica is mankind's last frontier on Earth, the idea of its being a world park is viable. As a world park it would undoubtedly provide protection for the environment; scientific research could be coordinated; and the continent would become an area of peace, free of nuclear and other weapons and all military activities.

Five hundred years after the collision of two worlds and the conquest of paradise, we are certain that Antarctica will not be allowed to suffer irremediable despoliation, as did the Caribbean. The future of Antarctica as a common heritage of all mankind can best be preserved through the United Nations. Therefore, as we debate the future of our "last continental wilderness", let us not forget that there is an urgent need for the international community to act collectively to protect this treasure trove of mankind. Together we can make this bastion of purity and silent beauty a symbol of hope, a unique example of mankind's capacity to preserve its past, present and future. We must act today. Tomorrow will be too late.

Mr. JUSUF (Indonesia): My delegation welcomes yet another opportunity to consider the question of Antarctica, especially in the context of the changing perceptions concerning that pristine environment. As in the past, we are participating in the debate in a spirit of cooperation as our collective endeavours to achieve consensus on this question continue.

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

First of all, we deem it essential to reiterate the basic objectives of the Antarctic Treaty - in particular, peaceful use, non-militarization, non-nuclearization, the promotion of scientific research, and protection of the environment. These objectives are shared by an overwhelming majority of States, yet the efforts to achieve a broad-based multilateral framework to deal with various aspects of Antarctica continue to be repudiated. Thus, decision-making with regard to activities in Antarctica that impinge upon the critical interests of a majority of States remains the exclusive prerogative of a minority of States.

It is pertinent to recall, in this regard, that in recognition of Antarctica's importance for scientific research - in particular, research concerning the global environment - the Rio Conference of last June requested that data and information be made available and called for enhanced access for the international scientific community to such data and information.

Likewise, the tenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta last September, while welcoming the adoption of the Madrid Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, which designated Antarctica as a natural preserve for peace and science, called for greater access to, and wider dissemination of, information concerning the activities, negotiations and agreements of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. The Conference also emphasized the importance of establishing viable links with specialized agencies and modalities to encourage and facilitate the participation of developing countries in scientific activities conducted in Antarctica.

Regardless of how Antarctica is managed in the future, or under whose auspices, my delegation regards several principles as fundamental.

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

First, non-consultative parties should be accorded a genuine role in decision-making within the framework of the current arrangements. This would increase confidence in the Treaty and thereby strengthen the Treaty system as a whole.

Secondly, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties should seek the participation of all relevant specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations with a view to encouraging their input and drawing upon their expertise.

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

This is particularly relevant with regard to environmental, meteorological and other scientific research programmes, which are increasingly turning to global, interdisciplinary studies requiring coordination with international organizations and institutions engaged in similar activities in other parts of the globe. In fact, there is a compelling need for an organic link between these organizations and the activities of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

Thirdly, scientists from the developing countries should be provided with opportunities to participate in research programmes, including the sharing of expertise as regards specialized equipment and logistical support in setting up their Antarctic programmes. This would go a long way towards removing the aura of exclusivity surrounding present activities.

Fourthly, there is a need to establish a non-exclusive and internationally acceptable regime for the exploration and development of Antarctica's resources. This would provide for the equitable management and sharing of benefits for all mankind.

So far, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have not shown themselves willing to address the genuine concerns of non-Treaty States in a purposeful way. My delegation therefore calls upon them to give serious consideration to these and other proposals and to respond positively to them, for we believe that their implementation will strengthen the Antarctic Treaty and lead to a system accountable to the international community. It is self-evident that flexibility on the part of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties is essential if the future stability of Antarctica is to be ensured. Such a manifestation of flexibility would provide tangible proof of their intention to reach the consensus which has eluded us in the past.

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

Consequently, in expressing our support for the draft resolution before us, we urge the Atlantic Treaty Consultative Parties to reconsider their positions and to respond positively to the legitimate interests of the international community.

Mr. KHANAL (Nepal): Each year in the debate on this agenda item in the First Committee, my delegation has stated that we have no problem with the aims of the Antarctic Treaty. The Treaty is an important instrument for ensuring that Antarctica will for ever be used for peaceful purposes. The Treaty seeks to put international cooperation in the Earth's last wilderness on a permanent basis. We also welcome the fact that the Treaty sets aside territorial claims, prohibits all military activities, nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste on the continent. We believe that the Antarctic Treaty system, while ensuring scientific research on the continent, represents a network of measures for conserving and protecting the biological diversity and for preserving the regulating properties of the biosphere.

These instruments notwithstanding, doubts have been expressed in recent years about the impact of human activities on Antarctica. Pollution and the environmental impact of activities related to scientific research and tourism have been well documented. The prospect of opening the continent for mining heightened international concern. There is today a global consensus on the need for concerted action at the international level to protect the Earth's climate from dramatic and unpredictable changes. Antarctica is at the very heart of the debate on the environment and the fragility of its ecosystem is universally recognized.

