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Chairman: Mr. MASHHADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) (Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Mashhadi (Islamic Republic of Iran) , Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 70

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA² GENERAL DEBATE AND ~~CONSIDERATION~~ OF AN ACTION ON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

The CBA IRMAN: In recent years, the subject of Antarctica has been a matter of growing concern in the international community. At each succeeding session of the General Assembly since 1983, this concern has been reflected in statements of delegations as well as in growing world-wide attention to Antarctica. Perils posed to the sensitive Antarctica environment have also been the subject of deep interest-

It is quite evident that States are striving to preserve Antarctica as a demilitarized and neutral zone for the preservation of peace and co-operation among all States.

Globally also, we are witnessing new and important initiatives which augur well for the preservation of world peace. Clearly, this trend can have a positive effect on efforts to solve various problems directly related to Antarctica, and I hope that it will continue.

(The Chairman)

With that in mind, I hope that the **debate** on this **item** will **be purrued** in a **co-operative and fruitful manner** and that consensus will **be** reached.

I should like to invite the attention of delegations to the **reports** of the **Secretary-General**, documents **A/44/518** and **A/44/586**, which are now before the **Committee** and which **address** some of the specific concerns raised in **General Assembly resolutions 43/83 A and 43/83 B**.

The Committee will have at its disposal three **days - a total of** six meetings - for **oonrideration** of this **agenda** item. **As** the Committee has decided, the deadline for **submission** of draft resolutions under agenda item 70 is 6 p.m. today and the list of speakers **for** the general debate will **be** closed **at 12 noon**. I **therefore** urge representative8 to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as **possible**.

Mr. JOSSE (Nepal) : **As** the Committee is meeting once again after **its** failute **at four consecutive** sessions **of** the General Assembly to adopt consensus **resolutions** on the question **of** Antarctica, it is not unnatural **that** my delegation is experiencing a sense **of déjà vu**. Yet, in a **very** important **way**, this **year's** **debate** on the item is taking **place** in **rather** special or changed **circumstances**.

I **refer, of course,** to the breakdown **of** consensus among the Consultative Parties of the Antarctic Treaty system on the regulation of Antarctic mineral **resources**, which they approved in Wellington in **June** 1988 despite General **Assembly** resolutions **calling for a moratorium** on negotiations on a minerals **régime** in the Antarctic until **all** members **of** the international community could fully participate in them. That is evident from important developments **since** then: the announcement by Australia that it would not sign the Convention on a mineral **régime**, the **support** by France of a **ban** on mining activities in the Antarctic, the **decision** by Belgium not to submit the Convention to **its** Parliament for ratification, and the **decision**

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of the Italian Parliament, with the consent of the Italian Government, not to sign or ratify the Convention. Equally **significant** is the decision of the **XVth** Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty which **met** in Paris last **month**, to **convene a** special Consultative meeting devoted to creating an **overall** system for the protection of dependent and associated ecosystems in Antarctica in **1990**.

My delegation welcomes those important developments as we believe they are consonant with the concerns that have been raised **by the** international **community**, including those in debates of this Committee, with respect to **the** overriding issue of the fragility of **the** Antarctic ecosystem. We note that they come in the **wake of** accidents such as the one that caused the disastrous oil spill off the coast **of** the Western **Antarctic** Peninsular last January and the growing awareness **of** the serious implications of Antarctica's ozone hole along with the need for mankind to **act** in concert to protect planet Earth's climate from drastic and unpredictable **change**. But, welcome as they are, **my** delegation does not believe that they can **be** adequately addressed through an environmental convention that is limited to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. In view of the well-documented phenomenon of climate **change** affecting our entire planet - and the fact that **the Antarctic is** at the very core of the global **debate on** the environment - it is only logical **that** such **concerns** should be tackled through a universal **régime**. Otherwise, it will **be difficult** to allay fears and suspicions that the concerns of all countries regarding protection from the climatic changes triggered by activities in or around **Antarctica** have been addressed to their satisfaction.

The fact is that as **long** as the Consultative Parties reject the concept **of** Antarctica **as** the "common heritage of mankind", it will be impossible effectively to address urgent global environmental issues that affect not **only** the Consultative Parties but all countries of our planet. **In** that context, my delegation recalls

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that it was the acceptance of the principle of the common heritage of mankind, with respect to the Earth's oceans and outer space that facilitated such important achievements in international co-operation as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the outer space Treaty. We also recall that the concept of the Antarctic as the common heritage of mankind, was once again endorsed by the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held at Belgrade last September.

