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Chairman: Mr. Ismail FAHMY
(United Arab Republic).

AGENDA ITEM 92

Examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind (*continued*) (A/6695; A/C.1/952)

GENERAL DEBATE (*concluded*)

1. Mr. PARTHASARATHI (India): Ten years ago we entered the space age which has since captured the imagination of all mankind. While still mesmerized by the astonishing rate at which the vast reaches of outer space are yielding up their secrets, we are beginning to explore the deep mysteries of the oceans which hold so much promise for the good of man. Let the fascinating adventure of exploration and exploitation of the bottom of the sea be guided by reason that demands that our endeavours in this sphere be for peaceful purposes and for the betterment of all.

2. We should wish to place on record our tribute to the Government of Malta for taking the initiative [A/6695] in placing the item under discussion on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly—an item both relevant and timely. In wording the item as it stands, the delegation of Malta has obviously tried to restrict it, and rightly so, to the discussion of the questions relating to the sea-bed and the ocean floor and the subsoil thereof. We are aware that there are numerous matters connected with the study of the oceans, but we can well realize why the delegation of Malta, in order to bring to an early conclusion the discussion on some of the more pressing and urgent aspects of this matter, particularly those relating to the peaceful uses of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, has worded the item in this manner.

3. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his note [A/C.1/952] in which he has given an account of the activities of the United Nations and the other interested agencies in this and other related fields within the broad field of oceanography.

4. The Secretary-General has stated in his note that:

“Given the multiplicity and complexity of oceanographic work, the consideration of this item may be facilitated and even sharpened by distinguishing between (a) the question of peaceful use, (b) the scientific activities and (c) those of resources exploitation” [*ibid.*, para. 2].

While this is pertinent to the consideration of the item, we suggest that another matter of relevance needs to be listed also, namely, the examination of legal questions.

5. We are convinced that the sea-bed and the ocean floor outside the limits of present national jurisdiction should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, a principle which has been accepted and embodied in the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies [General Assembly resolution 2222 (XXI), annex].

6. We entirely agree with the representative of Malta, who said in his exhaustive and lucid statement on 1 November:

“The development of a technology that permits the physical occupation and military use of large areas of the sea-bed beyond the continental shelf drastically alters traditional constraints on the use of the sea with consequences which even experts may find difficulty fully to assess at the present time; in any case a new dimension is added to strategy.” [1515th meeting, para. 47.]

7. It is our fervent hope that the technologically advanced countries will not use the sea-bed and the ocean floor for setting up military bases or military fortifications of any kind, or for testing any type of weapons, particularly nuclear weapons.

8. As the representative of Chile said in his statement:

“... my delegation views with sympathy the possibility that the General Assembly, might recognize as explicitly as possible, the need to reserve the sea-bed and the ocean floor, beyond the limits of present national jurisdictions, exclusively for peaceful purposes, and the use of the resources there for the benefit of mankind, and especially the developing countries.” [1526th meeting, para. 69.]

9. A great opportunity is presented to us to use the resources of the sea-bed and the ocean floor for the good of

all mankind, and not to appropriate them for the exclusive purpose of enhancing the national power of some countries. As the United States representative told us, President Johnson, speaking on 13 July 1966, stressed this point when he stated that:

“... We must be careful to avoid a race to grab and to hold the lands under the high seas. We must ensure that the deep seas and the ocean bottoms are, and remain, the legacy of all human beings.” [1524th meeting, para. 30.]

10. Not long ago, in terms of human history, nations in the pursuit of their narrow and limited interests embarked upon the disastrous course of parcelling the world into colonies, unleashing misery and suffering. To enter into a power struggle in a scramble for areas in the deep sea would be to repeat the tragic errors of history. As the representative of Sweden so aptly pointed out in her statement:

“... my delegation would favour some measure to freeze the present situation, to avoid claims to the ocean floor and activities thereon—except scientific ones—until our deliberations have resulted in some conclusions.” [1527th meeting, para. 126.]