My delegation therefore believes that fears regarding changes triggered by activities in Antarctica need to be addressed through a universal regime based on a cooperative relationship with the United Nations. Measures limited

(Mr. Khanal, Nepal)

to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties cannot fully address the global concerns. We have noted that the report of the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting was transmitted to the Secretary-General. We have also noted that some specialized agencies and programmes were represented at that meeting. While these are important developments, we find it difficult to understand the continued exclusion of the United Nations from the work of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

The Earth Summit held earlier this year at Rio de Janeiro established the significance of Antarctica in a global context. We are pleased with the commitments made by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties under chapter 7 of "Agenda 21" (A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I)).

My delegation has expressed its satisfaction at the signing last year of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. We call for a speedy ratification of the Protocol by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. We also hope that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties will take the necessary steps to redress the lack of a monitoring and implementation mechanism in the Protocol.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the reports he has submitted on this item. Document A/47/624 is an important contribution to the understanding of the role of Antarctica in the global environmental system. We are also pleased with the materials produced by the Department of Public Information of the United Nations, which are aimed at promoting public awareness concerning Antarctica. It is most desirable for the United Nations to have an active role in order to ensure that all activities in Antarctica, the common heritage of mankind, are being conducted in the best interests of all.

(Mr. Khanal, Nepal)

It is on the basis of these considerations that my delegation has once again joined in sponsoring the draft resolution submitted by the delegation of Malaysia (A/C.1/47/L.54). The sponsors have made every effort to display a positive attitude to the recent developments. We sincerely hope that the cherished convergence of views on this important item will be achieved in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. VERGAU (Germany): I am speaking today on behalf of all States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty.

It has been clear since the question of Antarctica was first injected into the United Nations General Assembly that consensus is the only constructive basis on which to consider Antarctic issues. Each year since 1985, however, consensus has eluded us. It has eluded us because we have been faced with draft resolutions over which there was no possibility of achieving consensus. The reason is simple - the purpose of the draft resolutions has been to call into question an important and effective Treaty system to which many States Members of the United Nations are party. The draft resolution continues to ignore the advances which have been made by, or are in the course of being implemented by, the Treaty system and fails to reflect adequately the role of the Treaty system in furthering international cooperation in Antarctica. Meanwhile, each year, the Antarctic Treaty system continues to demonstrate its ability to resolve, in an innovative fashion, the political, scientific and environmental issues that face us in other parts of the planet.

For more than 30 years, the Antarctic Treaty has united countries active in Antarctica or those which have demonstrated by accession their interest in Antarctica in a uniquely successful agreement for the peaceful use of a continent. Scientific research conducted by the States parties, and the

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

cooperation between them, have shown the world that nations can work together for international peace and cooperation. Antarctica is the largest unspoiled landmass on Earth, and States parties have committed themselves to its study and to the protection of its unique environment. The Antarctic Treaty is an example of the way in which nations can work together successfully to preserve a major part of this planet for the benefit of all mankind as a zone of peace where the environment is protected and where freedom of scientific investigation exists for the benefit of all.

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

The Antarctic Treaty was adopted by 12 States in 1959, at a time when other parts of the world were the arena of international tensions. The Governments of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, all of which had conducted scientific research in Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year, 1959, agreed that the unique opportunities which Antarctica presented to science should not be jeopardized by disputes among them. The Treaty, which entered into force on 23 June 1961, ensures that in the interests of all mankind Antarctica will for ever continue to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and will not become either the scene or the object of international discord.

The Antarctic Treaty contains far-sighted provisions for achieving its objectives, inter alia prohibiting measures of a military nature, nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive wastes. The Treaty guarantees freedom of scientific research and promotes ~~in~~ international scientific cooperation. It provides for the exchange of detailed information about activities in Antarctica and allows observers complete freedom of access to all areas of Antarctica to ensure that the provisions of the Treaty are complied with by the States Parties. Thanks to these safeguards, the Treaty has been successful in achieving its objectives.

The strength of the Antarctic Treaty continues to grow and the 41 parties to the Treaty now represent 70 per cent of the global population. We encourage the accession of more States to the Treaty.

In accordance with article IX of the Treaty, representatives of the Parties meet regularly to exchange information, to consult on matters of common interest, and to formulate and recommend to their Governments measures in furtherance of the objectives of the Treaty.

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

In 1964 the Parties adopted the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora. Subsequently two separate conventions, the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals and the Convention on the Conservation of Marine Living Resources, entered into force.

On 4 October 1991 in Madrid the Parties adopted the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The Protocol supplements the Antarctic Treaty and designates Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science in recognition of the continent's global importance. It establishes a comprehensive, legally binding regime to ensure that all activities undertaken by Parties in the Antarctic Treaty area are consistent with the protection of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. It stipulates that activities relating to mineral resources other than scientific research shall be prohibited.