My delegation continues to note with appreciation several positive characteristics of the Antarctic Treaty System, including the demilitarisation and denuclearization of that strategically located continent. We are also not unmindful of the valuable scientific research and study that have been undertaken in Antarctica, including that by one country that led to the important discovery of a hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica. My delegation was reminded of that by the Right Honourable Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in her very important statement on the phenomenon of global climate change and the environment less than two weeks ago at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

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In keeping with our view that the Antarctic is the **common** heritage of mankind, we do not recognise the validity of any **of** the territorial claims that **have been** made with respect to that continent .

We have in the past voiced our concern at the possibility of a minerals **régime** on Antarctica being approved **by** the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties **and Presented** to the international community as a **fait accompli** **before** 1991, when a review **of the** Antarctic Treaty could be taken up. **We** therefore expressed **our deep** regret and profound concern at this debate last year, following the adoption of the Convention in Wellington in June 1988. **Though we** believe it **may be** difficult for the Convention to come into force in the light of the developments mentioned earlier, **we** cannot but regret once again **that** the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, in complete disregard of **the** relevant General Assembly resolutions, have reacted to the call by the international community for a moratorium **on** a minerals **régime** until **it** can participate in its negotiation as a whole.

Similarly, we wish to reiterate our objection to the continued association Of the racist **apartheid régime** of South Africa in the Antarctic Treaty **system**. **Once** again, **we** call for Pretoria's exclusion from all Treaty meetings without further ado or **excuses**, since that **régime's** policies - both at **home** and abroad - are in direct contradiction with the principles and **purposes** of the **co-operative** development of Antarctica.

In **conclusion**, we wish to inform the Committee that Nepal will co-sponsor a resolution for consideration under agenda **item 70**. **We hope** that **ensuing** deliberations on it will be marked by co-operation and conciliation, towards which **my delegation** is fully prepared to contribute.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana) : The Ghana &legation is happy to contribute once more to the important debate on agenda item **70**, **concerning** the question of Antarctica.

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Unlike the delegations that have called the annual **debates** on **that** item a **"sterile ritual"**, we believe, that given the right attitude, the exchange **of** views provides **useful** opportunities in **the** continuing search **for an** alternative global **arrangement** for managing an important part of **our** planet. That **has become even more urgent in** view of **the** emerging international support **for** effective protection **of** the Antarctic environment.

The Ghana delegation therefore **looks** forward to a constructive debate. We hope that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties will, as an expression **of the** will to **resume** full co-operation with the non-parties, take part in this **year's** debate instead **of** speaking **through** a spokesman as they **have** regrettably been doing **over** the past two years. It is only through frank and open discussion of **that** important matter that the two sides can work **out** a mutually acceptable **arrangement** **for** the management **of a** continent in **which** there is so much international **interest**.

The Consultative Parties have prided themselves on the achievements **of** the 1959 Treaty. We do **recognize** the accomplishments of **that Treaty** in keeping Antarctica **demilitarized** and **free** from the **arms** race and nuclear weapons. We also **agree that** it **has** provided opportunities **for** scientific co-operation and research. **But** as has **been pointed out by** several delegations in the debates on the **question** of Antarctica, the Treaty has several flaws and therefore cannot be said to **be** designed to serve the interests of the wider **international** community. **Structurally, it** continues to be restrictive and rigidly propped up **by** membership qualifications that, inter alia, require the capacity to conduct scientific **research** in the Antarctic. In any event, the majority **of** developing countries have **been kept out**, since those requirements **are obviously beyond** their means.

We believe that the determination **of** global interests and the **ways of** safeguarding them could **best** be made **by the** entire **community of nations**. **It is**

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therefore ~~no~~ longer acceptable that a handful of States should arrogate to themselves the right to take decisions for all, merely because they possess superior scientific knowledge and greater resources. The Antarctic system is ~~an~~ experiment in collective management operated since 1959 by a group of States that, in their own words, have met certain self-determined criteria and have signed the Antarctic Treaty. The system therefore does not provide ~~for~~ international decision-making arrangements for dealing with such issues of international concern as the Antarctic. Hence our plea that it be replaced.

But quite apart from those limitations, we have been witnesses to a growing number of violations ~~of~~ the Treaty provisions, particularly in the area of conservation. For ~~instance~~, although the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine ~~Living~~ Resources was negotiated to deal with a greatly expanded commercial ~~krill~~ harvest, its members have not yet adopted any regulatory measures to curtail the harvesting of that tiny shrimp-like crustacean, which forms an important base of the food chain in the continent. In a recent report, a ~~Washington-based~~ scientific ~~group~~, the Environmental ~~Defense~~ Fund, has mentioned a series of violations of the Treaty's environmental measures by a number of ~~Treaty~~ Parties. Those violations, as stated in the report, include fishing in closed ~~areas~~, the bulldozing of ~~garbage~~ onto cliffs that penguins must pass to reach their nesting sites, and a series of improper waste-disposal practices in breach of rules the Treaty Parties have laid down for themselves. The report also states that although the minerals Convention of 2 June 1988 has banned commercial development activities pending the entry into force of the ~~Convention~~, certain of the Consultative Parties are ~~prospecting~~ for ~~non-living~~ resources under the ~~guise~~ of scientific research.

