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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 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 70 (continued)

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA: GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION ON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) : For the seventh consecutive year, the First Commi ttee is engaged in a full-scale debate on the question of Antarctica. A valuable contribution to the factual extent and scope of the onqoing debate has been made in the past by General Assembly resolutions and the decisions taken by the non-aligned countries. In the process, the volume of information on that barely explored continent has been increased. It cannot be said, however, that the degree of mutual understanding and convergence of views on the issues involved hae been correepondinqly enhanced.

Both the Parties and the non-parties to the Antarctic Treaty oeteneibly concur on the ultimate goal of ensuring the widest possible in terna tional co-operation for the manaqemant and use of Antarctica exclusively for peaceful purpoeea and in the interests of all mankind. That is to be achieved in a way that would promote scientif ic research, protect its vulnerable environment, and preserve its demilitarized and denuclearized statue. Yet, in the efforts to attain that common qoal, the Parties to the Antarctic Treaty - and especially the Consultative Parties - continue to be adamant and to resist any meaninqf ul involvement by the international community, non-parties to the Treaty , through the only universal forum which all of us are committed to support and strengthen.

In recent years, because of Antarctica'8 significance to the world at large, there has been sustained interest in that region, which in many respects consti tu tes the las t frontier on Earth. With the worldwide impact of such issues

(Mr. Poernomo, Indonesia)

as ocean depletion and global warming at stake, such interest is bound to increase. Regrettably, however, vital information about that region continues to be meagre.

Formal communiqués issued at the conclusion of the meeting9 held by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties are couched in general terms. Crucial documents are not made public, nor is the precise nature of the decisions taken. The situation is further compounded by the secrecy that continue9 to characterise the functioning of the Treaty. Notwithstanding the claims made by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, and despite the potential global impact of activities in Antarctica, the system remains an exclusive club where decisions are taken behind closed door 9 by a pr ivileqed few. Thus, its operations are not fully transparent.

In the context of those considerations, our concerns were further heightened by the possibility of a régime for mineral resources that would go beyond the purview of the Treaty and even place it outside the decision-makinq ambit of the in terna tional community . There is widespread apprehension that the true scien ti fic value Of Antarctica as a global laboratory free of contamination may come to an end if exploration and exploitation of its mineral resources were to beqin.

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We have documented rsporte that dut ing the past year alone a number of oil spills and other accidents have occurred in that region, with possible irreversible consequences for the fragile Antarctic ecosystem. Many consider this to be a harbinger of things to come in the event of minerals development taking place on any scale.

The protection of Antarctica as a global ecological common and the value of maintaining it as a scientific and wilderness preserve far exceed any benefits that might accrue from commercial exploitation. Global environmental concerns, which have become a major preoccupa tion of the United Nations, should be deemed relevant in the context of Antarctica as well. Perhaps it is due to theee considerations that some of the Consultative Parties are having second thoughts on a minerals régime and have recognised the need for new measures and procedures to ensure the comprehensive protection and conservation of Antarctica's pristine environment. In this context , we commend their decision to abandon the minerals Convention in favour of a new convention on the environmental protection of Antarctica, which in any event should become a global responsibility, rather than a matter within the exclusive purview of the Treaty 's signa tories.

It is by now self-evident that many of the complex issues relating to the Antarctic region carry far-reaching implications beyond Antarctica itself. The further evolution of the Treaty as an area of common interest can be achieved through a dynamic process of innovation and adaptation to the new challenges and problems posed by that region. What is needed is greater access to, and wider dissemina tion of, informa tion concern ing activities, negotiations and agreements? the establishment of viable links with specialized agencies! co-operation with relevant bodies of the United Nations sya tem; and means and modali ties to facilitate the meaningful participation of the non-aligned and other developing countries.

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Indonesia does not share the apprehension of the Treaty's signatories that wider participation would in any way undermine its functioning, especially in areas of scientific co-operation and environmental research. Indeed, increased participation of the international community would make a significant contribution without undermining the legal régime already in force. Specifically, international co-operation can be promoted by the establishment of scientific bases where teams from all interested nations can conduct research of global scientific interest= This will allow for the optimization of investments, the consistency of research programmes and the elaboration and implementation of a coherent project for activities in Antarctica.

Clearly, the case for greater involvement by our Organization in unravelling the many complex issues and in seeking equitable solutions and arrangements is selfevident. Such a process should allow for a thorough examination and clarification of them in order to remove misperceptions and to bridge the differing positions of Member States. My delegation is more than ever convinced that the international community has a right - and, indeed, an obliqation - to maintain and to deepen its lmq-term commitment to ensuring that the last qreat frontier on Earth is managed on the basis of international co-operation and in the interests of all mankind. By recognizing the legitimacy of the concerns of all nations and by harmonizing our actions, we can further advance our common objectives in the Treaty, and at the same time make it equitable and thersby promote its wider acceptability. Ultimately, our aim is to ensure that Antarctica will remain for ever a conduit for international co-operation in this interdependent world.

Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia): Our deliberations on the question of Antarctica are taking place against a background of increasing international concern over the state of the global environment. In the many meetings and conferences held to

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consider the var ious aspects of this challenge to mankind, the common thread running through all these international discussions is the recognition that global environmental threats requite a global response.

International co-operation is imperative for the success of any strategy to deal with such challenges. The conclusions of the many international meetings held in 1989 clearly attest to this. These sentiments can be found in the Hague Agreement, the Helsinki Conference, the Par is economic Summit, the ninth summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and the Langkawi and Noordwijk declara tions. They also lie at the heart of such conventions as the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Base1 Convention on Dumping of Hazardous and Toxic Wastes. Another case in point is General Assembly resolution 43/53, cn clima te change, which recognizes that climate change is the common concern of mankind and that timely action taken to deal with it should be within a global f ramework. New impetus was given to this initiative with the adoption by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) of its decision 15/36 to begin preparation for negotiations on a framework convention on climate.

There is also the work undertaken by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Chanqe, with the support of UNEP and the World Meteorological Orqaniza tion, to formulate strategies to deal with such phenanena. We are also working hard preparinq for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, scheduled for 1992.