11. We should, therefore, direct our thoughts to the fundamental principles which should guide us. The representative of Ghana has mentioned three basic principles which are:

“... first, that the resources of the sea-bed and ocean floor beyond the continental shelf should not be subject to the sovereignty of any nation; secondly, that these resources should be considered the common heritage of mankind; and thirdly, that the sea-bed and ocean floor should be reserved for peaceful uses.” [1526th meeting, para. 80.]

12. We are told by experts that oceans contain immense deposits, still not fully estimated, of minerals such as petroleum, magnesium, uranium, gold and huge quantities of food resources within the realm of immediate exploitation as technological advances make that exploitation economically sound. How should the wealth of the oceans be used? Should it be appropriated for the benefit of a few or should the bounty of the sea be shared by all? We should be failing in our duty if we did not accept the challenges posed, and opportunities offered, by a broad-minded and courageous approach. The exploitation of the oceans should be for the purpose of raising the economic level of peoples throughout the world, and especially in the developing countries. We believe that the United Nations is the appropriate agency which can co-ordinate and direct the exploitation and exploration of such resources.

13. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly have already considered some measures regarding the exploitation of the resources of the oceans. By its resolution 1112 (XL), the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General:

“(a) To make a survey of the present state of knowledge of these resources of the sea [mineral and food, excluding fish] beyond the continental shelf, and of the techniques for exploiting these resources . . .

“(b) As part of that survey, to attempt to identify those resources now considered to be capable of eco-

nomic exploitation, especially for the benefit of developing countries;

“(c) To identify any gaps in available knowledge which merit early attention by virtue of their importance to the development of ocean resources, and of the practicality of their early exploitation;

“(d) To report on the progress of the survey at an early session of the Council.”

14. Also the General Assembly, by its resolution 2172 (XXI), of 6 December 1966, requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the specialized agencies concerned, to undertake:

“... a comprehensive survey of activities in marine science and technology, including that relating to mineral resources development . . . and . . . to formulate proposals for:

“(a) Ensuring the most effective arrangements for an expanded programme of international co-operation to assist in a better understanding of the marine environment through science and in the exploitation and development of marine resources, . . .

“(b) Initiating and strengthening marine education and training programmes, . . .”

We are keen to see soon the publication of the survey asked for in that resolution.

15. The Indian delegation would like to make particular references to paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's note, to which I referred earlier. The Secretary-General has stated:

“... the preliminary work on the tasks entrusted to him in the above-mentioned resolution of the Council has led him to the conclusion that (a) the legal status of the deep sea resources and (b) ways and means of ensuring that the exploitation of these resources benefit the developing countries constitute two major gaps.”

16. We should like to compliment the Secretary-General on his bold approach in defining the lacuna which exists in this field. The Secretary-General has further stated that, regarding ways and means of ensuring that the exploitation of these resources benefit the developing countries, he will “examine various alternatives, including the advisability and feasibility of entrusting the deep-sea resources to an international body”. The Secretary-General goes on to say that:

“The General Assembly may consider it advantageous for the Secretary-General to prepare a more comprehensive report which would include a study of the legal framework which might be established for the deep-sea resources, the administrative machinery which may be necessary for effective management and control, the possible system of licensing and various possible arrangements for redistributing and/or utilizing the funds which would be derived therefrom, including those earmarked for the benefit of the developing countries.”

17. The Indian delegation feels that a report from the Secretary-General on this item is a *sine qua non* for any progress in this matter.

18. The delegation of India attaches equal importance to scientific activities in the field of oceanography, recognizing

that oceanographic research is indispensable for governing the vast resources hidden in the oceans. However, in many countries such activity is under-developed, and therefore the potentials for utilizing the oceans' resources have thus far not been realized.