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Furthermore, a number of the Antarctic Treaty Parties, according to the **report** by Environmental De **fense** Fund, are even sponsoring scientific drilling **of** the Antarctic continental shelf **for** particular deposits **of** hydrocarbons **without** reporting the results **of** their illegal **surveys**, as required by the Antarctic Treaty. **All** those violations show that translating written regulations into **actual** measures has proven problematic within a treaty system already complicated **by** questions of territorial **sovereignty**.

My delegation continues to believe that, given **the** wide recognition of the importance of Antarctica, the management and use of that continent should be conducted in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. That implies, inter al ia, the application of the **common** heritage principle which has **come to be** widely supported by an overwhelming majority **of** the international community. We also believe that the common her **itage** approach will put an end **to** the so-called territorial claims and counter-claims that have undermined the adoption of bold and effective measures to control activities in Antarctica.

We recall in that connection the sinking early this **year of** the Argentine vessel Bahia Paraiso and the release of hundreds of gallons of oil from the sunken vessel, resulting in perhaps the **worst** environmental disaster ever to occur in Antarctica. Much as we would wish to avoid any speculation on the causes of the accident, **we** cannot fail to take note of reports that despite explicit warnings **of** dangerous ledges and pinnacles in the **area**, the vessel steamed through the **channel**, apparently to press national territorial claims to that part **of** the continent. My delegation and other non-treaty countries, in a joint statement **contained in** **document** A/44/125 of 13 February 1989, expressed deep concern **over** the incident and its implications for the fragile Antarctic environment. But the Bahia Paraiso incident also underscores the need for an internationally neqotiated **consensus**

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arrangement within the framework of the United Nations that will eliminate all underlying territorial tensions.

Since the adoption of the Antarctic Minerals Convention 17 months **ago**, we have been witnessing new perceptions around the world about the responsibilities of **Governments** in the protection of the Eragile Antarctic environment. We welcome those perceptions although they have failed to address, as of now, the concerns of the developing countries particularly with regard to broad-based arrangements for managing the **Antarctic**. In particular, **we** consider encouraging the joint statement by the Prime Ministers of Australia and France on 18 August 1989 in Canberra that mining in the Antarctic is not "compatible with protection of the fragile Antarctic environment".

The **decison** of the recently concluded **XVth** Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held from 9 to 20 October 1989 in Paris, to **pursue** the France-Australian Proposal on a priority basis with a view to establishing a comprehensive environment protection convention that will turn Antarctica into a wilderness reserve is, in our view, a step in the right direction. The Paris decision is timely and should provide, in our view, food for thought for those Antarctic **Treaty** Parties who are gloating over the Minerals Convention and are already **poised** to commence mining in Antarctica. We hope those Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties who continue to believe that threats facing Antarctica are being grossly exaggerated will soon take a **cue** from their colleagues who, in response to public opinion **and** the rulings of national legislatures, have decided not to sign or ratify **the** Convention on the Regulations of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities.

Incidentally, while on this issue, I wish to say how disappointed my delegation is that, contrary to the demands of General Assembly resolutions of the past, the Antarctic Treaty Parties failed to invite the Secretary-General or his

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representative to the recent meeting in Paris and to other meetings that have **been** held since December 1988. A constructive beginning to a resolution of the current problem can be achieved by at least associating the Secretary-General with the deliberations of the Antarctic Treaty Parties.

As my delegation stated last year, the Wellington Minerals Convention of **2** June 1988 fails in several respects to address **major** concerns of the non-parties to the Treaty. Essentially, it has maintained the status quo by perpetuating the restrictive and unequal structure of the Antarctic management **régime**. Like its parent Antarctic Treaty, therefore, we would like to see them suspended or radically modified to meet the legitimate aspirations of the vast majority of United Nations **Member** States that are unable to accede to the Treaty **due** to its difficult membership qualifications. We therefore hope that the ongoing negotiations Of the France-Australian initiative will eventually lead to a re-negotiation Of the Antarctic Treaty in the interest of **the** wider international community.

