VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SOUZA e SILVA (Brazil)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 66 (continued)


GENERAL DEBATE, CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION UPON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. ARIAS STELLA (Peru) (interpretation from Spanish): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation I should like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman to preside over the proceedings of this Committee, thus ensuring the success of our work. I would like also to ask you, Sir, to convey these congratulations to the members of the Bureau.

We also express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the important report he has submitted on the question of Antarctica.

The future of Antarctica is of concern to the entire international community, and the United Nations system, as the most progressive and developed institutional expression of international relations, cannot remain indifferent to what happens in the southern continent. For this reason, as a matter of principle, my delegation supported the deliberations on this issue which led to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 38/77. We are confident that, in the course of discussions in this Committee, the same spirit of co-operation will prevail.

We would like to stress the fact that in our view actions which are undertaken under United Nations auspices cannot in any way be construed as an act of interference in the framework of the norms governing the activities in Antarctica.
Respect for treaties is a cardinal principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and my Government could never change this, not even by means of procedure. On the contrary, in this case, the support of the parties to the Antarctic Treaty, as expressed in resolution 38/77, is a crystal-clear demonstration that between these two standards, the United Nations on the one hand and the Treaty on the other, there exists a possibility of reaching agreement and this can be strengthened on the basis of joint collaboration between Treaty parties and non-parties in fields where encouragement and support from the United Nations may be helpful and useful to the objectives of the entire international community.

Without these considerations I have mentioned, my country could not have joined in discussion of this item outside the Antarctic Treaty forum, where we have non-consultative status.

My country's concern over Antarctica has been constant and our geographical location means that we give special consideration to it.

Aside from historical elements, suffice it to mention the geological connection of the Andes, the influence of southern waters on our climate and the subsequent effects on sea and on land which, in their turn, create a unique ecological balance that is the basis of significant resources for my country.

A proper appreciation of this prompted Peru, in April 1981, to accede to the Antarctic Treaty. This accession represented acknowledgement of the legal system that has made it possible to maintain an acceptable situation with respect to Antarctica from 1959 to the present.

Its value resides in the fact that the instrument has corrected a situation characterized by sharp differences over aspects of control, sovereignty and so on and has maintained, through carefully negotiated formulas, objectives designed to benefit the entire international community.

Hence we spare no effort in thanking the States parties to the Treaty for their valuable undertaking designed to preserve Antarctica as a continent destined solely for scientific study and research, removed from the situation of dispute that we see in other parts of the international system.

In the course of the debate, we have appreciated the attitude and the importance that some States not parties to the Treaty attach to the subject. The intentions expressed in the various opinions in favour of beginning consideration of the question of Antarctica leads us to believe that it is advisable to proceed first to a stage of exploration and identification of the areas in which the efforts of all parties and the exchange of opinions could make progress.
In such an initial stage, we do not believe it suitable to establish goals whose preliminary introduction could give rise to difficulties in the process of harmonization of criteria. Our priority interest will be to ensure that there exists the declared will to carry forward this long-term task and to choose the most appropriate method of work.

All know the influence of Antarctica on the rest of the planet. It can change or modify the ecological characteristics of vast regions.

In our case, this enables us to rely on resources that represent a significant economic heritage.

As a sovereign State and a member of the international community we are very much involved in the evolution of this unique southern region and any new undertaking with respect to it affects my country directly or indirectly.

Peru, as an exporter of both minerals and fish products, is interested in and affected by any process connected to the possibility of exploiting such resources in Antarctica.

This direct interest, allied with our constant desire to preserve the frozen continent in accordance with the lofty purposes contained in the preamble to the 1959 Treaty, compels my delegation to reiterate the appropriateness of establishing procedures which, founded on legal equality, would allow the broadest participation of States in processes connected with the creation of norms to govern activities in this area, particularly in the fields of the exploration and exploitation of resources for commercial ends.

In this connection, the point made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in paragraph 215 of his report, when he specifically refers to living resources, is enlightening.

My country observes with the greatest of interest the international meetings of parties to the Treaty where the formulation of agreements to govern the mineral prospecting, exploration and exploitation activities in Antarctica is negotiated.

We believe that the presence of all States interested in this process is clearly appropriate given the close economic relationship between exploitation, marketing and consumption and the possible adverse repercussions they could have on the stability of States outside the Treaty régime.

Our Government pays special attention to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The interrelationship between such resources, their biological cycle and the ecosystem within which they develop are deserving of
extreme caution. To this end, in-depth studies on all the risks that could be involved in their exploitation would be particularly useful. In this respect, paragraph 245 of the report of the Secretary-General is particularly valuable.

Within the sphere of international co-operation and scientific research, developments over the last two decades have been considerable and have reinforced the special situation of Antarctica.

Thus we are at an initial stage in our knowledge of this part of the world. However, the awareness of the need to preserve its natural resources is growing, as is demonstrated by the emergence of private international associations for this purpose.
While there is continuous co-ordination and a broad exchange of information within the framework of the valuable studies of the specialized agencies and the activities of States that have sponsored such studies, there is clearly a lack of structures or institutions to gather and process available information, and those that exist are independent bodies or specific State institutions with the limitations inherent therein. We believe that to make progress and to foster co-operation within the United Nations system, it would be most advisable to establish a centre for documents and resources on Antarctica. The activities of organizations such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are examples of the kind of co-operation which would lead to progress and better knowledge of this sphere. We believe that the role of the United Nations in the widest possible dissemination of the knowledge which we have so far gained would be of extraordinary value, because access to such information is a duty as well as a necessity. There are few States that have their own infrastructure to be able to develop such highly specialized work without major difficulties.

The task of research in the southern-most area is tremendous and must involve broad participation and representation which would avoid any restrictive tendency in the acquisition of knowledge with respect to Antarctica. We believe that the present deliberations are only an initial stage in the consideration of this topic. For this reason, we believe that an appropriate debate on this item could take place at the next regular session of the General Assembly. For the time being we would merely ask the Secretary-General to keep the report he has given us up to date, and if he deems it appropriate to add to it elements which might supplement those already contained in the document. This is not a matter which follows the traditional North-South, East-West patterns in contemporary international relations since the parties to the Treaty are from different parts of the world. However, there is a distinction between those States that are full participants in deciding the future of Antarctica through the Treaty and those that do not participate in it at all. Since it is necessary to have elements on the basis of which we can have a dialogue, we should not establish objectives at the outset which may not be
acceptable to all and tend rather to bring about polarization. We must realize, therefore, that the assistance of parties and non-parties to the Treaty is indispensable if we are to achieve a constructive dialogue. We must also show flexibility otherwise our task involving Antarctica, which obviously is of universal interest, will be more difficult.