19. With the establishment in 1960 of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO for promoting scientific investigation with a view to learning more about the nature and resources of the oceans through the concerted action of its members, a significant and decisive step was taken in the right direction. The Commission has co-ordinated three large-scale international expeditions, namely, the International Indian Ocean Expedition, the International Co-operative Investigations of the Tropical Atlantic, and the co-operative study of the Kuroshio current and the adjacent regions of the Pacific. In this connexion, I may refer to India's participation in the International Indian Ocean Expedition, which included studies of the sea-bed and the ocean floor. During the expedition period not much progress was made in this field, except in the study of certain mineral components near Cochin, submarine canyons on the east coast of India and general surveys of the shelf near the Kutch and Gujarat coast. The various steps taken by my Government in this context, during the period of the International Indian Ocean Expedition, have now resulted in the establishment of our National Institute of Oceanography. The programme of this Institute includes activities in the field of marine physics, chemistry, biology and geology. The geological studies will include detailed prospecting of the continental shelf and slope and also the nature of the sediments and progress of sedimentation in different regions of the Indian coast.

20. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission adopted on 27 October 1967 a resolution establishing an IOC working group on legal questions related to scientific investigations of the ocean. We are gratified to note the pace and extent of the activities of the Commission, and we believe that it will continue to make progress in achieving the objectives set for it.

21. The Indian delegation would wish to note also the interest and activities of other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, in the field of oceanography.

22. My delegation recognizes the urgent need of acquisition of knowledge about the sea-bed and the ocean floor and is aware that those objectives can best be achieved by international co-operation at this juncture primarily through the existing international organizations. It is in the spirit of what I have just said that we would recall with appreciation the statement of President Johnson of 13 July 1966, as reported in *The New York Times* the following day:

"Truly great accomplishments in oceanography will require the co-operation of all the maritime nations of the world. And so today I send our voices out from this platform calling for such co-operation, requesting it and urging it."

23. I now turn to the legal implications involved in the consideration of the proposal before us. Representatives are aware of the four Conventions on the Law of the Sea adopted at Geneva in 1958.¹ The Convention on the Continental Shelf states in article 1 that the term "continental shelf" refers to the sea-bed and subsoil of the submarine areas adjacent to the coast but outside the area of the territorial sea, to a depth of 200 metres or, beyond that limit, to where the depth of the superjacent waters admits of the exploitation of the natural resources of the said areas. Even beyond that vague limit of the continental shelf allowed by article 1, the Convention on the Continental Shelf permits the exploitation of the subsoil by means of tunnelling irrespective of the depth of the water above the subsoil. Thus, article 7 of this Convention provides that "the provisions of these articles shall now prejudice the right of the coastal State to exploit the subsoil by means of tunnelling irrespective of the depth of the water above the subsoil." The Convention on the Continental Shelf is already in force, as representatives are aware, and therefore it is necessary for the question of the delimitation of the continental shelf from the high seas to be more thoroughly examined. However, my delegation fully agrees with the representative of Sweden when she stated:

"It is inconceivable that, having inserted a brief, somewhat cryptic phrase into a convention, States could have intended to allow the parcelling-up of the sea-bed underneath the oceans". [*1527th meeting, para. 114.*]

24. There is also no uniformity at present with regard to national laws and regulations relating to the question of the exploitation of the resources of the sea, sea-bed and subsoil, outside one's internal waters. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his Note, the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations is considering the issue of a further volume in the legislative series on the law of the sea if sufficient material is received by it in time in response to a request made by the Secretary-General to Member Governments seeking information about such national laws and regulations. We hope that the publication of this series can be undertaken as a project of priority.

25. I cannot but refer to some of the literature and material which already exists on the legal aspects of this matter. This needs to be taken note of. A substantial amount of work was done by the International Law Association, for instance, at its 1948 and 1950 Conferences. I would make specific reference to its work on rights to the sea-bed and its subsoil. The work of the International Law Commission on the law of the sea and the records and documentation of the two Law of the Sea Conferences of 1958 and 1960 held in Geneva are also relevant. The memorandum of the Secretary-General on the régime of the high seas prepared in connexion with the work of the International Law Commission,² also contains a valuable survey on the literature on the legal régime of the

¹Convention on the High Seas (United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 450 (1963), No. 6465); Convention on the Continental Shelf (*ibid.*, vol. 499 (1964), No. 7302); Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone (*ibid.*, vol. 516 (1964), No. 7477); Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas (*ibid.*, vol. 559 (1966), No. 8164).