Another aspect of the Antarctic Treaty of concern to my delegation is the continued association of the racist **régime** of South Africa with the Treaty in **spite** Of several resolutions of the General Assembly calling for South Africa's expulsion from Antarctic Treaty membership. As we have often explained, the racist **régime's** odious policy of apartheid is not only an affront to the international community but **also** poses a threat to international peace and security. Furthermore, the **vast** majority of the South African people who are of the black race have not benefited, and will not benefit, from the resources of Antarctica because the white minority has decreed that it be so. **It** should also be obvious that the recent cosmetic gestures by the South African **Government** have in no way changed the basic **policies** of apartheid nor the repressive machinery erected **to** enforce its policies. MY

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delegation would therefore urge the Antarctic Treaty States, once again, to **revise** **their** position **on** the question **of** South Africa's continued membership in the Antarctic Treaty group of countries. We appeal especially to those Treaty States **that** co-operate with us in other **forums** to bring **pressure** to bear on South Africa to continue their moral and political **efforts** in this arena **also**. Again,- we ask for **the** understanding and co-operation of the Antarctic Treaty Parties in that important **matter**. The overwhelming majority **of** the United **Nations** membership at the current **session** welcomes the continued imposition of a co-ordinated international pressure on **the** racist **regime** in spite **of** the **so-called** reforms announced **by** the South African administration. The expulsion **of** the racist **régime** from Antarctic Treaty membership will therefore help to isolate that **régime** and further demonstrate the abhorrence of the international community **for its** policies **of** apartheid.

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This is a moral question all of us must deal with. The continued extension of membership privileges to the racist régime, which after all does not enjoy a mandate from the overwhelming majority of South Africans, will only encourage its intransigence and further help it increase its repression of the black majority in that country. We hope the Antarctic Treaty parties will associate themselves this time with the international call for a review of the racist régime's membership of their group.

In conclusion, we should like to re-state our position that, for the Antarctic Treaty to command universal support, its unwritten rules, which as of now continue to debar developing countries from acceding to the Treaty or at least make it difficult for them to do so, will have to be revised. Annual debates held in this Committee have articulated the strong feelings of several delegations, including that of Ghana, on those serious flaws in the Treaty's provisions. Questions about the equitable management of Antarctica, it should be emphasized, will continue to be raised so long as the present restrictive closed-shop structure of the Treaty remain. As the time approaches for a review of the Treaty in 1991, we would like to hope that the many useful comments made by various delegations, in the present and past debates alike, will provide the Antarctic Treaty policy-makers with food for thought, particularly on fundamental issues of the future management of the continent. To that end, the non-Treaty States, as in previous years, are willing to return to the consensus approach. We hope a positive response will be forthcoming from the Antarctic Treaty party States.

It should also be emphasized that contrary to the unfortunate impression in some quarters that comments by non-Treaty States constitute mere obstructions or a minor nuisance which should be no more than tolerated, we should like to assure the Treaty parties that our cause is much nobler and constructive than that. Our

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overriding concern is that the continent **of** Antarctica be managed in **such a way** that the wider **international community** will also be involved and **not kept out**. That demands a Treaty system that is **more universal**, more open and **more responsive** to the legitimate aspirations of all. We **request the** Antarctic Treaty parties to **see** our **efforts** in that positive light and to **assess** the ground upon which our demands **are based and what impact they can have on the status quo**.

We therefore hope that **the** two-part draft resolution that will be presented by the non-Treaty **countries** will be considered in the spirit **of** give-and-take with a view to registering **significant** positive support for the draft resolution in **place** of the regrettable non-participating attitude that has characterised decision-making on the **item in two** previous sessions of the General Assembly.

Our **goal** is to **save, to manage** and to sustain **Antarctica** for all. We are reinforced in our conviction by the important consideration that we **are** entering a period of world history when global participation **per se** is an important dimension **of** legitimacy. Let us not be too attached to restrictive practices, lest we be washed **away** by the tide of change and the popular will.

Mr. Ahmad KAMAL (Pakistan) : The debates on Antarctica in the **General** Assembly **over the past** many years have served to bring to the fore the vital **importance** of that continent for the international **community**. They have **also** underlined the **concern** of the **vast majority** of the **membership** of the United Nations at its **exclusion** from participation in decisions regarding the future of Antarctica, a continent which **has** an important bearing **upon** the future of our Earth.

There can be **no gainsaying** the fact that the Antarctic Treaty, signed **in 1959** by a very small number of countries, brought the **continent effectively** under the supervision of the **signatories**. The Antarctic Treaty is unequal and discriminatory

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since accession to the Treaty **does** not entitle **acceding** States **to participate in decision-making**. That is the prerogative **of** the **Consultative Parties**, which **exercise full control over the admission of new Consultative Parties**.

The Antarctic Treaty **purports to further the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations**. It is therefore strange, to **say the least**, that **despite** repeated **requests** by the international **community**, expressed through **resolutions** adopted by the **General Assembly**, the Secretary-General **has never been invited to attend meetings of** the Treaty parties. My delegation **fails to** understand the **logic** behind the **refusal** of the Consultative Parties to invite the **Secretary-General of an Organization of which they are all Members and the purposes and principles of which the Treaty undertake to promote** .