In short, in facing the common threat to global environment, we have no other option but to join hands. It is no mark of wisdom to state that no country or group of countries will be spared the cataclysmic consequences of the greenhouse effect, global warminq or the depletion of the ozone layer. We all know this. One

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has only to listen to the speeches made during this session of the General Assembly and at other forums. They are bullish on international co-operation, and we applaud such statesmanship. President Bush, for example, called for "an international approach to urgent environmental issues" (A/44/PV. 4, pp. 54-55). I am therefore reminded of the saying, "Either we live together as brothers, Or we perish as fools."

It is this stark reality of our vulnerability that should he the cement for global collective action. We find ourselves fortunate indeed that the international political climate is nw propitious for meaningful multilateral action.

The détente between the super-tiers has also found expression in ren wed support for the United Natione. We have been witness to a historic initiative by them at this session, with their unprecedented co-sponsorship of a resolution to enhance the work of the United Nations. The salutary effects of the deepening détente between the two super-hers have propelled the United Nations into prominence, playing, and succeeding more and more, in its role of facilitating the resolution of regional conflicts.

This return of faith in multilateralism could not have come at a more critical time for the world. For today's challenges - whether they pertain to development, environment, climate change or dcuqs - are global concerns. And the United Nations remains the mul tilateral forum best suited for harnessing the creative energies and the essential political will of the international community ta face up to these challenges.

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What is inexplicable is the obvious contradiction in the pcsition of those who in the same breath wax eloquent on the need for a global strategy, international co-operation and enhanced United Nations involvement in global environmental questions and reject the applicability of that multilateral approach to the question of Antarctica.

They seem to suffer from a blind spot when it comes to discussions on the modalities and arrangements for ensuring the protection of the environment and ecosystems in and around Antarctica. The critical significance of Antarctica to the global environment and ecosystems is beyond debate. I cannot put it better than the French Prime Minister, Mr. Rocard, who said on 9 October 1989 that "the Antarctic is at the heart of the debate an the environment". In any case, seven years of deliberations in this Committee should have borne that out already. I would prefer not to dwell further on this aspect of the question, but I feel I must do SO because understanding Antarctica's role in the global environmental and ecological balance will shed light on current discussions.

To begin with, Antarctica is a land of continental dimensions, covering 10 per cent of the surface of the globe, an area of 14 million square kilometres. That is the size of the United States and Mexico combined. For comparison, the area of Europe, from Lisbon to Mcscw and Scandinavia to Turkey, is only 10 million square kilometres. The Antarctic ioe-sheet is equal to the combined area of the United States and Europe; in winter, with increased ice, the size of Antarctica expands to 30 million square kilometres. The Antarctic holds about 70 per cent of the world's available fresh water reserves and about 90 per cent of the world's ice.

Because of its polar location, the bulk of its ice mass and the huge extent of its surrounding seas, the continent exerts a fundamental influence on the atmosphere, oceans and biological conditions of the entire global system. The

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Antarctic ice-sheets also have a controlling influence on ocean circula tion Patterns, global weather, climate and food production. The hiqh albedo of the Antarctic ice helps to reduce the absorption of heat from the sun and prevent the warming of the Earth. The continent, lying at the hub of our planet's weather system, with the turbulent air above it, acts as a qiant pump helping in the circulation of global air masses.

The ocean surrounding Antarctica is rich in planktonic species which provide a founda tion for the marine ecosystem. The Antarctic convergence zone, where cold waters of the Antarctic sink below the warmer waters of the Pacific, provides an environment for explosions of Life and nutrients that are carried thousand8 Of miles to other parts of the Earth.

The Antarctic is also a fragile environment, vulnerable to the impact of human activities. The ability of the ecosystem to recover from change induced by humans is less than that of ecosystems elsewhere because of the extreme conditions and the simplicity of the ecosystem.

Any change in the Antarctic environment would have an unpredictable impact on the climate and environment of other parts of the world. The threat to the global environment and ecosystems thst would be posed by the deatructian of the environment and ecosystem of the Antarctic is beyond question. No country could escape the grave consequences of such adverse developments. That provides compelling arquments for ensuring the full protection of the continent and its surrounding seas from harmful human activities. That need has been readily and universally recognized.

Antarctica's importance derives also from its unique characteristics as the last wilderness of mankind. It is a global scientific laboratory of immense value, with its pristine nature providing a base-line against which we can measure

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pollution and the extent and effects of global climatic change, It permits research important to the study of global processes and the changing environment. The region holds many secrets of the Earth's past. It may also be the best monitoring-zone for global pollution and a vantage-point from which to observe the degradation of the Earth's natural system. The polar regions are very sensitive to changes in the global environment and may act as warning signals of changes in the total energy flux into our Earth and of changes in the atmosphere. They also serve an important function by enabling us to detect the effects of natural phenomena and human activities on a global scale.

Antarctica therefore serves as a crucial area for mankind's efforts to understand such global phenomena as global warming and the thinning of the ozone layer. The melting of the Antarctic ice alone, for example, would raise the level of the sea, wiping out not only low-level countries but also centres of population in coastal areas. Study of the ice-sheets of Antarctica is of vital importance. Concern has also been expressed over the possibility of harvesting Antarctic ice and the impact of such a commercial use of ice on the environment and ecosystems of the Antarctic.

The adverse impact of human activities in Antarctica would also deprive mankind of an opportunity to make valuable scientific observations necessary for our understanding of the phenomena of global changes. It would only make the task of finding solutions to meet the threats posed by such changes even more difficult and distant. The price we may have to pay in the long run may indeed be horrendous.

In the light of what I have said about the crucial impact of Antarctica on the world's environment and ecological balance, does the cur cent institutional framework for the management of that continent reflect universal involvement and correspond with the democratic norms of international relations? Can 25 countries

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arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to all decision-making on Antarctica? In the words of the French ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, "The survival of the human race depends on the survival of Antarctica." Surely, it is untenable for the majority of States Members of the United Nations - 134 of them - to be totally excluded from the decision-making process on matters which affect the very survival of mankind. Clearly, such a discriminatory arrangement, which has its roots in the world of 30 years aqo, must catch up with current-day realities.