²See *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*, 1950, vol. II (United Nations Publication, Sales No. 1957.V.3 vol. II).

continental shelf. It is interesting to recall at this time that certain proposals for the internationalization of, or for framing international regulations on, the exploitation and utilization of the sea-bed and subsoil have already been put forward. Thus, Dr. François, in his capacity as the Special Rapporteur of the International Law Commission, stated at the eleventh session of the General Assembly that the possible establishment of an international office of the sea had been considered by the Commission.

26. Such a proposal is also referred to in the International Law Commission's commentary on article 68 of its draft articles on the Law of the Sea. Also at the 1958 Geneva Conference on the Law of the Sea, the Federal Republic of Germany put forward a proposal³ alluding to the possibility of entrusting the exploitation of submarine areas to the United Nations or one of its specialized agencies, while recognizing at the same time the difficulties involved with regard to such a proposal.

27. I apologize for having mentioned in some detail some of the body of work which already exists in this connexion. The time seems now to have come for us all to think along more concrete and specific lines. This must be done on the clear understanding that this work has to be carried out in the context of international co-operation. My delegation stands ready to make its own contribution by participating in the work of any appropriate body which may be established by the General Assembly to consider matters raised in the proposal of the delegation of Malta. However, we must emphasize that we attach great importance to the report, which we have already suggested should be prepared by the Secretary-General. That will naturally help the deliberations of any body that is set up. I hope this Committee will agree with the relevance and significance of the basic principles referred to by me earlier, with a view to providing us with guidance in the work that lies ahead of us.

28. Mr. ABEL (United States of America): On 8 November [1524th meeting] my delegation presented its views on the action which the General Assembly should take at this session on the present item. Our underlying assumption was, and is, that the immediate task is to take those procedural and organizational steps which will enable the Assembly to deal in an orderly and effective way with a new and rapidly expanding field of concern.

29. We sense from the debate thus far a wide agreement on this point. We sense also an agreement with the view that those steps should take the form of the establishment of a special committee. We note with particular interest that of the forty-five representatives who have spoken in this debate, twenty-three have spoken clearly in favour of the immediate establishment of a committee, and twenty-three have spoken in favour of giving that committee broad terms of reference. My delegation was struck by the thoughtful analyses and constructive suggestions set forth in support of a committee with broad terms of reference by a number of delegations, and in particular by views pronounced by representatives of such States as the Netherlands, Norway, Italy, Ghana, Ecuador, Brazil and Venezuela.

30. We also note with interest that there were an additional seven who proposed a committee in the form of a preparatory or *ad hoc* body. Among those, we have heard a wider range of views as to scope. We were particularly struck by the suggestions set forth by the representatives of Austria and Tanzania [1527th meeting].

31. Seven speakers held the view that it might be premature now to begin collective study of the questions which have been the subject of our debate. But many, like the representatives of Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago, suggested that it was almost too late, rather than too early, to deal with this matter. Many clearly shared the Maltese view that this Assembly cannot afford to delay.

32. We believe a clear consensus has been established in favour of collective study, and that widespread agreement can be marshalled for the appointment of a committee with suitable terms of reference which will have the task of preparing recommendations for consideration by the Assembly. It may well be—as suggested by Brazil [*ibid.*], among others—that a permanent committee can be established which will approach its work in two stages of activity.

33. Like Brazil, in supporting the creation of a permanent committee we recognize that the initial preoccupation of that committee will be the assembly of information; and for much of that the committee will need to rely heavily on the Secretary-General and specialized agencies. We also agree that the committee should not be precluded from addressing itself to all aspects of the question, be they scientific, technical, economic, legal or military. As the representative of Brazil pointed out, that does not mean we should expect the committee to examine in depth all such aspects of the problem—much less to come to conclusions—by next year.