It is also **odd** that the parties to the Treaty **refuse** to participate in the debate or **decision-making** in the General Assembly on the **issue** of Antarctica. That is obviously meant to convey the signal to the **vast majority of States Members** of the United Nations that the international **community** has, and can have **no, say in the future of** Antarctica.

Most ironic is the fact that a treaty designed, inter alia, to further the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be so **secretive** as to be closed to all except a handful of **countries**. Its cabalistic nature is evident from the fact that the documents **of its meetings are not made public**. The precise **nature of its decisions** is not made **known to outsiders**. Information trickles **out** only to the extent that the Consultative **Parties** wish to make it public. It would **be logical to assume that** the information leaked or **made available to the rest of the international community would be filtered in a manner suited to the requirements of** the Treaty signatories.

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The parties to the Treaty have argued ~~time~~ and again that the Treaty has worked in ~~an~~ exemplary fashion. It ~~is true~~ that it has held in abeyance the territorial claims of certain ~~States~~ over Antarctica. It has ~~ensured~~ the nuclear-free ~~status of Antarctica~~. The exclusion of military rivalry has made possible the pursuit ~~of~~ peaceful co-operation in scientific research. All these are ~~positive~~ elements. However, that does ~~not~~ and cannot imply that an ~~open~~, non-discriminatory, equitable and universal treaty would ~~not~~ prove equally, if not more, effective.

The Antarctic Treaty ~~also recognizes the~~ interest of all mankind in ~~Antarctica~~. The parties to the Treaty, however, have arrogated to themselves the right ~~to~~ decide what is the common interest of mankind. Even worse, the decisions ~~that are~~ taken in the "common interest of mankind" are kept as closely guarded secrets from the vast majority of that mankind. It is argued that the Treaty parties ~~have~~ undertaken a ~~significant~~ volume ~~of~~ work in the Antarctic Treaty ~~system~~ in the interest ~~of~~ mankind. If that is indeed so, why should that work not be made available to the entire international community? Why should the decisions ~~made in~~ the closed ~~councils~~ of the Consultative Parties not be open to scrutiny? Why should a few countries ~~assume~~ the right to decide what is ~~good~~ for Antarctica - and indeed for the entire world - without consultation and without all-owing the participation of the rest of the international community?

One of the major problems facing the world today relates to the environment. A major conference on environment and development is planned for 1992. The entire international community is concerned about the degradation of the environment.

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It is also recognized **that** the environment and the **ecosystem** of Antarctica **have a direct** bearing on the environment of the entire world. **And** yet the Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, which **are** so disturbed **about** global environment and **concerned about** its protection - which we appreciate - **refuse to** divulge information or **discuss** environmental **questions rela**ting to Antarctica. That reticence surely would work to the detriment of preparing a **comprehensive** strategy to **deal**, with the **problems of** the global environment.

The Treaty partners **do not hold** themselves accountable to **the** international community. The decision-making **is in the hands of** a **few** and the **operations in** Antarctica **are** not transparent. That gives rise to the **possibility** that certain **decisions** might be **made** in respect to Antarctica that **could** prove harmful if not disastrous. One **such** example was the finalisation **of** the Minerals Convention **by the Parties to the Treaty last year**, despite the objections and protests of the Overwhelming majority **of** the States of the world. It is **indeed** fortunate that after the adoption **of** the Minerals Convention **some of the Parties to the Treaty** have **realized the hazards** that the exploitation of **the resources of** Antarctica may **pose for** the Antarctic environment and **for** the rest of **the** world. We hope that those States will **not sign** the Minerals **Convention** and will **not** allow its entry into **force**.

Antarctica is a **common** heritage of mankind. Its protection **is the common** responsibility of all **of** us. Any **régime** for the protection **of** Antarctica must have the support of the international community **for** it to **be** successful. It **is** only an open, equitable, accountable and universal treaty that can **achieve the effective** protection **of** Antarctica and **its environment**.

It is unfortunate that the racist minority **régime of** Pretoria is not **only** a Consultative **Party** to the Treaty but continues to be **allowed to participate in the** meetings **of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, despite** the demand of the

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international community that the racist Pretoria régime be excluded from participation in any such meetings.

In its final declaration, the ninth Non-Aligned Summit Conference reaffirmed the conviction that Antarctica should **forever** be used exclusively for peaceful purposes in the interest of mankind and should be accessible to all **nations**. It **recognized** the interest of mankind as a whole in Antarctica in terms of international peace and security as well as in terms of the environment and its impact on global climatic conditions. It affirmed the interest of mankind in **ensuring** the protection and conservation of the **environment** and the dependent and associated ecosystem of Antarctica against all harmful human activities. It stated that the international community is entitled to information on all aspects of Antarctica and that the United **Nations must** be **made** a central repository of such information. My delegation supports the declaration of the Non-Aligned **Movement** in its totality and calls upon the Parties to **the** Antarctic Treaty to co-operate **with** the rest of the international community for the implementation of the declaration.