We submit that it is because of the critical importance and unisue attributes of Antarctica that it should be managed as a common heritage of mankindr for the benefit and in the interest of mankind. The current exclusive and discriminatory arrangement, which places the fate of Antarctica and consequently of the world community in the hands of the 25 Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, is clearly unacceptable.

The Antarctic Treaty, concluded in the international political climate of 1959 and following the successful experience of the International Geophysical Year, sought primarily to enable the free conduct of scientific activities and international scientific co-operation by ensuring that Antarctica was to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. In addition, by prohibiting all military activities, the testing of weapons and nuclear explosions in Antarctica, it established conditions for the demilitarization and denuclearisation of the continent.

Article XI, paragraph 1, of the Treaty provides for the Consultative Parties to undertake measures in furtherance of the principles and objectives of the Treaty. The primary focus of the Treaty provisions was therefort on matters relating to scientific activities and the protection of Antarctica. But unfortunately the self-appointed guardians, unaccountable to the world, have taken

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upon themrelvee roles beyond that envisioned by the Treaty. The Trea ty does not have express provisions regarding the exploitation of any resources in or around the continent. Movement by the Consultative Parties into the area of regulating Antarctic mineral-resource activities is considered by some experts as ultra wires with respect to the Treaty. Some of the Consultative Parties have lowered their sights from the avowed aim of protecting the continent and seem to be exchanqinq their role for that of exploiters of the continent.

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For six years, from 1982 to 1988, they applied themeelves single-mindedly to the drawing up of a framework for the regulation of such activities. This finally led to the signing of the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities in 1988. Despite their protestation8 to the contrary, the Convention hae been judged, even by those intimately involved in all the negotiations on it, as providing an essential framework for minerals development in Antarctica. The Australian Minis tar of Finance, for example, described the minerals Convention as "a starter's qun for miners". Any continuing claims to the contrary, for example that the Treaty is a conservation régime, ring hollow indeed . Several Antarctic Treaty Parties have already reconsidered and decided not to sign the Convention. Indeed none of them has ratified it .

When one closely examines the arguments advanced by the proponents of the Convention their contradiction becomes obvious. It was argued that the Antarctic is in acute need of a convention to avoid an unregulated scramble for the mineral resources of the continent. At the same time, we were given to underetand that the current state of technology would make such exploitation unfeae ible and that there wee no clear proof of mineral resources beyond their mere traces. The current international prices of these resources are such as to make any exploitation of them in the Antarctic economically unviable. If we were to accept such arguments then how could one explain the unseemly haste to conclude the minerals convention.

As was indicated by Prime Minister Hawke of Australia and Prime Minister Rocard of France on 18 August 1989:

> "Mining in Antarctica is not compatible with protection of the fragile Antarctic environment."

The qrave hazards that mining activities would pose to the Antarctic environment and its ecosystems cannot be sufficiently emphasized.

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If the oil spill of the Exxon Valdez is anything to qo by, any such accident in Antarctica will wreak incalculable and irreversible damage on the system. The Exxon Valdez spill took place in March - in Spring weather, near population areas and within reach of centres for quick-response action.

The resources expended to cope with this disas ter were enormous. Exxon was reported to have spent About $1.3 billion to combat the spill, which covered about 1,100 miles of shore-line. During the peak of the six months of operations, Exxon marshalled no lees than 1,400 boa ta, 85 aircraft and 11,300 people. Yet, after the work by Exxon to tea tore the car taminated shore-line of Prince William Sound was over, the State Government of Alaska bad to continue with the clean-up.

Apart from the undocumented effects on marine life, it was reported that 34,000 birds and 984 sea otters also perished. The full environmental impact is still to be fully documented.

Even more diaturbinq was the admission by experts that the experience from the Alaskan spills showed that in the current state of the art of the oil clean-up, technology is not all that qood for effectively dealing with such spills. Time magaz ine, in a report on the spill, observed : "No amount of money and finger pointing can compensate for such a disaster.'

We need to bear in mind that the Exxon Valdez is a case only of a tanker spill. If exploration and exploitation of fossil fuel is undertaken in Antarctica the risks from such accidents are mind-hogglinq. In addition, Antarctica will he exposed to all manner of accidents such as blow-outs at oil wells or accidents durinq the tr ansportation of the oil. The introduction of men, equipment, supplies and their consequent detritus would have detrimental effacta on the lonq-term interests of Antarctic protection.

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The damage to the Antarctic ecosystem from an oil spill, for example, would be long lasting and if it occurs in the ocean, could be felt far off as the Antarctic plays a major role in deep ocean circulation and provides nutrients well north of the Antarctic convergence. It is well known that oil-oxidirinq bacteria will not proliferate at temperatures below freezing-point and hence little biodegradation or decomposition can take place in Antarctica.

The physical conditions and remoteness of Antarctica make timely response to dieasters difficult. The recovery of the affected areas could take centuries, if at all. There have already been three cases of spills this year in the Antarctic. The eupply vessel Bahia Paraiso carrying 250,000 gallons of fuel ran aground two miles from the Palmer Station off the Antarctic peninsula in February this year polluting about 15 kilometres of Antarctic coast. The wreck has not yet been removed and is reported to be still leaking oil. With the onset of winter it will not be possible, in the view of experts, to undertake any action to salvage the vessel. The New York Times reported that

> "The resulting spill of poisonous diesel fuel had disastrous effects on marine birds and other wildlife." (The New York Times, 25 September 1989, p. A 10)

The Environmental Defence Fund (EDF) in a paper entitled "Securing Environmental Protection in Antarctica" stated

> "Indeed as many as 40,000 penguins could be destroyed by the Bahia Paraiso incident."

As for its impact on scientific research, Dr. Wilkniss, Director of the Division of Polar Programmes at the United States National Science Foundation stated on 8 September 1989 that:

> "Continuing effects from the grounding and resultant oil spill as yet may threaten over 20 years of important scientific study that has been accomplished at Palmer Station."