This is not a new issue in the United Nations. In one way or another, it has been a matter of concern in this forum before and after the Treaty of Washington was signed and special importance should be attached to it, while at the same time we recognize the great importance of the Treaty; bringing a subject like Antarctica before the major international forum is an extremely valuable objective. While States that promote trends which characterize the international system have successfully tried out the effective and constructive formulas contained in the Treaty, there is no major reason to believe that this situation cannot be further strengthened in the United Nations and endorsed by the entire international community.

Mr. KEISALO (Finland): First I should like to express my delegation's thanks to the Secretary-General for the report he has submitted to us.

The question of Antarctica is now before the General Assembly for the second time. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the question, and we think that this discussion should be aimed at further strengthening the Antarctic Treaty, to which the Government of Finland attaches great importance. Last year in this debate we informed the Committee of our decision to accede to the Treaty. The necessary formalities to this end have now been completed and the instrument of accession was deposited on 15 May 1984 with the Government of the United States of America.

My Government considers that by acceding to the Treaty we will be able to strengthen the Treaty system and contribute to its successful implementation. The Treaty is the best basis for any future international co-operative efforts in Antarctica or concerning it. It is the fundamental instrument for the international community in ensuring that future activities in Antarctica are conducted in the interest of mankind for maintaining international peace and security, co-operation in scientific research and conservation of the fragile environment of the continent.

The Antarctic Treaty provides for the effective demilitarization of Antarctica. My Government holds the view that the cornerstone of the Treaty system and any future endeavour on the continent is the objective set out in the preamble to the Treaty, where it reads:
"Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord."
It is in the interest of all mankind that this objective be achieved.
The Treaty also provides for a mechanism to regulate scientific activities and co-operation in Antarctica. Freedom of scientific investigation on the continent is ensured by the Treaty, and the Treaty system has made it possible to reconcile the increasing and versatile research activities. The Treaty in effect provides for the protection of the vulnerable Antarctic environment and the conservation of the living resources of the continent. It is also important to note that the Treaty introduced a moratorium on territorial claims in Antarctica.
Finland is situated in the subarctic zone and has a wide experience of coping with severe, cold climatic conditions. Consequently, Finland has both the interest and the capacity to contribute to the research activities in the Antarctica. Technology developed in Finland for operations in the arctic regions, including ice-breakers and other special vessels already used by various scientific expeditions, is equally applicable in the Antarctic region.
It is widely known that if the climatic conditions of Antarctica changed, this would dramatically and fundamentally influence the environmental conditions throughout the world. This extreme vulnerability of the Antarctic environment must be taken into account when any exploitation of existing natural resources or any exploratory or other activity in the area is carried out.

The question of Antarctica is of extreme importance for all of us, Treaty parties and non-parties alike. We therefore welcome the statements made in this debate, as they indicate a common desire to come to a conclusion that can be adopted by consensus. On that basis, we feel, the Assembly can best continue the consideration of the question at its next session.

Finally, my delegation wishes to stress that the Treaty is a rare example of a successful instrument for international co-operation and has proved capable of meeting new challenges. Yet the future poses questions which need to be answered. In particular, the potential exploitation of Antarctica's yet-unknown non-renewable natural resources presents a formidable challenge both legally and politically. It is in the interest of the whole international community that this potential be regulated in an effective manner which corresponds to the principles and objectives of the Treaty system.

Mr. MAZARI (Pakistan): We wish briefly to express our views on agenda item 66, concerning the important question of Antarctica, which is now under consideration by this Committee.

We have listened with great interest to the views of the other delegations that have spoken earlier on the subject. We have also had the opportunity to glance through the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/39/583. Regrettably, owing to the delay in the submission of this report, which has caused us considerable disappointment, my delegation will not be able to offer substantive comments on it at this stage.

The continent of Antarctica covers an area of approximately 13.9 million square kilometres, one tenth of the earth's land surface. The continental shelf of Antarctica covers an area of 4 million square kilometres. In view of the promise that this vast continent holds for scientific research and the exploitation of living and mineral resources, as well as the need for the protection of its ecosystem, the importance of this question to the international community as a whole cannot be over-emphasized. We had therefore welcomed the inscription of this
issue on the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Later my Government was able to submit to the Secretary-General its views on various aspects of the question of Antarctica. We should like to take this opportunity to reiterate these views, which appear in part II of document A/39/583.

The consideration of the question of Antarctica has generated a lively debate among the delegations present in this Committee. We hope that it will lead to a better understanding of each other's point of view and progress towards a generally acceptable legal régime in Antarctica.

My delegation is fully aware of the positive aspects of the Antarctic Treaty, particularly in ensuring the demilitarization and denuclearization of Antarctica. We therefore believe that any international effort to replace it by a generally acceptable régime should build upon its positive features so that Antarctica and its resources are exploited exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of the whole of mankind.

But the Treaty is not free of serious deficiencies. In the view of my Government, the need for a new international régime for Antarctica, freely negotiated between the members of the international community under the auspices of the United Nations, arises from a number of shortcomings and lacunae of the Antarctic Treaty system. I should like to mention a few of these shortcomings at this point.

First, the Antarctic Treaty was concluded between States having no claims of sovereignty or ownership over Antarctica and others with such claims over different parts of the continent, which are denied by the former as well as by the international community in general. Any agreement between such parties regarding the continent of Antarctica, which in fact and in law does not belong to any State, cannot be the basis of a legal régime binding the international community as a whole.

Second, the Antarctic Treaty leaves open the question of sovereignty over Antarctica and does not contain adequate provisions for governing the ownership and exploitation of its resources or for the exercise of jurisdiction in the area. Recommendations and conventions adopted by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties on some of these subjects can have no application for other States.
(Mr. Mazari, Pakistan)

Third, article VI of the Antarctic Treaty, under which the Treaty is to apply to the area south of 60 degrees south latitude, which is an area outside the national jurisdiction of any State, may be in conflict with the provisions of the Law of the Sea Convention conferring jurisdiction on the International Sea-Bed Authority.

Fourth, the system established by the Antarctic Treaty for administering the continent is unjust and undemocratic. It establishes two classes of States parties: the Consultative Parties and the Non-Consultative Contracting Parties. The right of participation in decision making is denied to the latter.

Fifth, the racist minority régime of South Africa, which has been debarred from the activities of a large number of international organizations, continues to participate fully in decision making on Antarctica as a Consultative Party.

Sixth, the criteria laid down in the Treaty are such that most developing countries, whose interest in Antarctica is as well founded and substantial as that of any other country, cannot acquire the status of Consultative Parties.

In view of the foregoing, we fully support the view that the Antarctic Treaty should be replaced by an international régime to be established by an international treaty of a universal character which should, inter alia, provide for the development and management of Antarctica and for an equitable sharing by States of its resources and the benefits derived from its use, taking into particular consideration the needs and interests of the developing countries. Such a régime must also establish democratic international machinery for giving effect to the provisions of the Treaty.