The Antarctic Treaty was concluded at a time when a large number of States presently Members of the United Nations were still struggling against colonial Powers for their **r**ight to self-determination and independence. The **wor**ld has **changed s**ince then. So should the **régime** in Antarctica. It must **acquire** **legi**timacy through openness, **universality** and **equity**, through **a renewed commitment** that Antarctica be a common heritage of mankind, that it not be subject to appropriation by any State or **person**, and that it be reserved exclusively for **peaceful** purposes. The delegation of Pakistan will continue to work towards that objective in co-operation with the membership of the United **Nations**.

I would like to conclude by **calling** for the widest **possible** support for the draft resolution on the subject to be introduced by the representative of **Malaysia**, which we have co-sponsored.

Mr. GARCIA ROBLES (Mexico) (interpretation from Spanish) : Over the past years, the vital interests of mankind in Antarctica - interests that exist in all spheres and contexts but mainly in connection with ecology - have emerged increaaainqly clearly. At the same time that these interests have been identified, there has also developed growing concern and awareness of the need to protect Antarcotica adequately. It has been felt that, to that end, it would be necessary to have as soon as possible a definitive and universal statute for Antarctica as a basic guarantee of its adequate protection-

For all thore reasons, various proposals have come from the international community, including a recent proposal from the States Parties to the Washington Treaty of 1959, in connection with the definitive legal statute that Antarctica should be given in order to protect the interests not only of some States but those of all mankind.

There has been mention of a common heritage of mankind, of a preserve, or of an international natural park. But there are also those who believe that, at this stage, the international community is late in meeting that new challenge. They offer as clear evidence of that the damage done to the ozone layer over Antarctica. That view will become increasingly accurate if no international effort is mounted to address the problem as soon as possible in order to avoid its becoming, to the detriment of all, a crisis requiring not preventive but urgent corrective measures, which are not always the most successful.

Given the present challenge of protecting the environment, the international community is facing difficult dilemmas that it must resolve sooner or later, since the deterioration of the environment is caused by models of development designed for the production of wealth - wealth that, however vast, ironically does not seem sufficient to offset the damage caused in producing it. Some parts of our world have become rich at the cost of the quality of the environment. Others have

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followed or have been induced to follow similar models in a futile attempt to escape from poverty, but unfortunately to similar effect. Trying to remedy and correct the damage thus produced requires more than the redirection of models of development; it requires also that part of the wealth be devoted to that vital objective. Soon new dilemmas and similar challenges will appear in the same area, and the international community must be appropriately prepared to find the best solution and even to prevent the appearance of other problems.

In that context, the following three guiding principles inspire our position. First, the Mexican Government shares and has shared the concern about the urgent need to ensure the protection of the important interests of all mankind in Antarctica.

(Mr. Garcia Robles, Mexico)

Secondly, the Mexican Government, consistent with what **it** has **said here** in the past, particularly when proposals were put forward **in** 1983 by Malaysia and **Antigua and Barbuda**, will support any attempt to **elaborate a** definitive legal **instrument**, Provided that it both protects the **interests** I have mentioned **and is genuinely universal - in other words**, is accepted **by** the whole international **community**.

Thirdly, international co-operation should be the **common denominator of** that **instrument**, and the **United Nations** is the best **body** to co-ordinate **and** promote such co-operation. Therefore, the **General Assembly must** prepare resolutely and urgently to **assume** its rightful role and responsibility.

Mr. LEWIS (Antigua and Barbuda) : **I** begin with a quotation from the **Secretary-General's** report on the **question** of Antarctica;

“The Secretary-General was not in receipt of an invitation to **meetings** of the Antarctic **Treaty** Consultative Parties, and therefore is not in a **position** to provide any **evaluations** thereon, (A/44/586, para. 6)

As this is the first **time Antigua and Barbuda** has spoken in the First **Committee**, let me congratulate **Mr. Adolfo Taylhardat** most heartily on **his** election to the chairmanship. I **am** confident that he will continue **to** guide the Committee's deliberations with the great skill and fortitude that he has exhibited **so far**. Venezuela and **Antigua and Barbuda** have many close, deep and **significant ties**. His country continues to demonstrate a sensitivity to and understanding **of** the problems of development facing its Caribbean neighbours in a manner which manifests true fraternity.

Unfortunately, on the question of Antarctica many of the **developing** countries remain **disappointed** at the lack of **progress** in bringing scientific, environmental, marine, **touristic** and mining activities under the **aegis of** the United Nations.

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Nevertheless, Antigua and Barbuda, which has been at the forefront on the **question** of Antarctica since 1983, remains committed to a just and reasonable solution and to the attainment of consensus on the subject.

