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CONTENTS

Agenda item 26:

Examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind: report of the <u>Ad Hoc</u> Committee to study the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction (continued).....

Page

Chairman: Mr. Piero VINCI (Italy).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Examination of the question of the reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction, and the use of their resources in the interests of mankind: report of the Ad Hoc Committee to study the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction (continued) (A/7230; A/C.1/973; A/C.1/L.425/Rev.2, L.429/Rev.2 and Add.1-4, L.430, L.431/Rev.2, L.432/Rev.1 and Add.1, L.433 and Corr.1, L.435, L.436, L.437 and Add.1 and 2, L.438, L.439, L.440/Rev.2, L.441 and Add.1-5, L.442, L.465/Rev.1)

- 1. Mr. AMERASINGHE (Ceylon): Yesterday [1646th meeting] the representative of Belgium introduced the final text [A/C,1/L,425/Rev.2] of the draft resolution regarding the establishment of a committee to study this question further and to make recommendations to the General Assembly.
- 2. The draft that has now evolved is, as the representative of Belgium stated, the result of protracted and arduous negotiations. Those negotiations were necessary because it was the desire of the co-sponsors to secure the widest possible agreement on the terms of reference contained in the draft resolution. It is of vital importance that in a task of such magnitude and complexity we should commence with the highest possible measure of agreement, since only in that way can we hope to ensure the success of our endeavours in this direction.
- 3. The most important change in form and structure is contained in operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution. As members will recall, in the first revised version of the draft resolution [A/C.1/L.425/Rev.1] the provision relating to the reservation of this

area exclusively for peaceful purposes was contained in operative paragraph 2 (c). That provision is now given the status of a separate paragraph. That has special significance.

- 4. It is important to realize that the limits of this area that are considered appropriate for one purpose may not necessarily be appropriate for another purpose. The co-sponsors of the draft resolution appreciate the fact that there exists another body competent to deal with the question of peaceful uses in so far as it forms part of the question of disarmament. But they also realize the necessity for preserving the integrity of this item.
- 5. The area to which this item refers is that of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction. Any continued examination of this subject must therefore preserve for the body entrusted with the negotiations the right to address itself to that area. On the other hand, such a body cannot presume to circumscribe or fetter the discretion of another body that has competence to deal with the subject. In regard to the peaceful uses of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, so far as they concern the Committee that also has to deal with the other objective, the considerations that would be relevant might not be the same as those that would appertain to the definition of the limits of the area which should be reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes. The dictates of military strategy and national security might counsel a different approach. We recognize that fact in paragraph 3 of the draft when we state that any study in regard to the peaceful uses of the area and in regard to the limits of the area that is to be reserved for peaceful purposes cannot possibly prejudice the examination of the question by those entrusted with the study of disarmament and with the task of reaching agreement in the field of disarmament. Thus, neither body would fetter the discretion of the other body or circumscribe the limits of its survey. We hope that that is clearly understood from the wording of paragraph 3, that the study that the committee will undertake

"within the context of the title of the item, and taking into account the studies and international negotiations being undertaken in the field of disarmament"

will not prejudice the limits which may be agreed upon during disarmament negotiations.

6. It was that aspect of the terms of reference which, as I have stated, gave rise to the main difficulty in our negotiations. Now that that problem has been solved to the satisfaction, I hope, of all sections of opinion in

this Committee, we trust that the draft resolution can be supported unanimously.

- 7. The CHAIRMAN: I understand that the co-sponsors of various draft resolutions will continue their consultations, and I am glad that that is the case.
- 8. May I respectfully remind the Committee that today was our target date; we were supposed to conclude our deliberations this morning. Having been unable to do so this morning, we certainly must conclude them this
- afternoon in order to heed the appeal made to us by the President of the General Assembly.
- 9. I would therefore make one more appeal to all members, and especially to the co-sponsors of various draft resolutions and those who are taking an active part in other consultations connected with the pending question, to accelerate their consultations and, as we hope, to come to an agreement.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.