We also believe that the negotiations for concluding a new international régime for Antarctica should be guided by the following considerations of fundamental importance:

First, Antarctica and its resources are the common heritage of mankind.

Second, Antarctica is not subject to appropriation by any means by States or persons, and no State can claim or exercise sovereignty or sovereign rights over any part of it on the basis of discovery, occupation, geographical contiguity or administrative acts, or on any other basis. In our view, territorial claims to Antarctica are a vestige of the colonial era and can have no validity in the present age. We believe that these claims, which are only frozen by the Antarctic Treaty, should be categorically rejected under the new régime.
Third, no State or person, natural or juridical, can claim, exercise or acquire rights with respect to Antarctica or its resources incompatible with the international régime to be established.

Fourth, Antarctica should be reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes and all measures of a military nature should be prohibited in Antarctica.

Fifth, Antarctica should be open to use by all States without discrimination in accordance with the international régime to be established.

Sixth, the exploration of Antarctica and the exploitation of its resources should be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole, taking into particular consideration the interests and needs of the developing countries. All such activities should be governed by the international régime to be established.

Seventh, there should be freedom of scientific research in Antarctica, and States should co-operate in scientific research exclusively for peaceful purposes.
Eighth, in conformity with the international régime to be established, States should take appropriate measures and co-operate in the adoption and implementation of international measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment and its ecosystem, the protection and conservation of its natural resources and the prevention of damage to its flora and fauna.

Ninth, until a global régime based on these considerations is established in Antarctica, a moratorium should be imposed on the exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources of Antarctica.

We believe that the most appropriate forum for negotiating a new international régime to replace the Antarctic Treaty system would be a United Nations conference on Antarctica. We are also ready to support the establishment of an ad hoc committee to make preparations for such a conference.

At the same time, we are conscious of the wide divergence of views on the subject and related issues among the delegations in this Committee at present. In view of this, we believe that every possible effort should be made to avoid a state of confrontation and to adopt a course of action which would facilitate a dialogue and exchange of views on this important issue, help in gradually narrowing down the differences of views and lead ultimately to the emergence of an international consensus on a new appropriate international régime for Antarctica. We hope that the General Assembly at its fortieth session will be able to take decisive steps for setting in motion the process leading to the establishment of a new international régime for Antarctica. We would like to take this opportunity to assure other delegations of our full co-operation in moving towards that goal.

Mr. MANSFIELD (New Zealand): I do not think that I need to remind the members of this Committee of the importance to my country of the Antarctic region immediately to our south. We spoke of these things last year, and our vital interests in the region were carefully documented in the comments submitted by New Zealand to the Secretary-General in preparation for the valuable study which he has prepared.

I should like to focus instead on some of the things which have been said in this debate. I think we are all indebted to the representative of Malaysia, who clearly and eloquently focused our work on two very important questions. First, does mankind as a whole have an interest in Antarctica? Secondly, does it not follow that the future administration of Antarctica should therefore be in the hands of the full international community?
Our answer to the first question is a definite yes. Mankind as a whole does have an interest in Antarctica. That is recognized in the Antarctic Treaty and in many of the decisions adopted under the Treaty over the years.

In addressing the representative's second question, however, I find myself asking another question. Does mankind as a whole have an interest in the conservation of tropical rain forests? Again I think the answer is definitely yes. However, it is not being argued that the United Nations or a United Nations committee should manage those forests.

My point is simply that there is no political, legal or logical connection between a general interest on the part of all mankind of the sort which has been identified in the debate and the institutional proposals which have been advanced by some members.

Antarctica is not a vacant lot. It is subject to an existing legal régime. And I want to really underline this; it is a régime that works and one that works very effectively.

Peace and security have been maintained in an area comprising more than 10 per cent of the earth's surface for 25 years despite periods of global tension and regional conflicts. In my view this is an outstanding record of achievement.

On-site inspections to verify the demilitarization provisions of the Treaty have been conducted regularly. What other arms control treaties can boast that record?

Political and practical co-operation has been achieved between States that have been deeply estranged, despite the fact that at times some of them have had no diplomatic relations or were even engaged in armed conflict.

Resources have been responsibly managed: first, pursuant to the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals adopted in 1972; more recently, pursuant to the 1980 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The latter is widely recognized as by far the most advanced and soundly based conservation convention in existence anywhere.

Some 70 environmental protection measures have been drawn up and implemented. Where else in the world has it been possible to get such wide-ranging international co-operation on environmental protection?

I repeat, the system works. Furthermore, it works despite the fact that there is no consensus as between the Treaty parties on the legal status of Antarctica. It works because the Treaty contains a unique framework which permits claimant to
work with non-claimant, East to work with West, big with small and rich with poor. It involves mutual forebearance and trust and a deep sense of commitment to the importance of working together under the umbrella of the Treaty.

The fundamental importance of this framework for co-operation provided by the Treaty cannot, in our view, be ignored. Certainly an attempt to manage any aspect of Antarctic affairs must take it fully into account.

The Treaty cannot be taken apart like a Lego set and put back together minus some of its integral parts, as has been implied by some speakers in this debate. Seek to replace or sidestep critical elements of the Treaty and the whole structure will collapse. I am sure that no one in this Committee wants to go back to the situation of instability and potential conflict that prevailed before the Treaty.

I think that recent history supports my thesis that the Treaty is seen as a valuable and working institution. Look at the pattern of accessions to the Treaty. In 1960, there were 12 parties. Now the number is 32. Twenty States have acceded. Eleven of these - more than half of the total number of accessions - have taken place in the past four years. More than half of these recent accessions have been developing countries. This is not a pattern that suggests the Treaty is seen as unable to meet the challenges of the future.

I would suggest that this is a record that shows quite the reverse. This is a Treaty that is evolving rapidly and is being widely recognized as making a significant contribution to world peace and security and to international co-operation. It is a dynamic instrument which a growing number of States from different regions and at different stages of development believe can meet their needs and those of the international community at large. The dynamic nature of the Treaty system is its greatest strength.
I want to conclude by returning to my opening points. New Zealand accepts that mankind as a whole does have an interest in Antarctica. It is an interest which may not be as direct as our own but it is real and important. In our view, the Treaty system is capable of evolving to respond in appropriate ways to that interest. However, that evolution must come from within. There can be no solution imposed from without.

Under the umbrella of the Treaty all kinds of creative solutions can be found. Outside the umbrella the necessary political and legal conditions for effective co-operation on Antarctic matters do not exist.