34. The need for a broad scope for that committee is evidenced by almost all who have spoken and who have expressed their concern on matters which cannot be usefully considered if the committee is to be held rigidly within the confines of the sea-bed and ocean floor itself. I have in mind widespread concern on such subjects as: pollution—where acts are involved far earlier than the arrival of waste on the floor itself; conservation—where a broad range of questions involving scientific and physical processes of the oceans must be taken into account; scientific research—which likewise must take account of the inter-action between the floor and the waters above; development of law—where the tight relationship between activities on the floor and in the waters covering it is self-evident; and arms-control—where it would be meaningless to consider measures on one dimension without considering the effect on the total environment of the ocean.

35. It is in view of the acknowledged complexity of the subject that we favour a progressive development of general standards and principles. It is the clear consensus of this Committee also that States should be guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the conduct of activities on the deep ocean floor, and that the use of ocean resources should be for the benefit of mankind.

³ A/CONF.13/C.4/L.1.

36. It is also agreed that we need to know far more about the ocean environment; and for this we must continue to foster oceanographic research. As pointed out by the representative of the United Arab Republic [1528th meeting], the results of that research should be made available to all.

37. To those who have expressed fear of moving ahead in this complex realm, let us be mindful of the observation of the representative of Sweden [1527th meeting]—that we can no longer afford to leave these questions to be dealt with in a fragmented fashion.

38. We now draw to the close of a stimulating and constructive debate which was initiated by the imaginative and industrious approach of the Maltese delegation [1515th meeting]. This debate has greatly benefited by the injection of new ideas and new information, not only from representatives of States, but from representatives of specialized agencies as well. Certainly the Assembly will wish to encourage the closest possible collaboration between its committee and the specialized agencies, since the committee will be largely dependent on them for current information on marine activities, for which they will continue to bear operational responsibility. As we approach the task of drawing up a draft resolution, my delegation will seek to record the existing wide agreement so that the initiation of collective study will be harmonious and productive.

Mr. Tchernouchchenko (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

39. In closing, I wish to state the appreciation of my delegation for the support given to our proposal for the establishment of an oceans committee. It is our continuing conviction that such a committee will afford the best means of achieving sound constructive programmes on the broad range of maritime questions which may come before the General Assembly.

40. Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus): I wish in the first place to pay a tribute to the delegation of Malta for the inscription of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly. It is a source of particular gratification to my country that a sister island in the Mediterranean has taken this timely initiative in the United Nations. I particularly wish to congratulate Ambassador Pardo for his comprehensive, fully-documented and most illuminating statement. Cyprus, as an island, is deeply interested in all that concerns the sea. Also, my country, within its modest means, has taken an active interest in every effort in the United Nations towards international understanding and the establishment of peace through a world legal order. This item is therefore of absorbing interest to us, not to mention the particular interest of Cyprus as a member of the world community and a developing country in benefiting from the international use of the sea-bed.

41. The subject of our discussion is one of great significance. It refers to the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor beyond the limits of present national jurisdictions, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind. It is the one forward-looking and constructive new item on our agenda.

If we face the problem involved with the determination that was demonstrated in regard to outer space, this Assembly could be historic.

42. Under the watery expanse of the seas and oceans, covering about three-quarters of the earth's surface, lies an unknown world of immense potentialities in material resources. The recent great strides in science and technology have opened up the riches of these resources for man's exploration and use. This vast area has not been appropriated by any nation. The concept of separate State sovereignties in respect of all land on this globe fortunately so far has left the high seas untouched and immune. They come under no sovereignty. Their resources are therefore the heritage of all mankind, and should be treated as such. They must be placed under the control of an international authority.

43. The United Nations is the existing Organization that represents the world community. Title to the sea-bed and the ocean floor beyond the internationally accepted limits of national jurisdictions could possibly be vested in the United Nations on behalf of, and in trust for, all the nations of the world. In a forward-looking statement, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace in 1957 declared its belief that:

“... the United Nations is capable not only of administering territory but of acquiring title under international law through prior claim to territory or space to which no State has title.”⁴

44. With respect to the bed of the high seas and the continental shelf beyond national jurisdictions, it urged the General Assembly to declare the title of the international community.

45. This call was emphatically repeated last July in a declaration by the World Peace Through Law Conference, widely representative of the world community by the participation of judicial and legal authorities from over one hundred States. Thanks to the initiative of the delegation of Malta, this vital issue is now where it should be, before the General Assembly for action.