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The case against the exploitation of Antarctic mineral resources is a compel1 i nq one indeed. It would be to the benefit and in the interests of mankind to ban all prospecting and mining activities in Antarctica. The Governments of Australia, France, Belgium and Italy have made path-breaking decisions against mining in the Antarctic. The European Parliament, which on 18 September 1987 rejected any exploitation of mineral resources in the Antarctic, decided on 16 February 1989 to call for a strict ban on mining in Antarctica.. In the United States Senate a resolution was introduced by Senator Gore which, inter alla, stated that Antarctica should for an indef inite period be established as a reqion closed to commercial minerals development and related activities.

As for a aampl ing of the views of scientists with regard to mining activities in Antarctica, the results of a petition circulated to 121 New Zealand scientists involved in recent New Zealand Antarctic research programmes are revealing. Of the total of 89 replies received, 81 favoured the petition opposing minerals ac tivi ties. The petition recommended that the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities be replaced by an agreement which would exclude commercial minerals activi ties and maintain Antarctica as a fully protected area. Amonq the signatories of the petition were Dr. Ratherton, the immediate paet Chairman of the Ross Dependency Research Committee and recent Chairman of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Another was Professor Georqe Knox, past President of the International Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR).

A recent survey in the Federal Republic of Germany amonqst scientists involved in Antarctic research elicited from 112 of them, or 84 per cent, a firm response aga inst the Convention. Surely, the views of these scientists so deeply involved in research activities in Antarctica cannot he taken lightly.

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We therefore commend the efforts against minerals activities and call on the international community to support the banning of all prospecting and mining activities in Antarctica and to turn its attention to the need to provide comprehensive and effective protect ion of the Antarctic. We believe its establishment as a nature reserve or a world park would provide the best guarantee against harmful human activities in Antarctica. Again, it is self-evident that, given the historical antecedents of Antarctica, any régime or framework designed to give effective protect ion must be acceptable to the international community. Only through its full participation in the negotiations for such a régime and acceptance of it, can we hope to establish a regime that is binding and enforceable on all alike. The international community has a shared responsibility for the protection of this global ecological commons. Such a step would further signify what the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organiaaticn described as

> ". . . the birth of a new kind of loyalty, an Earth-patriotism, a looking at the planet and its atmosphere as an object for protection and not for aggression and pillage." (A/44/1, p. 21)

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While we need to ensure protection of ths Antarctic environment and ecosystems from any mineral resource activities, we should also look at the current sources of pollu tion in Antarctica, It has been observed by the Environmental Defence Fund that

> "because Antarctica derives much of its scientific value from its uncontaminated condi tion, it is ironic that the 'day to day' operation of scientific research facilities is the principal source of pollution on the continent ".

Waste disposal by stations and vessels, pollution from the burning of fossil fuel, spills from vessels and etoraqe dumps and the burning of combustible wastes in open Pits are amonq the main sources of pollution and environmental degradation in Antarctica.

Since September last year, there have been reports of five instances of leakages of fuel in Antarctica. Three of these involved spills from resupply vessels from Antarctic stations. The other two cases of spills were reportedly from Leaks at the stations themeelves. One spill occurred in September 1988, resul ting in the release of about 13,000 gallons of fuel, and the other, in October 1989, causing the seepage of 42,000 to 50,000 gallons of jet and diesel fuel.

According to the report of the Environmental Defence Fund, 52,000 adile penguins were lost in nine years due to construction near the now abandoned Hallet Base, and helicopter fliqht patterns near another base caused a 50 per cent reduction in the breeding population at one penguin rookery in a six-year period.

It was also documented that the waters around one of the baaes were found to contain a greater concentration of PCB - polychlorina ted hiphenyl - and heavy metals than virtually all the waterways in the United States. Those toxins were found in tissues of Antarctic penguins and seals.

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Construction of runways has also affected penguin breeding colonies. In one area, the Fildes Peninsula on King George Island, which was set aside in 1975 as a specially protected area to preserve several lakes and three types of penguin, three bases were established through the redrawing of the boundaries of the area. The area is now reported to he virtually barren of penguins and at least one lake is used as a garbage dump.

It is perhaps a measure of the seriousness of the situation that the United States Administration has reauested appropriations to clean up United States bases in Antarctica. This multi-year effort is expected to cost some $30 million during f iscal years 1990-1993.

The adverse consequences for local terrestrial and marine life of human activities arise from the fact that only 2 per cent of the area of Antarctica is ice free. This area is the habitat and breeding ground for plant and animal life in Antarctica. Unfortunately the wildlife has to compete with bases located in those areas. The number of stations has been increasing steadily. In 1983 there were 34 stations. In 1989 there are 57 bases, operated by 20 nations - an increase of 23 bases in just six years. King George Island, a small island, is already overcrowded with seven B ta t ions.

This increase in scientific stations has been prompted by the fact that nations seeking decision-making status under the Antarctic Treaty would have to fulfil the requirement of conducting substantial scientific activity there, such as the establishment of a scientific eta tion or the dispatch of a scientific expedition. To satfefy this criterion, more and more bases would have to be established by those countries seeking consultative status. A recent case in point, we understand, is that of the Netherlands, which, despite having undertaken

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co-operative scientific research with the Federal Republic of Germany, is not accorded consultative status because of questions about its not having its own base.

The overcrowding of bases would mean more human activities, more waste disposal and pollution, and more harassment and disruption of the sensitive Antarctic wildlife populations. Such prospects clearly call for a fresh approach to the entire question of scientific research and of participation in decision-making in the management of the continent.

It is our conviction that the current predominantly national scientific programmes undertaken in Antarctica should be reviewed with a view to encouraging multidisciplinary programmes devoted to scientific research of global importance, to be undertaken on an international basis. The establishment of international bases would not only avoid duplication of research, but also enable the drawing up of scientific priorities. Duplication of logistical and other infrastructure requirements that would otherwise he needed to establish national stations could also be avoided. We believe those measures would contribute to minimising and avoiding the adverse impact of scientific activities in Antarctica. Indeed international co-operation was the basis for the seminal scientific programme in Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year, from 1957 to 1958, which laid the foundation for the conclusion of the Antarctic Treaty itself.