Let me end with the strongest possible statement of my Government's commitment to ensure the protection of the environment of the Ross Dependency and to play a major role within the Treaty system in environmental protection questions relating to the continent as a whole. We do not seek to promote or encourage the extraction of resources from Antarctica and we are concerned to have heard indications from countries outside the Treaty that their interest in Antarctica is prompted by an interest in resource exploitation. The Treaty system, with its emphasis on conservation, offers all States an opportunity to make an input to discussions on all resource questions, and we strongly urge all who are interested to take advantage of this opportunity.

Finally, I should like to express my delegation's satisfaction at the progress that has been made at this session in reconciling different views on the Antarctic question. This is reflected in the fact that the Committee will shortly have before it a draft resolution which, I believe, it should be able to adopt by consensus.

Mr. FAVANARIT (Thailand): The consideration of the item entitled "Question of Antarctica" by the First Committee during this session once again reflects the increasing awareness and growing interest of the international community with regard to the subject. This is not surprising, since Antarctica covers one tenth of the earth's surface. Its location, vastness, fragile ecosystem, rich marine and possibly mineral resources have great significance for international peace and security and for the economy, environment, scientific research, telecommunication, meteorology and other important fields of interest and concern to mankind. In this connection, therefore, my delegation wishes to pay a warm tribute to the Malaysian delegation for its initiative in highlighting the importance of this matter to the international community.
During the 1957/58 International Geophysical Year, the Meteorological Department of Thailand participated in the meteorological survey of Antarctica conducted by the World Meteorological Organization. It was clear that the size of the land mass and the climatic extremes and other conditions would have a far-reaching and world-wide impact on the environment in general; nor was there any doubt that in that frozen continent lie mysteries that have yet to be unravelled and understood by science. Antarctica represents a unique scientific challenge to mankind. In this light, Antarctica should be a frontier that is accessible to all nations and a place where international co-operation is not only desirable but indeed a necessity. Nor should it be an area of contention or discord. Above all, Antarctica should continue to be used exclusively for peaceful and constructive purposes.

Recognizing the importance of Antarctica and the growing interest of the international community in that continent, the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session adopted resolution 38/77, which requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive, factual and objective study on Antarctica for consideration at the thirty-ninth session. Notwithstanding the vastness and complexity of the subject under study and the time constraints, the report of the Secretary-General has been completed and is now before us. In our view, the report is informative and objective and represents a step forward in enriching knowledge about and increasing interest in Antarctica among Member States. My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General and those who assisted him for their efforts in producing this report.

While the study on Antarctica was one of the subjects that States Members of the United Nations were able to agree upon, the debate at the thirty-eighth session showed that there were still widely varying views among Member States on such major issues as equitable sharing of benefits and greater involvement of the international community in decision making on that uninhabited continent. These issues, if left unaddressed and unsolved, could become a source of discord and conflict. Given the fact that the debate in the First Committee during this session is of limited duration and that the question involves complex political and legal issues, it is highly unlikely that this session will succeed in reconciling views and resolving the issues. Periodic in-depth examination and discussion of the question in all its aspects will be necessary in order to try to narrow the divergence of views that still exists, to the detriment of all parties concerned.
(Mr. Pavanarit, Thailand)

In the light of the foregoing, my delegation is of the view that, while it is not possible at this session to agree on the establishment of a United Nations committee on Antarctica, the proposal deserves to be studied further and should not be rejected at this stage. In making this suggestion, it is not the intention of my delegation to start a process which will undermine the Treaty régime. We rather hope that further discussions on this question within the framework of an ad hoc or special committee will lead to the reconciliation of differing views, thus pre-empting future discord and disruption of co-operation in that vast and important area of the world.

Mrs. TNANI (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): At the thirty-eighth session we began consideration of the question of Antarctica, which was coming more and more to the forefront of the international community's attention and was arousing increasing interest. However, the debate that began at that time did not go beyond matters of principle, which we find reflected in resolution 38/77. The central idea that emerged from that resolution was that Antarctica should continue to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and should not become the scene or object of international disputes. However, at that time we did not have available more specific or complete knowledge of the various components of the matter. The gap has been filled neatly by the important factual and objective general study on all aspects of Antarctica which the United Nations Secretary-General was requested to make under resolution 38/77 and which he successfully completed. We wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General warmly for his very valuable and useful contribution to our work.

Simply because there is a moratorium on territorial claims concerning Antarctica today, we should not lose sight of the fact that that continent was the object of partial occupation by a number of countries over a long period of time dating from the nineteenth century right up to just before the Second World War, in accordance with an ancient rule that land belonged to the first occupier and indubitably to the strongest and most powerful. Very great tensions inevitably arose between the countries which were disputing ownership of the Antarctic continent, and we know that they seriously threatened peace, to such an extent that on two occasions, in 1956 and in 1958, India proposed that the question of Antarctica be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration.
We would like to stress this point. Today claims and ambitions in the Antarctic continent have merely been frozen by the Washington Treaty of December 1959. There is no reason they cannot be revived in one form or another in the future and once more present a threat to peace. In this connection we cannot rule out the possibility that one or more countries may suddenly see fit to terminate the commitments entered into under the Washington Antarctic Treaty and restake their claims over territories that overlap those of other countries. That would create inevitable tensions and even conflicts. Should we not now, therefore, forestall such potential threats to world peace rather than have to deal with them at a later date in conditions that might well prove to be more difficult?

And this is not all. In fact, the Washington Treaty has frozen land claims in Antarctica, but not those relating to the adjacent sea. That is a vast area in which conflicts and even serious confrontations may well arise among different countries with regard to the exploitation of the territorial sea, the continental shelf and the exclusive 200-mile economic zone. As another possible source of conflicts we might add that many countries believe, and not without some reason, that the sea surrounding the Antarctic continent belongs to that part of the sea-bed and ocean floor which is not subject to national jurisdiction but is, rather, part of the international sea-bed and ocean floor the area and mineral resources of which are defined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as the common heritage of mankind.

Let us now take a closer look at the Washington Antarctic Treaty signed on 1 December 1959 by 12 countries, among which - a reassuring fact for world peace - were the two super-Powers. Unfortunately, South Africa also figures among those 12 countries, and in this connection it might be worth while to point out for the benefit of those who are now urging the third world countries to adhere to the Washington Antarctic Treaty that it is obviously not mere chance that none of the African countries has so far acceded to it. What in fact stands in the way of their adherence to that document is the presence of South Africa among the signatories and, what is more, as a Consultative Party.

Of course, we are prepared to agree that the Washington Antarctic Treaty has been highly useful and that it has had positive overall results. It has opened the way for increased scientific research in Antarctica. It has prohibited the militarization of Antarctica, nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive wastes on that continent.
But let us not deceive ourselves. The Washington Treaty has not so much resolved the various problems as suspended decisions on them. There are still hidden strategic considerations. Territorial claims are still pending. The exploitation of the sea adjacent to the continent of Antarctica is even now the subject of dispute.