From the outset we have stated that the world-wide community of nations should all share in the benefits of the entire Antarctic region. That is precisely why we ~~have~~ called for broader representation in ~~the~~ decision-making process and ~~put~~ forward a set of proposals entailing, first, the retention of the Antarctic **Treaty** as a basis for administering the region; secondly, the creation of an authority, under the umbrella of the Treaty, to manage the Antarctic, with the existing Consultative Parties automatically being members, and with equal membership of representatives of every region of the world; thirdly, environmental non-governmental organizations with an established record in Antarctica ~~to be~~ observers at all meetings of the authority, with the right to speak; **fourthly**, a special session of the United Nations General Assembly to be held every year on the question of **Antartica**, a session from which information about the region would **flow** world wide; and, **fifthly**, the establishment of a **system of international** taxation and revenue-sharing administered by the proposed authority.

Last year we were compelled to state that we deeply regretted the decision of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to disregard totally and **completely** General Assembly resolution **42/46** of 30 November **1987** on the question of Antarctica. However, we were able to state in our policy statement this year that there was now a glimmer of hope, as the Prime Ministers of Australia and France had announced their joint initiative to turn the Antarctic into a wilderness reserve. Linked with that are other positive **developmen'ts**, such as the Belgian Parliament's **passing a bill prohibiting** Belgium nationals and corporations from undertaking **any** mining and prospecting activities in Antarctica and the subsequent announcement by

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the Government of Belgium that it would not sign the minerals Convention. Further encouragement has come from the fact that Italy, India, Greece, Austria and Bulgaria have supported the Australian-French initiative.

The whole world is buzzing with information on the environment. The renowned French naturalist, Jacques Cousteau, has stated that the survival of the human race depends on the survival of Antarctica. An oil spill in Antarctic waters can damage the food chain for decades, and this affects us in the northern hemisphere. The danger is real, as we see when we recall that in September 1988 a fuel bladder leaked at **McMurdo**, releasing more than 13,000 gallons of fuel **near** Williams Field. On 28 January 1989 the Argentine vessel Bahia Paraiso sank near Palmer Station, and a spill of diesel fuel oil was registered as a consequence of damage **to** the ship's tanks. On 28 February 1989 the Peruvian ship Big Humboldt ran aground in **Fildes** Bay, King George Island. Also in February this year the British **resupply** ship HMS Endurance hit an iceberg near Deception Island.

There is therefore grave concern about the environment, a concern manifested by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in her address to the General Assembly at its current session, on 8 **November**. The Prime Minister stated that a British scientist on board a ship in the Antarctic Ocean had declared that we were now seeing what might be early signs of man-induced climatic change. The scientist stated:

"Data coming in from Halley Bay and from instruments aboard the ship . . . show that we are entering a spring ozone depletion which is as deep **as**, if **not** deeper than, the depletion in the worst year to date." (A/44/PV. 48, p. 7)

We, of course, know that ozone in the stratosphere can block much of the ultraviolet radiation from the sun and prevent dangerous levels of ultraviolet radiation, which can cause skin cancer, from reaching the Earth, and there have

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hsen studies which indicate that an increase in the radiation can harm plants and human and animal immune systems.

The British scientist also reported a signiflcant thinning of the sea ice. He stated:

“Sea ice . . . separates the ocean from the atmosphere over an area of more than 30 million square kilometres. It reflects most of the solar radiation falling on it, helping to cool the Earth’s surface. If this area were reduced, the warming of Earth would be accelerated due to the extra absorption of radiation by the ocean.” (ibid., p. 8)

The sea ice also has other functions, as revealed by the National Science Foundation's polar study expedition of last year. Cornelius Sullivan, co-leader of the expedition, declared that a vast and precocious undiscovered population Of tiny plants and animals live in ice that forms annually round Antarctica. The scientists found large and thriving populations of krill, grazing on one-celled plants and animals that live in the ice pores, Obviously, the sea ice is a place where, with a minimum expenditure of energy, the krill can avoid predators and live in a rich pastureland.

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Environmental concerns, social concerns, also featured prominently in the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Commonwealth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties participated actively in the formulation Of the Lanqkawi Declaration on Environment (A/44/673), which, having established the deep concern over the serious deterioration in the environment and the threat this poses to the well-being of present and future generations, includes the following statements: any delay in taking action to halt this progressive deterioration will result in permanent and irreversible damage; the main environmental problems facing the world are the "greenhouse effect", the depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, marine pollution, land degradation and the extinction of numerous plant species; many environmental problems transcend national boundaries and interests, necessitating a co-ordinated global effort; and the success of global and national environment programmes requires mutually reinforcing strategies and the Participation and commitment of all levels of society - Government, individuals and organizations, industry and the scientific community.