Let me now turn to the working methods of the Treaty. The Antarctic Treaty operations in our view lack transparency. Despite repeated General Assembly resolutions, little information has been made available to the United Nations. To our knowledge, the only document submitted this year by the consultative parties was document A/44/383 containing the press release issued by the President of the Preparatory Meeting of the fifteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in May 1989.

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The documents of the consulta tive meetings are not made public in advance so that the input and views of the international community can be taken into account in the decis ion-mak ing. There has been an apparent attempt to rectify the secrecy of its documents, but unfortunately so far only certain categories of documents have been declassified, lonq after the meetings were held. A qood example of the seeming shroud of secrecy is the lack of public documents on the recently concluded Consul ta tive Maeting, held in Paris from 9 to 20 October 1989. We believe the only document issued by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties for public information was the brief communique issued at the end of that mee ting. To this day the United Nations has yet to receive any document on that meeting from the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Par ties. Whatever inform tion has come our way was concerned mainly with the work of non-governmental organizations, which have shown exemplary dedication in their efforts to rally international opinion for the protection Of Antarctica.

On account of its exclusiveness and lack of transparency the Treaty fails the test of accoun tabili ty to the in terna tional community . What is even more difficult to comprehend is the unwillingness of the Treaty Parties to heed the repeated calls of the General Assembly to invite the Secretary-General to its meetings. The rationale behind this initiative by the non-Treaty parties is to lend some measure of transparency and accountability to the operations of the Treaty. That would provide a bridge between the Treaty parties and the other Members of the United Nations.

Surely the Consultative Parties cannot object to the involvement of the Secretary-General, who en joys the universal confidence of all Memhers of the United Nations . After all, the Treaty purports to further the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Can there be any doubt as to the impar tiality ,

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objectivity and integrity of the Secretary-General in discharging the duties given him by the General Assembly? While we note with satisfaction the presence of several international organizations at the fifteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, we fail to understand why a similar courtesy could not be extended to our esteemed Secretary-General. Is the adamant refusal by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to invite the Secretary-General a repudiation of all that the United Nations stands for as personified in the person of the Secretary-General?

At the same time we note with deep regret that the racist apartheid régime of South Africa - the outcast of the international community - has still not been excluded from participation in the meetings of the Consultative Patties. The General Assembly resolutions have again not been heeded by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

(Mr. Razali, Malaysia)

The first of December of this year will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Antarctic Treaty. It should be an occasion for deep reflection and sober analysis of the strengths as well as of the weaknesses of the Treaty. It should also be an opportunity for addressing our minds to the ways and means by which we could, collectively, promote the interests of the international community in the preservation and conservation of Antarctica.

The intervening year between now and 1991, when the Treaty could be called for review by its Consultative Parties, should be devoted to seeking areas of convergence and common ground. The review could serve to permit full participation Of the international community through the investment of equity, transparency and accountability. The Treaty must be responsive to the passage of time and to world opinion. I can do no better than re-echo the words of Mr. Hawke, the Rime Minister of Australia, when he said in July 1989 that:

"... ultimately it is the sheet weight of international public opinion that will determine the future of Antarctica".

In conclusion, the words of Richard Byrd, America's greatest Antarctic explorer, which are inscribed at the base of his statue in the Antarctic, should be a stirring evocation of what should be out common aspiration for the Antarctic. He declared:

"I am hopeful that Antarctica, in its symbolic robe of white, will shine forth on a continent of peace, as nations working there in the cause of science set an example of international co-operation."

Let us therefore work together to tealize that hope and set an example of international m-operation for succeeding generations.

Mrs. REYES (Philippines): On 24 March 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil-tanker ran aground in the Prince William Sound in Alaska, occasioning one of the severest

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environmental disasters in modern reckonfnq. What had been a relatively isolated, idyllic part of the great northern continent suddenly became A household word. Pictures of afflicted wildlife crowded our newspapera and television screens. For the inhabitants of the fishinq villaqe adjacent to this area, the future darkened overnight. Indeed, the repercussions of this single incident will still he with us for a long time to come.

What the international public was probably lees aware of was that, at the opposite pole of the world, in Antarctica, three acci dents involvinq ship spills had also occurred earlier this year. On 28 January 1989, the Bahia Paraiso eank near Palmer Station. A month later, on 28 February 1989, the BIC Humholdt was Punctured in Fildes Bay. In the same month, the resupply ship HMS Endurance hit an iceberq near Deception Island.

Perhaps because those accidents occutrad in a largely uninhabited continent outside the knowledqe of most people, they did not provoke the same outcry as the Exxon Valdez disas te r. Accordinq to specialists, the information provided on those accidents was patchy and in most cases unava ilable; in fact, none provided enough data on possible environmental affects. As in the Exxon Valdez case, it took a long time before clean-up and rescue equipment arrived.

When the debate on Antarctica was haqun in the United Nations seven years aqo on the initiative of a few na tions, the topic was thouqht aomewhat arcane. The sponsors of the resolution were regarded as over-tdealiatic, if not quixotic. Today, such recognized natural phenomena as "global warminq ", "the qceenhouae effect " and the depletion of the ozone layer have made thin subject not only relevant but indeed cruc ial.

IF even a part of the ice mass on Antarctica were to melt because of global warminq, our coastal ci tics, our industries, our aqricultural heartlands would be

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directly affected. The fragile base an which we found our proud modern civilizations would be subjected to a major challenge. Perhaps it is no accident that many atchipelaqic and island States have joined the common effort to focus international attention on Antarctica. They would be just as affected as mainland countriee, if not more so, by inunda tiona and changes in climatic and environmental conditions.

Now that countries as well as individuals ace becoming more aware of Antarctica, they are diecovering a few stark realities about this vast continent. They have, for instance, discovered that Antarctica is not quite the pristine white continent pictured in qeography books and occasional travelogues. Thirty years of increased human activity have put pressure on the Antarctic environment, especially in the area of waete disposal. Because of its peculiar environmental condi tions, Antarctica can be regarded as a non-renewable resource. As in the case of the rain forests, it would not be easy - it miqht even be impoeeible - to restore its original condi tion once that had been modi Pied.