All this prompts us to hope that the modus vivendi established by the Washington Antarctic Treaty will be revised, consolidated and improved within the framework of multilateral negotiations sponsored by the United Nations. In other words, we remain open to any proposal in that regard and, in particular, to the idea of establishing an ad hoc committee on Antarctica, as a number of friendly delegations have suggested.

Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia): It is not often that a new item on the Assembly's agenda involving a non-conflict situation evokes such keen interest among Member States as has the question of Antarctica. My delegation for one welcomes this as a reflection not only of increased international awareness of the importance of the question but also of the growing perception that the United Nations should be allowed to anticipate potential problems and to involve itself in a question of world-wide concern before apparent controversy reaches crisis proportions.

Last year Antarctica featured for the first time as an item on this Committee's agenda. The spirited debate which ensued, in which a large number of delegations representing both parties and non-parties to the Antarctic Treaty participated, provided the first opportunity for Member States to express themselves on the subject in this universal forum. Indeed, for many it was the first opportunity to acquaint themselves with some aspects of the problem which have somehow remained shrouded in obscurity for a long time.

The debate revealed, inter alia, that, while there was broad consensus on the merits of some features currently incorporated in the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, as well as on the overriding need to ensure that Antarctica is forever used for peaceful purposes, there were also divergences of views and the realization that in its future development this huge and barely explored continent posed a number of unresolved problems and the seeds of potential international discord. It also became clear that in this regard the present Treaty system contained either ambiguities or inherent deficiencies in its structure, scope and decision-making procedures that have cast some doubt as to its efficacy for resolving those emergent problems in an equitable manner in the interests of all mankind.
At that time my delegation had occasion to raise a few questions regarding those problems. For example, would the trend towards eventual exploration and exploitation of Antarctica's mineral resources not revive contention over territorial and sovereignty claims? What will be the impact of the Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Antarctic Treaty with regard to such aspects as the limits of national jurisdiction and the role of the International Sea-Bed Authority in the exploitation of resources in the marine areas of the Antarctic region? How best can Antarctica be protected in its perhaps inevitable transition from being a huge scientific laboratory and natural sanctuary to becoming an arena for revived international rivalry and discord over real or prospective economic wealth?

At the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly we concluded our debate on this agenda item by adopting by consensus resolution 38/77, which, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive, factual and objective study. We now have that study before us, and my delegation should first of all express its sincere appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General and to all those in the Secretariat who were involved in its preparation.

Although we were aware of the difficulties that were being encountered in preparing the study, we none the less regret the fact that its rather late distribution has definitely circumscribed the opportunity for Member States fully to digest its voluminous and complex contents. Consequently, my delegation's comments at this juncture will have to be tentative, at best.

We gratefully acknowledge that the factual information presented in the study has indeed shed some more light and has further clarified a number of issues. Thus we now have a better grasp of the significance of the region in the geopolitical, environmental and meteorological spheres, as well as of its scientific and economic potential. The study also details the occurrences and deposits of various mineral resources, both on and offshore, as well as the living marine resources which are already being exploited, and it underscores the considerable economic potential that has yet to be harnessed. Indeed, the study has reaffirmed the tremendous importance of this region and its wide-ranging and complex ramifications for the international community as a whole.
Furthermore, the study exhaustively reviews the functioning of the present Treaty, which has governed and regulated activities in the Antarctic for more than two decades. Among its obvious virtues is the prohibition of any military activities, which establishes Antarctica as a totally demilitarized and denuclearized zone. It has safeguarded Antarctica's natural environment and fostered scientific research and co-operation. In the geo-political realm it has held in abeyance territorial and sovereignty claims. At the same time, however, the study also demonstrates that the Treaty's effectiveness in contributing to the interests of the international community at large, especially in the sharing of benefits derived from exploitation of the region's marine resources, continues to be restricted.

In another respect, my delegation had hoped that the study would go further than it has done. On some issues in which Indonesia is interested — and presumably many others as well, judging from the written submissions of Member States — the study is unfortunately vague or silent. Such questions as the consistency with which present criteria for membership in the Treaty are applied, the precise role and privileges that are accorded or denied to non-consultative members, especially within the deliberative and decision-making processes of the Treaty, the problems of jurisdiction with regard to commercial exploration and exploitation of Antarctic resources, and the mechanism to prevent and redress any possible unilateral reassertion of sovereignty claims, are but a few that come to our mind at this preliminary stage.

Furthermore, my delegation has always believed that a comprehensive study should necessarily go beyond a factual compilation of background information, however useful and objectively presented, and also include an analysis that would at least attempt to give answers to some basic questions such as those I raised earlier in my statement.

For these reasons we saw obvious merit in Malaysia’s proposal to establish an ad hoc committee which would be entrusted with the primary task of making a further in-depth study of the Secretary-General’s report. It is, indeed, unfortunate that, despite the sensible and detailed explanations provided by my friend and colleague Ambassador Zain Azraai as to the spirit and motivations underlying his proposal, it
nevertheless encountered strong opposition and reservations from certain quarters. Be that as it may, my delegation would like to compliment Malaysia and others who have made similar proposals for not pressing the creation of an ad hoc committee at this time.

This, however, still leaves us with the question of how to move forward from here. Certainly my delegation would not wish to be part of an exercise which would simply take note of the Secretary-General's study without any further meaningful follow-up. We should therefore ensure that the intervening period between now and the next session of the General Assembly is purposefully spent. Of course, Governments will need more time to examine and digest the study, considering that the documents were issued barely two weeks ago. Additionally, however, the Secretary-General should be requested to seek the views of all Member States on the study and to invite the relevant specialized agencies, organs and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other interested international organizations, to submit any information and comments relevant to the study they may wish to provide. It would, furthermore, be pertinent and timely if, in submitting their views and comments, Governments would also address themselves to some of the basic questions which have been raised by delegations in the course of the present debate. Specifically on the matter of a minerals régime in Antarctica, on which negotiations are already in progress among the Consultative Parties to the Treaty, and which has given rise to a number of questions among the international community at large, Indonesia believes it would be desirable for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, through the Secretary-General, to keep Member States fully informed of the progress in the negotiations. This would to a large extent dissipate the sense of doubt among Member States as to the real intent and purport of those negotiations and bolster the assurance of the Treaty parties themselves that the Antarctic Treaty indeed is an open and transparent system without exclusivity of any sort.

My delegation believes that if we were to prepare ourselves in these ways for the next debate, at the fortieth session, we should not only contribute to an informed and objective discussion of the issues but in a real sense also promote our common objective in preventing Antarctica from ever becoming the scene or object of international discord.
Mr. KUNDA (Zambia): This is the second opportunity for United Nations Member States to express their views on the subject of Antarctica. We naturally attach great importance to it. The debate this year is taking place in the aftermath of the Secretary-General's report on all aspects of Antarctica, taking fully into account the Antarctic Treaty system and other relevant factors. In this regard my delegation wishes to commend the Secretary-General for fulfilling his mandate under General Assembly resolution 38/77 of 15 December 1983, by which he was requested to prepare the study. We also wish to commend Mr. Viacheslav Ustinov, the Under-Secretary-General responsible for Antarctica, as well as his able staff, who did the spadework that finally culminated in the study which began coming out in sections a few days ago.