Are we to read all of the above, and after each statement recite "except in the case of Antarctica"?

The Commonwealth Heads of Government, after recognizing that our shared environment binds all countries to a common future, and having resolved to act collectively and individually, committed themselves to a programme of action, including the statement that they

"call for the early conclusion of an international convention to protect and conserve the global climate and, in this context, applaud the efforts of member Governments to advance the negotiation of a framework convention under United Nations auspices". (A/44/673, para. 8 (d))

Must we add "except in the case of Antarctica"?

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We have never said that there should be absolutely no mining in Antarctica, but we have raised questions as to the effects of mining on the environment, and we are not satisfied that it can at present be done without incurring great risks. What we have stated publicly is that the extraction of minerals poses a severe threat to the environment, and we do not consider the despoiling of a continent to be either ecologically or aesthetically responsible. Antarctica, be it remembered, is mankind's last frontier. Man's intrusion, if not carefully monitored and regulated, can dramatically alter global ocean and weather patterns. This is one reason why there is a need for direct involvement by the United Nations and the fullest co-operation of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties with the Secretary-General or his representative.

Both supporters and opponents of the minerals Convention accept the need to protect the wildlife and habitat of Antarctica - land, coastal waters and atmosphere. For that reason Antigua and Barbuda supports the decision of the Consultative Parties to convene in 1990 a special meeting exclusively devoted to drawing up an overall system for the protection of the environment. However, we strongly urge that the Secretary-General be invited to the meeting. That would indeed be listening to the international community. It is appropriate here to recall the following paragraph from a communiqué dated 26 October 1989 from the French Foreign Ministry

"It is appropriate to note that in deciding in a consensus manner for a substantial mandate for a special consultative meeting exclusively devoted in 1990 to an overall system of protection for Antarctica the Parties to the Treaty were able to listen to the international community, as France advised them."

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In the area of tourism, it is clear that there is a need for a comprehensive management strategy. Visitors are now estimated to number about 3,000 a year. There have already been localized negative impacts, including the disruption of scientific programmes and vandalism of historic sites. A comprehensive management system should incorporate enforcement provisions, establish agreed environmental assessment procedures, create a system for monitoring of impacts, and set up liability provisions.

Human activity in Antarctica should be so oriented as to minimize the impact on the fragile environment. Most wastes generated there should be returned to the countries of origin for proper disposal. Waste management plants in Antarctica should be continuously monitored for the release of toxic substances. Figuratively speaking, the fact that Antarctica is a land full of ice should in no way induce States Members of the United Nations to play with fire.

It is true that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have taken steps over the past few years to open up the Treaty system, yet the need remains for non-Treaty parties to have a meaningful role in the decision-making process. There is also a need for documents from the Treaty system to be made available to interested nations which have experts capable of analysing and assessing Antarctic undertakings. We have noted that the following bodies were all invited to the XVth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Paris from 9 to 19 October this year: the International Hydrographic Bureau, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the Intergovernmental Group on Climatic Evolution, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. We can see no logical or plausible reason why the United Nations Secretary-General was not extended an invitation. Sadly, we also noted the

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high visibility of Youth Africa at the meeting, and once again call upon upon the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to exclude the racist régime from such meetings.

Permit me in closing, Sir, to pay a tribute to the non-governmental organizations which have worked so diligently to bring the realities of Antarctica to the world at large. Most of the members of these organizations come from Antarctic Consultative Party States, and for that we are all the more grateful. So, on behalf of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, I wish to thank Greenpeace, the World Association for World Federation, the many other organizations that make up the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, and other bodies that have assisted in this matter for their assistance in providing vital and pertinent information on the question of Antarctica. Their commitment to the welfare of mankind and to the protection and preservation of our environment will be acclaimed by future generations.

For our part, the non-Treaty Parties pledge to continue working to preserve Antarctica as the common heritage of all mankind. We believe in the stated Principles of the United Nations, and therefore will continue to press for direct involvement by the Secretary-General or his representative in developments in and surrounding the Antarctic continent,

The survival of the human race, we are told, depends on the survival of Antarctica. We shall therefore continue to insist that it be brought under the umbrella of the United Nations. We are optimistically hoping that many of the richer and more powerful entities of this world will realize that in relation to Antarctica selective multilateralism goes against the principles to which we are all pledged.

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But we are determined to uphold the heritage of all mankind and to state categorically to the non-governmental organizations and the varied peoples of our planet that we will continue to advocate mankind's welfare and to use all our energies in this regard. In this, we say to them: "Please be assured that we will not let you down."

The CHAIRMAN: At our next meeting, to be held tomorrow morning, we shall hear statements by the representatives of Zaire, Lesotho, Sri Lanka and Australia.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.