As we all know, the Antarctic Treaty governs all activities undertaken in that continent. In 1991, the Treaty may be open to review, as was agreed upon in 1961. It is thus most appropriate that the community of na tions should focus on this and urge the Antarctic *Treaty* Parties indeed to pursue a much-needed review which will take into consideration the concerns of all countries that are now part of the international community.

The Antarctic should continue to be considered as part of the diearmament and security concerns of the 1990s. Security there should encompass the environmental, economic, military and political spheres.

Let us quickly review the events that have taken place since we discussed this topic last year.

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From A to 20 October this year, the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties met in Paris at their XVth Consultative Meeting. This was preceded by the Preparatory Meeting at the same venue from 9 to 13 May this year.

It seems that some of the concerns expressed in thia forum are now being taken into consideration by the Antarctic Treaty Qnsultative Parties. On 22 May 1989, Prime Minister Hawke of Australia announced that mining that included drilling should not take place in Antarctica. He also announced that Australia would not sign the proposed minerals Convention and would instead work for a comprehensive environmental protection convention to establish Antarctica as a wilderness park. That propoeal was submitted to the Preparatory Meeting early in May and later on became a French-Austtal ian initiative at the October mee tinq of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties.

This trend has, appropriately enough, snowballed since then. Other States in addi tion to France and Austral is have similarly avoided signing the minerals Convention, including Austria, Belgium, Greece, India and Italy. Thus far, only 16 of the 34 Treaty Parties have signed the minerals Convention and none has ratified it. It may be noted that the minerals Convention stipulates that all claimant States must sign and ratify the Convention before it can enter into force.

Australia's propoeal for a comprehensive environmental protection régime has been supported by Chile, France, India and New Zealand.

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Thus the *October* meeting in Paris was slanted towards the topic of protection of the environment in Antarctica. Some 12 racommenclations were adopted at the meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultativn Parties on measures that could he taken in the Antarctic.

We bring these facts to the attention of the Committee in order to highlight the fact that there is now a growing consensus regarding the importance of Antarctica, which is for the moment focused on the area of environment. However, Antarctica continues to be a vital area of concern in the fields of disarmament and security - if only with a view to ensuring that the gains made towards keeping it as a nuclear-free zone, as an area uaed for peaceful purposes and not the scene or object of international discord, are maintained. We applaud the efforts of those Sta tee which, in response to our concern on environmental questions, have proposed a régime for the protection of Antarctica.

At the same time, we reiterate our request to those parties to allow the greater majority of States to participate in such decisions by inteqrating the Antarctic Treaty into the framework of the United Nations system. Decision-making here can no longer be left to the 22 Consultative Parties of the Antarctic Treaty. By its nature, such a system cannot be accountable to the international community .

In resolution 43/83 adopted at last year's session, the General Assembly reiterated its "call upon the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties to invite the Secretary-General or his representative to all meetings of the Treaty parties, including their consultative mee tinqs". We regret that this call was not heeded and that yet another chance for fruitful dialogue was missed.

Meetings of the same magnitude and importance have been held in Paris in 1989. In January the meeting of the States Parties of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and other interested parties held in Paris attracted wide participation and public

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attention. Its recommendations and results were widely publicized in the media and its issues further debated at the current session of the General Assembly.

In contrast, the XVth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting - perhaps because of the closed, exclusive nature of the Antarctic Treaty - did not attract the same public attention or coverage in the media, nor has it spurred the same public debate of its important issues. It might be noted that the communiqué issued after that meeting was a very brief one. In accordance with past practice, the documents and other papers of the meeting - even on issues of environmental protection - were not made ava ilable to the public. It may be noted that the diminishinq ozone layer over Antarctica could well affect the public as seriously as chemical weapons.

It is most lamentable that South Africa, despi te universal condemnation of its practice of apartheid, continues to sit as a full, unsanctioned member at meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. This was evidenced by its presence at the XVth Consultative Meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties held in Paris.

While we recognise the positive steps taken by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Par ties, we would urge them to further these gains by moving towards integration into the United Nations system. The times are most propitious for a different approach to this suestion. In the fields of disarmament, peace and security, many gains have been made in the recent past. Surely it is time to take cognizance of this by moving the Antarctic Treaty into the United Nations system.

As events in the world have shown, Governments and private groups can no longer adopt the "trust me" or "trust us" mentality. Operations of an exclusive nature have given way to systems which are open to the searchlight of public scrutiny. A refusal to debate the issues, to continue to "not participate" on important topics can only work to the detriment of the common good.

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Some of the watchwords which we might wish to consider in handling this topic could be, first internationalism instead of nationalism. The Philippinhes, like many other States, would like to be able to participate in scientific work in the Antarctic. It does not lack for personnel or government bodies which would be capable of launching scientific experiments in this intriguing continent. Yet, like most developing countries today, it is hampered by certain financial constraints. Even if it did find the wherewithal to embark on such a project, it would contribute to the environmental strain on the Antarctic if it were' to set up its own national base here. Think of what would happen if the number of national bases were to double there in the next 5 or 10 years. It would be more economical and logical if nations were to co-operate in international projects or scientific co-operation in the Antarctic. One could therefore limit the amount of environmental damage to this continent and, at the same time, enable more nations to participate on a cost-effective basis.

A second watchword could be: a common heritage instead of individual gain. The cautious attitude towards immediate endorsement of the minerals Convention seems to indicate that nations are realizing that the Antarctic cannot be considered simply in a single dimension as a possible source of mineral wealth or other natural resources. The environmental damaqe that could result from exploitation of this continent would not be offset by gains made in the area of mineral wealth. We may not be far away from the day when the idea is fully accepted and endorsed that the Antarctic, like the seas or outer space, is Part of the common heritage of mankind. In fact, the Palme Commission, in its Final Statement issued on 14 April 1989, refers to Antarctica, together with the oceans, atmosphere and space, as some of "the global environmental commons which are the responsibility of the international community as a whole". (A/44/293, para. 82)

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A third watchword could be: common security instead of individually attained security. We fully recognize the legitimate security concerns of those nations that are contiguous to the Antarctic region. They are correct in being concerned about keeping this continent free from discord. Yet the security of the world would also be affected if strife were to take place in, or originate from, the Antarctic. Even those of us located far away from that continent would be affected. Hence, the Antarctic cannot be considered as a res nullius, a thing apart from the security system which in theory would hind the world together. In considering our security for the twenty-first century, the Antarctic should be an essential part of it. That is why we believe that we should consider this responsibility toqether.