We regret, however, that between the time that the study began coming out in sections and the beginning of this year's debate on the subject matter at hand we did not have time to study the report in full. We are none the less encouraged by the positive response many countries and non-governmental organizations demonstrated by providing their views and, in certain instances, by lending the Secretary-General whatever assistance he deemed it appropriate to request for the purpose of carrying out the study. We believe that the study will go a long way in enriching our knowledge about the Antarctic continent and that it will prove to be an invaluable step in increasing the awareness and interest in Antarctica of all of us, if indeed it has not done so already.

The little time we have had to peruse the study, albeit superficially, reveals that it has served to expose the complexities inherent in the question of Antarctica. These complexities are such that they cannot be addressed meaningfully in the timeframe of three days of general debate on the subject. It is for this reason that we fully support the idea, proposed by the Ambassador of Malaysia in his thought-provoking statement, of establishing a special committee on Antarctica whose primary responsibility it would be to study the report prepared by the Secretary-General.

My delegation recognizes the considerable environmental, climatic, geographical, scientific and historical significance of Antarctica to all mankind. Above all, we can hardly over-emphasize the critical importance of the renewable resources and the equally critical strategic importance of the non-renewable resources of Antarctica. To be sure, their importance will have no equal in the lives of many generations to come, especially in the light of the dwindling non-renewable strategic resources in our present and familiar environments.
Furthermore, my delegation subscribes to the view that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes for ever and, through the banning of the introduction of the crippling arms race therein, not become the scene or object of international discord. In this connection, we fully support the non-militarization or denuclearization régime that obtains in Antarctica that was established by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, which became effective in 1961. The denuclearization of Antarctica and the subsequent prohibition of nuclear explosions of any kind, as well as of any radioactive waste disposal, are important measures designed to preserve and conserve Antarctica and all the resources therein.

It is well known that the Antarctic Treaty recognizes no claims of exclusive right to Antarctic resources. Instead, the Treaty rightly establishes the principles of common governance and access, thus laying the necessary foundation for the principle that Antarctic resources belong to mankind in general. At the same time, however, there is no provision for international participation in the administrative structure of the present Antarctic régime.

The administrative arrangement that obtains in regard to Antarctica caters only to a small group of countries. The decision-making mechanism is in fact confined to the 16 members who enjoy the exclusive consultative status in the Antarctic régime - notwithstanding the fact that the significance of Antarctica far transcends the exclusive concern of such a group of countries. The significance of Antarctica involves the interests of all the world's countries and peoples. More important, the present institutional arrangement favours the rich and technologically advanced countries. As a consequence of this, the benefits of Antarctic resource development could unfairly be denied to developing countries which are not favoured by wealth and technology. The arrangement is therefore unequal, to say the least.

The question of resources in Antarctica brings me to the issue of the covert mineral negotiations in which the Consultative Parties are engaged. We are greatly disturbed by those negotiations, aimed at creating a new extensive régime to govern the use of mineral and other resources, which may include oil. I wish to submit that the exploitation of all the resources, mineral or otherwise, in and around Antarctica falls within the purview of international concern. It therefore requires the participation of all States in determining the type of mineral régime
which should be charged with the exploitation of the mineral wealth of Antarctica. We urge the Consultative Parties to defer the current negotiations on the mineral régime until such time as a determination, which is long over due, is made in regard to its proper status. And when that determination is made, the mineral resources of Antarctica should not be exploited unless and until this can be done without significant damage to the fragile Antarctic environment.

The Antarctic Treaty was created at a time when Antarctica was primarily of interest as a larger-than-life laboratory for scientific research. Today, its importance is no longer exclusively scientific. Besides, today — unlike in 1959, when the Treaty was born — we live in a radically expanded world community characterized by economic interdependence, need and strengthened institutions for international decision making. Formerly colonized peoples occupy their proper places in the community of nations. We believe that all these and other manifestations of change must be taken into account in dealing with Antarctica with a view to widening international co-operation in the area.

One of the concepts to evolve out of the demise of colonial rule relates to the obligation equitably to share wealth and resources. Since the resources of Antarctica have, from the historical perspective, not been a subject of individual State appropriation, and since the colonial premise on which most of the Third World was appropriated has now been rejected, it is only logical that the Antarctic resources should now come under the common heritage principle. This calls for Antarctica to be declared a common area and for management and decision making in regard to it to be carried out by the United Nations for the benefit of all mankind.

Due recognition should be given to the overwhelming desire of many countries and non-governmental organizations for the democratization of the decision-making process on the Antarctic régime. A constructive approach to the future of the Antarctic continent is not only important for its own sake but can also ensure a substantial contribution towards the achievement of a peaceful, just and environmentally sound world. Such a constructive approach can only come about through the application of a common-heritage principle to the management and exploitation of Antarctica.
Finally, my delegation wishes to reiterate its position that one of the disturbing flaws in the Antarctic régime relates to the fact that the Treaty has as one of its signatory countries the racist minority régime of South Africa. That régime is an international outcast because it practises institutionalized racism through its invidious policy of apartheid. Its continued membership of the Antarctic Treaty does not therefore reflect too well on the Treaty and indeed on its entire membership. We believe that it is in the interest of the international community to exclude the racist minority régime of South Africa from the Treaty. Leaving that régime a member of the Treaty is tantamount to condoning and indeed rewarding the obnoxious policy of apartheid, a policy that has been declared a crime against humanity.

Mr. JESUS (Cape Verde): For the second time the debate on Antarctica is taking place in this Committee, and rightly so. We share the view that whatever matter falls within the purview of the interests of all and any nation should be dealt with within the framework of the United Nations and never in a forum which excludes equal participation by all nations.

The delegation of Cape Verde would like to underline the following points on which it bases its position with regard to Antarctica.

First, it is the view of the Republic of Cape Verde that Antarctica, together with outer space and the sea-bed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, are common spaces not subject to national appropriation. Antarctica is to be considered the common heritage or province of mankind, free from sovereign rights, in the interest of all States and peoples, as are the sea-bed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, outer space and the celestial bodies.

Secondly, therefore, an international régime has to be negotiated for Antarctica in a forum in which all States, large and small alike, can participate on an equal footing.

Thirdly, as has been established for the seas and outer space, Antarctica should be reserved exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Fourthly, the fragile ecosystem of the continent should be carefully preserved to ensure the protection of its environment.
Fifthly, scientific research should be carried out in peace and in the interest of all mankind.