The detailed environmental-impact-assessment procedures annexed to the Protocol constitute a key element of the regime. Further annexes concluded at the Consultative Meeting in Bonn in October 1991 cover the conservation of flora and fauna, the prevention of marine pollution and waste disposal, and management of specially protected areas. Strong measures on compliance, response action, inspection and environmental monitoring are included, as is provision for binding settlement of third-party disputes.

Thirty-six States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, including all the Consultative Parties, have signed the Protocol and have committed themselves to taking the steps necessary to achieve its earliest possible entry into force. The Consultative Meeting recently held in Venice has shown that this is likely to become a reality. In the meantime, the Parties will ensure that the provisions of the Protocol are applied to their activities in Antarctica

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

as quickly as their legal and constitutional processes will allow. Adoption of the Protocol in 1991 was a fitting tribute to the thirtieth anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty and demonstrates the Parties' resolve further to strengthen the Treaty.

The Protocol is further evidence that the Treaty Parties are aiming at conservation of Antarctic resources. It is a testimony to the fact that the Treaty Parties are fully alive to the environmental concerns shared by all delegations.

The Antarctic Treaty Parties are fully committed to scientific research in Antarctica. Since the 1950s the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) has played a prominent role in developing cooperation among Antarctic scientists. Antarctica is a pristine laboratory of world-wide significance and has enabled researchers to detect and monitor, for the benefit of all mankind, global environment phenomena such as the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming and sea-level changes. Other areas of scientific research that benefit from the unique opportunities offered by the environment of Antarctica are expanding rapidly. The States Parties have ensured that the results of these important research efforts are freely available.

The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings have also consulted and cooperated with other scientific, technical and environmental international organizations, including a number of United Nations specialized agencies, which have shared their expertise and information as appropriate. These organizations include: the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission; the International Civil Aviation Organization; the International Maritime Organization; the World Meteorological Organization; the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources; the International

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

Hydrographic Organization; the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research; the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources; the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; the International Whaling Commission; and the United Nations Environment Programme.

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

The results of the Seventeenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Venice from 11 to 20 November of this year, underline the high degree of cooperation among the States Parties and their dedication to the sixth continent. As usual, upon completion of the report on the Seventeenth Consultative Meeting, a copy will be forwarded to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General's report of 20 October 1992 (A/47/541) is proof of the fact that the Antarctic Treaty constitutes a modern dynamic system which continues to provide for timely and comprehensive solutions to all questions facing Antarctica. In the concluding remarks, the Secretary-General characterizes the Antarctic Treaty system as follows:

"Information outlined in documents available, particularly those provided by Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, have addressed several aspects of Antarctica. The final report of the Sixteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting details scientific research and initiatives pursued and developed over the last 30 years. In that regard, it should be noted that international cooperation has been achieved at the level of Governments, some United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, and relevant international and non-governmental organizations.

"Documents submitted, such as those summarized above, appear to reflect that the existing Antarctic Treaty system continues (a) to foster international cooperation; (b) to adapt to changing environmental priorities; and (c) to elaborate new mechanisms in line with innovative scientific research. They also indicate interest in renewed global efforts in line with increased public awareness, particularly as regards Antarctic ecosystems, and growing world-wide environmental concerns."

(A/47/541, paras. 27 and 28)

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

The Antarctic Treaty Parties are aware of the significance of Antarctica for global environmental issues and therefore provided detailed information for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) preparatory process, including information on the recent conclusion of the Protocol of the Antarctic Treaty on Environmental Protection and the far-reaching annexes to it.

The constructive influence of the Antarctic Treaty Parties was particularly apparent in the preparations for UNCED, especially during the lengthy and arduous work on the formulation of Agenda 21 in the Preparatory Committee. An agreement was reached to include the following paragraph in the UNCED document "Agenda 21":

"In recognition of the value of Antarctica as an area for the conduct of scientific research, in particular research essential to understanding the global environment, States carrying out such research activities in Antarctica should, as provided for in Article III of the Antarctic Treaty, continue to:

"(a) Ensure that data and information resulting from such research should be freely available to the international community;

"(b) Enhance access of the international scientific community and specialized agencies of the United Nations to such data and information including the encouragement of periodic seminars and symposia."

(A/47/624, para. 18)

In the view of the Antarctic Treaty States, as well as of all other States participating in the Rio Conference, this reference in Agenda 21 treated the question of Antarctica in the UNCED context in a fair and balanced manner.

(Mr. Vergau, Germany)

We hope that the consensus reached within UNCED may serve as a model for understanding in the General Assembly, allowing us to refrain from the exercise of voting on unhelpful and divisive draft resolutions in the future. For all those Members of the United Nations interested in the future of Antarctica, as well as all those interested in developing scientific activities there, we reiterate our invitation to accede to the Antarctic Treaty and to take advantage of the existing institutions and experience of the Antarctic Treaty Parties. This, we submit once again, would be a constructive and responsible approach to the question of Antarctica.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.