46. The exploration and exploitation of the resources of the seas and oceans under international control for the benefit of mankind is a matter of immense importance to the world community. It would meet some of the most pressing needs of humanity and could facilitate solutions of the now intractable problems that threaten our world today.

47. Bringing legal order to the high seas—a part of the earth's inner space—would mark a break-through in international co-operation and would bring nearer to realization the fading prospects of ever attaining the goal of enduring peace in a world of law and order, as envisaged by the Charter.

48. The subject before us presents a great opportunity and a new challenge. If treated with determination and in the spirit it deserves, it could prove a turning-point in the

⁴ *Strengthening the United Nations* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 6.

development of the United Nations and for the future of mankind.

49. In reference to the development of the United Nations particularly, we have spoken in the past of the need for independent resources of revenue for the Organization in order that it may be enabled to become an effective instrument of peace and freedom in the world, as required by the Charter. And we referred to such resources being made available to it through the exploration of the wealth lying under international seas. In the context of the present item we reiterate and emphasize this aspect, particularly in regard to the United Nations functions in the maintenance of peace and in its development programmes for, indeed, disarmament and peace will remain an ever-vanishing phantom unless there is a modicum of international security through a strengthened United Nations. And there can be no peace ensured when the disparity between the rich and poor countries is an ever-growing gap which, in the words of the late President Kennedy, is becoming a threat to mankind equal to that of the nuclear bomb. This gap would be immensely widened if the vast resources of the sea-bed were to be the subject of national appropriation and exploitation exclusively by the technologically-advanced States. An international control of those resources for the benefit of mankind is therefore a demanding necessity in the very interests of peace and survival.

50. For the establishment of the international régime to control the sea-bed a thorough and comprehensive study is required of all aspects—legal, economic and technical—as well as of the political and military implications. It would include the study of the delimitation of national jurisdiction on the continental shelf and the interpretation of the relevant paragraph of the Geneva Convention of 1958. While not restricting the national jurisdiction to the 200-metre depth of the shelf, where the progress of technology enables the exploration at greater depths, nevertheless the paragraph in question refers expressly to the continental shelf and could not possibly be interpreted as including the bed of the sea and of the ocean beyond that shelf.

51. Because of the many complexities involved, the relevant task will have to be carried out with care but also with the requisite expediency. Several speakers have proposed the setting up of a special committee. My delegation supports that proposal. The committee to be set up will, in co-operation with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, deal fully with all matters directly relevant to the problem and will report to the next General Assembly. Among the main objectives of the committee will be to ensure the international character of the resources involved and their equitable distribution among all countries, whether coastal or land locked and whether technologically and economically advanced or not, but with due regard to the compelling needs for special assistance to the developing countries, and for providing a source of revenue for the United Nations as already mentioned.

52. In dealing with the item before us we have to bear in mind that the rapid development of technology compels parallel speedy action by the United Nations. The increasing possibilities for areas beyond the 200-metre limit

of the continental shelf to be commercially exploited and used for military purposes might perhaps be an irresistible temptation for unilateral appropriation, particularly in view of the elasticity of national limits on the continental shelf under the Geneva Convention of 1958. Such unilateral action might place some nation or nations into committed positions from which they could not possibly retreat. It would thus inevitably start an irreversible course of antagonisms involving at the end military objectives. The escalation of a nuclear arms-race beneath the sea and on its bed would seriously aggravate the present hazards, with unfathomable consequences to mankind.

53. We have to ensure, as of now, that the sea-bed and the ocean floor will be reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all peoples. We must see to it that we are not "overtaken by events", as the representative of Sweden remarked [*1527th meeting*].

54. The establishment of the proposed international authority for the control of the sea-bed and the relevant work of the committee to be set up are matters that no doubt require time. But, on the other hand, the freezing of the existing situation under the seas and oceans in order to forestall any move towards national appropriation or military use of the sea-bed and the ocean floor is a matter of immediate importance and urgency which would not require time-consuming procedures.