Sixthly, no mineral exploitation should be undertaken without a comprehensive study of its effects on the environment, including the fauna and flora of the continent, or without establishing an international régime on the mechanisms and modalities through which this exploitation could eventually take place in the interests of all States.

In the course of this debate we have been confronted with the declarations of some delegations from States parties to the Antarctica Treaty to the effect that any attempt to bring the Antarctica question up for discussion in the United Nations would lead us onto a dangerous path which could destabilize the balance achieved in the Antarctica system.

These declarations are astonishing, to say the least, and are based on a double standard. In the main, no nation seems to disagree with the assertion that the United Nations is the appropriate and most effective forum, if not the only possible forum, to deal with issues of universal concern— the Law of the Sea being one recent example among many others. But in the case of Antarctica, those few who are parties to the Treaty change their position, for obvious reasons, and therefore refuse even to accept the principle of the negotiation of a comprehensive régime for Antarctica to be undertaken within or under the auspices of the United Nations, with full observance of and respect for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation shares the view that the Antarctica system has many positive aspects which should be given due consideration in a comprehensive régime to be negotiated by the entire international community. During this debate I have not heard anybody question the principles established in the Antarctica Treaty relating to the peaceful use of Antarctica, the preservation of flora, fauna and the environment in general or its declaration as an area free from military activities, or even the freedom of scientific research. In this respect, it seems to my delegation that we are all in agreement with one another. What therefore, we, the majority of members of the international community, are in disagreement with is the fact that a few countries which have consultative status, however powerful they might be, can ascribe to themselves the right to decide what is right or wrong for
the whole of mankind by defining the course of action to be followed and respected
by everybody with respect to activities in Antarctica.

It has been said that the Antarctica Treaty is based upon the purposes and
principles of the Charter of the United Nations. However, in my humble view it is
not consistent with a major principle of that Charter contained in Article 2,
paragraph 1, which establishes the sovereign equality of all States. Article 1,
paragraph 2, of the Charter makes the development of friendly relations among
nations dependent upon respect for the principle of equal rights of States.

It is evident that the Antarctic Treaty, by providing in article IX,
paragraph 2, that only Consultative Parties are entitled to participate as full
members in Antarctic Treaty consultative meetings - which is the body responsible
for determining policy on scientific, environmental and operational matters related
to co-operation in activities in Antarctica - is not treating all States on an
equal footing, since as is stated in the above-mentioned article, only a party to
the Treaty which demonstrates its interest in Antarctica by conducting substantial
scientific research activity there, such as the establishment of a scientific
station or the dispatch of a scientific expedition, is entitled to become a
Consultative Party.

In other words, the majority of third world countries, even if they became
parties to the Antarctic Treaty, would not be able to participate fully on an equal
footing with any other State Consultative Party in establishing the policies for
the activities of Antarctica for the simple reason that they cannot afford to send
a scientific expedition to Antarctica or to establish a scientific station there.
It is evident that the principle of equality of States established in the Charter,
upon which the Antarctic Treaty is said to be based, cannot allow that its
observance be limited with regard to co-operation on Antarctica merely because of
lack of resources of third world countries.

The Antarctic Treaty can become a basis for universal co-operation in
Antarctica, subject to the following provisos: the extension of the right of equal
treatment to all States parties, irrespective of their conduct of substantial
scientific research activity in Antarctica; that in all activities related to
Antarctica decisions be taken by all States parties on the basis of one State, one
vote; that provision be made to make it plain that Antarctica is free from national
appropriation and therefore no territorial claim there should ever be recognized.
If these provisos were acceptable to the current parties to the Antarctic Treaty then the major obstacles to the full participation of the overwhelming majority of States in the Treaty would be removed and the way would be paved for constructive and universal co-operation on Antarctica.

Whatever the outcome of this debate might be we think that the process of dialogue on this issue should continue and be further strengthened within the United Nations framework with a view to finding a solution compatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Mr. Ali (Bangladesh): This Committee, for the second year in succession, is deliberating on the item "Question of Antarctica". The initiative which Malaysia and Antigua and Barbuda, two fellow members of the Commonwealth, have taken in this regard is deeply appreciated by my delegation. The participation of a large number of speakers on this item clearly illustrates the interest of the international community in Antarctica, which has been termed mankind's last frontier on earth. Our deliberations on this item at the preceding session of the United Nations General Assembly provided a useful starting point for a thorough and comprehensive study on this subject. The debate also demonstrated that while there are many similar views regarding the objectives of a régime in Antarctica, there are differing and often divergent views regarding the specific nature and operations of such a régime. The primary purpose of our deliberations, therefore, should be to analyse in depth these similarities and differences with a view to evolving a consensus course of action for international co-operation in Antarctica which would also serve the interest of humanity at large.

We have for our consideration the report of the Secretary-General which was prepared and submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/77. May I take this opportunity to record our deep gratitude to the Secretary-General and his able deputies for their commendable effort in this regard. This report, however, was only made available a few days ago, and consequently it has not been possible for my delegation to study it in depth and to make any definite assessment of the study.
The views of my Government on the question of Antarctica have been duly reflected in part II of the report of the Secretary-General in document A/39/583. Permit me to sum up our position on this issue; it is based on the following points:

First, Bangladesh affirms the conviction that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue for ever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord.

Second, Bangladesh supports the relevant paragraphs on Antarctica in the declaration adopted by the seventh non-aligned Summit Conference, held in New Delhi last year.

Third, in the absence of any indigenous population in Antarctica and in view of the prospects of tremendous mineral and fossil resources in the area, a global régime for Antarctica should be established on the principle of the common heritage of mankind.

Fourth, membership of the Consultative Council should be opened to other developing countries desirous of joining it. Alternatively, instead of single-country membership, participation by a recognized and established regional or sub-regional group might also be considered. As an immediate measure, affiliation of a developing country with one or more countries of the Treaty should be adopted.

Fifth, a mechanism should be established to ensure that the international community is aware of the activities carried out in Antarctica, particularly in the context of the environment and its resources.

Sixth, we firmly believe that exploration of the area and exploitation of its resources should be carried out for the benefit of all mankind and in a manner consistent with the protection of the environment of Antarctica.

Seventh, the racist régime of South Africa must be excluded from the Antarctic Treaty because of its apartheid policies.

While we are deliberating on the question of Antarctica, my delegation would like to recall that the United Nations, during the recent past, has succeeded in reaching agreement on a Convention on the Law of the Sea and a Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies - commonly known as the Outer Space Treaty. Preceding speakers have underlined that the principle of the common
heritage of mankind has been the prime motivating factor in the conclusion of those important agreements, by consensus, for the exploration and exploitation of these areas in the interest of humanity at large. The realization of this principle has been one of the most important developments in contemporary international law, and it must be sustained.