Mr. SAVUA (Fiji): This year's General Assembly has been concerned with a a number of key issues, significant among which are the questions of international peace and security, the environment and the effects of changes in global climate, and the problem of the world economic situation. These concerns are also evident in recent developments on Antarctica. The Secretary-General's report on Antarctica, document A/44/586, is conapicunua by i ta brevity.

(Mr. Savua, Fiji)

The Secretary-General cannot make further evaluations on this issue because he was unable to be present at the discussions. Despite this, the information gathered over the past three years is sufficient to cause widespread concern.

We have seen the catastrophic effects on the Alaskan environment of the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez. The oil spill was well-documented. It clearly illustrated the inability of the authorities to cope with a disaster of that magnitude and further showed that despite the safety assurances given by such controlling corporations, accidents will occur. Exxon will continue to make profits but the damage sustained by Alaska will leave a scar on the environment that may not completely heal.

The oil spill from the supply ship Bahia Pataiso on 28 January this year is but one of the many oil spills registered in the Antarctic continent. The effects of these spills cause a reduction in the abundance of krill, which will debilitate the food chain for decades. Such serious damage in pursuit of short-term gains should be unacceptable. When considering this question, we hope that the overriding question of the costs to the whole community of mankind will be Paramount.

We are encouraged by the results achieved by the XVth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Paris in October this year, as set forth in its communiqué. The France-Australian proposition for an overall convention to make Antarctica a natural reserve was the item of note in the communiqué. In pursuance of this, a special consultative meeting to be convened in 1990 will be exclusively devoted to drawing up an overall system for the protection of the environment that would be sufficiently broad in scope, and innovative. The meeting will in addition seek:

"... to establish in a more precise manner the obligations that result from this, and create follow-up procedures to protect Antarctica in a more

(Mr. Savua, Fiji)

effective manner; finally, to determine the need for institutional arrangements and the legal forms it will he necessary to adopt to make the system of protection for Antarctica efficient, integrated and overall."

We welcome theee lofty and noble ideals and acknowledge the fact that the Consultative Parties were able to listen to the international community. We again note, hwever, that the Conference did not invite the Secretary-General or his representative to attend the meetings. If the Coneultative Parties had taken heed of international concerns, then the least they should have done was to allow a representative of the Secretary-General to be present at their meetings.

This is most reqrettable, especially in the atmosphere of m-operation and openness prevailing this year. Again, we have to urge the Consultative Parties to respect previous General Assembly resolutions, which are aqain reiterated in this year's draft, and extend an invitation to the Secretary-General or his representative to attend their meetings. We believe this to be necessary so that the proceedings of those mee tinge can be disseminated as broadly as possible by an internationally credible office.

When confronted with criticism of the Treaty's exclusivity, the reply we receive is that the Antarctic Treaty is an international instrument open to all countries. The Treaty, however, has a two-tier system of membership: a consultative group and a non-consultative group. lb become A consultative party one has to be prepared to contribute in both financial and technical terms, and while we accept the principle that one must be prepared to pay one's way, we also believe that it should be possible to devise a system of representation and consultation that is fairer and more democratic than that nw existing. As we said last year:

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"We believe it is time for the Antarctic Treaty to evolve from the solid foundation already laid and proved to work well to an arrangement that incorporates present -day real i ties and aspi ta tions. My delegation beliaves it not beyond the ingenuity of both schools of thought to devise a workable and appropriate framework. " (A/C. 1/43/PV. 46, p. 7)

Matters concerning the Antarctic are followed with close interest by the countries of the South Pacific. Being so close to that continent, any significant changes in that environment could jeopardize our means of livelihood. It was also for that reason that the South Pacific nuclear-free zone was created as a means of defending the nuclear-free zone of the Antarctic. The Committee has recognised the importance of the wishes of the people of our region - by adopting the draft resolution on the Treaty of Rarotonga earlier this month.

We hope that what appears to be the beginning of a shift in attitude by the Antarctic Treaty Qnsultative Parties will evolve towards a more universal framework for decision-making on Antarctica. It is my delegation's hope that this small step will be the forerunner to the harmonizing of the Antarctic with the United Nations system and the preservation of the sixth continent for future generations of mankind under an international umbrella.

Mr. DZVAIRO (Zimbabwe): In speaking on the question of Antarctica, it is the hope of the delegation of Zimbabwe at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly that we are not participating in an annual ritual highlighting the benchmarks of intransigence, as has been the practice in the past. Indications of movement towards the politics of inclusion and multila teralism in interna tional relations have been the tone of most statements at this session of the General Assembly, and it is our hope that such indications will bear the fruit of manifestation in at least the beginnings of accommodation on the question of Antarctica.

(Mr. Dzvairo, Zimbabwe)

The rationale for universal participation in deciding the fate of Antarctica stems from the well-founded principle that in this new era all nations should necessarily participate in the multilateral consideration of issues with universal implications. It is a fact that the Antarctic Treaty system, well-intentioned and appropriate as it may have been at the time of its inception, has long outlived its usefulneas and practicability. The advance of history, technological. innovation and growing international awareneee of the implications of environmental irresponsibility all indicate how imperative it is that the Treaty system give way to a new multilateral approach.

The Treaty Qnsultative Parties have consistently denied that theirs is an exclusive club based on the preponderance of power and bant on apportioning among themselvea whatever benefits may be de rived from Antarctica. They have pointed out that any State Member of the United Nations may accede to the Treaty knowing full well that the condi tions to such accession, especially those pertaining to consultative status, are beyond the reach of most developing countries.