55. The General Assembly at this session should adopt a declaration of the principles involved. It should declare that the bed of the sea and the oceans is not subject to annexation or appropriation beyond the limits of internationally accepted national jurisdiction. It should resolve that such sea-bed and its resources should be administered as a common heritage of all peoples. It should declare also that the bed of the sea is not to be used for any military purposes and is to be reserved exclusively for peaceful uses.

56. We confidently trust that the spirit of co-operation in the interests of humanity that produced a speedy agreement on the principles for the peaceful uses of outer space may emerge also in respect of the bed of the high seas and the oceans, so that we can adopt at this present session of the General Assembly a set of general principles that would reserve this "inner space" of our globe for the benefit of all mankind and prevent it from becoming the field of a new and most threatening phase of the nuclear arms race following inevitably in the wake of a colonial scramble.

57. This, in our submission, is the aspect of the item that calls for the immediate attention and undivided concern of all Members of the United Nations, and for the action by the General Assembly.

58. Mr. EGUINO (Bolivia) (*translated from Spanish*): Despite the fact that Bolivia which, as a result of circumstances, is a land-locked country, without its own sovereign outlet to the sea, my delegation would like briefly to express the firm intention of my country to co-operate in any effort which the United Nations may make to carry out an examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction and

the uses of their resources in the interests of mankind, as item 92 on the agenda for the current session of the General Assembly is entitled.

59. There is no doubt that the interesting statements which we have heard in this Committee, beginning of course with the detailed introduction of the item by the delegation of Malta, have been highly illuminating. Nevertheless, as we have seen so far, we are dealing with a new subject. The various problems of the marine environment or the sea are many and complex. For that reason, it would appear advisable to take specific steps, carefully taking account of the experience of those countries which have studied the matter, and in particular the experience of the United Nations itself which has already undertaken surveys of activities which are feasible in marine science and technology, for example, activities relating to the exploitation of mineral resources, mentioned in General Assembly resolution 2172 (XXI). This delegation is convinced that all these surveys as well as those which have been assigned to the Inter-Governmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and the preliminary work done by the Secretary-General in accordance with the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council will serve to promote a better knowledge of this question in all the complexity which derives precisely from its great importance.

60. Despite these efforts, there would seem to be nothing wrong in our considering the establishment of a committee of the General Assembly as a preliminary stage. That committee, in co-ordination with all the organizations and bodies which are working on the problem and with Member States equitably represented, could proceed to analyse all the aspects of the question: political, legal, economic, scientific and technical. In this way we shall certainly be able in the near future—even if a special conference is needed for the purpose—to arrive at a clear definition of the interests of mankind, exclusively for its benefit, with regard to the resources afforded by the sea and the ocean.

61. Mr. PARDO (Malta): My delegation is most grateful for the generally favourable response to the initiative taken by my Government with respect to the item under discussion at the present time. We thank the many delegations which have spoken for the kind words with which they have honoured us. I wish to assure the Committee that we are fully aware of the complexities of the problem that my Government has raised. However, we hope that it will be possible to adopt at this session of the Assembly a resolution which will both receive the agreement of this Committee and, at the same time, take meaningful steps towards the goal of reserving the sea-bed and the ocean floor exclusively for peaceful purposes and exploiting their resources in the interests of mankind as a whole. In particular, we hope that it will be possible to reach agreement on certain principles with regard to the use of the ocean floor. We trust and hope that the international community, as represented in the United Nations, will not fail promptly to grasp an opportunity which may not recur. We do not have very much time.

62. The CHAIRMAN (*translated from Russian*): I thank the representative of Malta for his short statement. We have now concluded our general discussion on this item.

63. I have been asked to inform the Committee that the unofficial Working Group on item 92 will meet today at 2.30 p.m. in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. I should like too to point out that at today's plenary meeting at 3 p.m. item 33 of the agenda, the "Korean Question", will be examined. Further, I would remind the Committee that it has approved the Chairman's proposal that tomorrow we should begin consideration of the draft resolution in connexion with item 91—"Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America".

64. If there are no further comments and no one wishes to speak, I shall now declare the meeting closed.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.