It is the claim of the Treaty Consultative Parties that the Treaty system aims to further the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. We wonder why, if this is the case, they have, despite exhortation, failed to invite the Secretary-General or his representative to any of their meetings to date, including and up to the Antarctic Treaty Preparatory Meeting and the XVth Consultative Mee tinq, held in Paris f tom 9 to 13 May and 9 to 20 October 1989 respectively. Such invitation would demonstrate the positive intentions of the Treaty Parties and pave the way for comprehensive multilateral consideration of the issue of Antarctica. It is not as if the competence of the United Nations in regulating other matters of global concern has been found lacking. The Inter na tional Atomic Energy Agency, (IAEA) for example, has done a sterling job in ensuring the relative

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safety of nuclear energy which, if unchecked, would have proved more a liability in unregulated hands than a powerful force for peaceful use. The present concern of Member States for those nations who refuse to open their nuclear facilities for inspection by the IAEA is itself testimony to the effectiveness of a regime instituted and administered by the United Nations system.

(Mr. Davairo, Zimbabwe)

Environmental studies have shown the effects of the Antarctic and its ecosystem on the qlobal environment. It is not necessary to elaborate on the threat of global warming or to speak of the fragility of the Antarctic ecosystem, which experts have graphically explained to a atunned world in recent years. Any fall-out from abuee of the Antarctic will not affect the Treaty Parties alone, but rather the world as a whole. For this reason, any régime for the continent ehould not be the product of a small group of States but rather the responsibility of all nations. In this day and age, sovereign equality and the demccratization of International relations should not be mere catchwords to which the powerful na tions of the world pay lip-eervicc while their actions, whether for the sake of material greed or territorial gain, imperil the en tire international community and demonstrate unmistakably that miqht is still right, even it does attempt to don a cloak of leqi timacy.

The recent accident of the Arqentinian ship the Bahia Paraiso in the Antarctic, which resulted in the spilling of 250,000 gallons of oil in the pristine environment, demonstrated that no good intentions or even loose conservation regulations can guarantee the safety of the ecosystem there. The hareh climate and the inhospitable temperatures of the region cannot be expected safely to host haphazard explora tion and exploita tion. It is therefore alarming that the Treaty Parties should be suggesting a minerals convention, contemplating a régime for the exploi ta tion of mineral resources, should any be found in the req ion. Several factors militate against this proposal. First, environmentalists have urged us to move away from fossil fuels if we are to slow global-warminq and curb the disastrous alteration of our climate. The exploitation of oil and gas from the Antarctic by anyone will fly in the face of this warninq and will no doubt cause irreversible damage to the environment there.

(Mr. Dzvairo, Zimbabwe)

A minerals convention brings to the fore the risk of territorial claims and rivalry and increases the risk of war among those Treaty Parties which only 22 short years ago cited only the most altruistic scientific research goals as their reasons for being in the region. The one successful product of the region, the demilitarization and denuclearization of the Antarctic, might well be nullified.

There is also the question of scientific research stations. While the pursuit of scientific knowledge eventually benefits all mankind, the value of a multiplicity of research stations results in duplication, rivalry and a waste of resources. It also has a corresponding impact on the environment and may result in incalculable harm on the fragile ecosystem, which could in turn affect the entire globe.

In the light of those considerations, my delegation believes that it is not too late to make amends and bring the Antarctic within the purview of the United Nations. When we use the term "the common heritage of mankind", we are not connoting any exploitative intent. We mean that individual States should not have claims, territorial or otherwise, on the Antarctic and that the region should be declared a world nature preserve where all exploitative activities are prohibited and where scientific research is carried out as a coherent, regulated joint effort under the administration of the United Nations.

If the intention of the Treaty Parties are bona fide, at the veryleast the documents from their meetings should be ma& public and accession to their "Club" would not be as contorted as they have ruled it to be. In any case, my delegation is on record as saying that it has no intention of joining the Treaty system if the system is not one arrived at with the full and equal participation of all States Members of the United Nations. We still stand by that principle and will continue to do so.

(Mr. Dzvairo, Zimbabwe)

We welcome the moves by the Governments of Australia and France as expressed in their joint statement, of 18 Auquet 1989, on international environmental issues, to recognize that mining in the Antarctic is not compatible with the protection of the fragile Antarctic environment and their expressed intent to see the negotiation of a comprehensive convention on the protection of the environment that will turn the Antarctic into a wilderness reserve. It is our hope that they have no objection to the participation in such negotiations of all Staten Members of the United Nations as equal sovereign participante, whether or not they have stations on Antarctica or have acceded to the Antarctic Treaty system.

WQ hope that after all theae years of arrogant disregard of the justified clamour of the developing countries to participate in all decisions pertaining to the Antarctic, the Treaty Parties will heed the call to put the Antarctic in the moat representative international forum, the United Nations, and will prove those of us Who consider their intentions dishonourable wrong by joining in the consensus to declare the Antarctic a world park, the common heritage of mankind.

Finally, my delegation urges all members of the Committee to support draft resolution A/C/1/44/L.69, which has been introduced by the delegation of Malaysia, and of which my delegation is a co-sponsor, as the first step in the right direction on this issue.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: Tomorrow afte rnoon, in accordance with the Committee's ptoqramme of work and timetable, the Committee will. proceed to take decis ions on the draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 70, namely, draft resolutions A/C. 1/44/L. 68 and R/C. 1/44/L. 69.

The First Committee is scheduled to begin its general debate and consideration of and action on draft resolu tions under agenda Stems 71, 72 and 73, related to

(The Chairman)

international security, on Friday, 24 November 1989. However, as there are not enough speakers inscribed on the list of speakers for Friday, no meeting of the Committee will he scheduled on that day. In order to make full use of the time available to the Committee, I would therefore suggest that the Committee begin the next phase of its work - namely, general, debate and consideration of and action on draft resolutions under agenda items 71, 72 and 73, related to international security - immediately after the conclusion of its consideration of agenda item 70, "Question of Antarctica", tomorrow afternoon, 22 November.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee decides to act accordingly.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.