A number of speakers have already pointed out that when the Antarctic Treaty was concluded in 1959 its principal purpose was to protect this "unknown continent" from all kinds of nuclear weapons and to prevent use of its territory for nuclear testing. The Treaty, however, provided for co-operation in scientific research and for the exchange of information and scientific data for peaceful purposes. It is apparent that, since the Treaty had not resolved the question of exploration and exploitation of natural resources, the States parties to it undertook negotiations and finally succeeded, in 1980, in entering into a Convention on the Conservation of Marine Living Resources. This agreement mainly regulates fishing rights and not the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of the continent. It has already been pointed out during the current debate that efforts are currently under way among the States parties to the Treaty for the early conclusion of an agreement on this important issue.

My delegation at this point would like to state quite categorically that it is not our intention to criticize the Antarctic Treaty and its signatories or, for the moment, to propose a new treaty or a parallel body. Bangladesh fully recognizes that the member States of the Treaty have been able to set up a régime which is an outstanding example of international co-operation and amity, a truly nuclear-free zone and completely demilitarized. The existing co-operation between the two super-Powers in this area is a matter of great satisfaction for all of us. It is, therefore, not our intention to undermine in any way the achievements of the Antarctic system. At the same time, we should acknowledge the fact that Antarctica covers some one tenth of the surface of the globe and that it occupies a sensitive part of the world. The vast territory of Antarctica and its strategic location, with its rich marine and, possibly, mineral resources, have a particular significance in terms of international peace and security as well as of global co-operation in various fields. It is therefore only logical that mankind as a whole has a legitimate interest in Antarctica.
(Mr. Ali, Bangladesh)

All those important considerations clearly call for an in-depth evaluation of the situation, from a global perspective. In view of the special importance of the area, the current régime of the Antarctic Treaty system is required to meet various objectives for the present as well as for the future. There is no divergence of views as to its achievements in preserving international peace and security, in promoting scientific research and even, to some extent, in protecting the environment. However, there are differing views when the questions of international co-operation and equitable sharing of the resources of Antarctica come up for our deliberations. A number of speakers have already dwelt at length on the organizational structure of the current régime. It has been underlined that under the current system the decision-making process has been restricted exclusively to the members of the Consultative Council. Consequently, the Non-Consultative Parties that have been participating as observers since 1983 do not have any decision-making power. A vast majority of countries members of the United Nations that genuinely desire to participate in exploration and scientific research find themselves excluded from the current process.

A number of speakers have underlined the need to set up a small United Nations committee on the subject, with a view to involving the international community in the process, while others have expressed their reservations on that proposal. My delegation shares the perception that at this early stage of deliberations on this item we should proceed with utmost care and caution, with a view to evolving a consensus course of action. Our common endeavour, therefore, should be to examine with an open mind the various possibilities for an institutional mechanism, within the United Nations, for dealing with this issue.

The recently published report of the Secretary-General deserves our careful consideration. My delegation therefore feels that, after examining the study in detail, Member States should submit their views in this regard to the Secretary-General and those views should be circulated. This would facilitate a more comprehensive discussion of this item at the next session of the United Nations General Assembly. The process of dialogue and discussion which has just started should be sustained and we should make every effort to bridge our disagreements in order to usher in a new era. If we succeed, that may be the most fitting respect that we can pay to this world body on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary.
Mr. NEYCHEV (Bulgaria): The interest of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in the consideration of this item is based on the fact that it has always attached great importance to questions concerning Antarctica. My country is a non-Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1978, but Bulgarian scientists have been involved in basic research in the Antarctic region for many years. Our interest in issues related to Antarctica is above all based on the fact that the whole of the so-called sixth continent has been kept demilitarized and free of nuclear weapons because of the Antarctic Treaty.

In the present complex and difficult international situation Antarctica has for a quarter of a century been one of the few areas removed from the arms race and international conflicts, a region in which we can see the successful development of peaceful co-existence. The maintenance and consolidation of the bases of peaceful activities in the Antarctic is a task that corresponds to the interests of all mankind as well as to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Antarctic Treaty is a unique example of international co-operation, bringing together countries of different perceptions and interests and, what is most important, the Treaty creates a zone of peace in the entire Antarctic continent. The Treaty is based on the principle of using Antarctica exclusively for peaceful purposes. The preamble to the Treaty proclaims that in the interest of all mankind Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.

The Treaty prohibits any measures of a military nature such as the establishment of military bases and fortifications, the carrying out of military manoeuvres as well as the testing of any type of weapons in Antarctica. In other words, the Treaty established a régime of demilitarization and neutrality in the Antarctic. So far, for the first time in history not only individual territories but an entire continent was declared to be a zone of peace and international co-operation.

The task of ensuring peace in Antarctica is also served by the provision of the Treaty prohibiting any nuclear explosions in Antarctica and the disposal there of radioactive waste material. Its inclusion in the Treaty meant that, in addition to being a demilitarized, neutral zone, Antarctica was also proclaimed to be a nuclear-free zone. In this context, the People's Republic of Bulgaria attaches equal importance to articles I and V of the Antarctic Treaty, which explicitly set forth principles for the non-militarization and non-nuclearization of Antarctica,
which through a uniquely effective system of comprehensive inspection represents a major contribution to safeguarding peace and stability in the region. By the freezing of territorial claims, the emergence of disputes and conflicts can be precluded.

During the period in which the Treaty has been in force, more than 100 recommendations have been drawn up and adopted with regard to the most varied fields of activity in Antarctica: meteorology, transport, communications, determination of areas to be particularly protected and of special scientific interest and so forth. Special practical and effective measures have also been drawn up and brought into force to conserve Antarctica's flora and fauna, to conserve Antarctic seals and, most recently, to ensure that all the marine living resources of Antarctica are rationally managed with due regard to the Antarctic environment as a whole. The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, which came into force in 1982, established an international régime for the conservation of those resources and is open to accession by all countries, including those which are not parties to the Antarctic Treaty. The environment of no other continent has received such a level of international protection. Antarctica is perhaps the only place in the world which remains relatively unaffected by pollution from the atmosphere, the land or the oceans.

During the period of almost 25 years in which it has been in force, the Treaty, which is open to accession by any interested State, has stood the test of time. The large area south of the 60th parallel has been kept free of any international disputes. It is an area where peaceful research is undisturbedly carried out by States with different social systems in the interest and for the benefit of all mankind.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria, therefore, resolutely advocates the maintenance of the present state of affairs in the interest of peace and security throughout the world. However, viewing the present state of international relations with a sense of responsibility, no one should fail to notice that any revision of the 1959 Treaty, for whatever motives, would entail very serious risks. Instead of producing a new agreement, this would result in the very real danger that the territory of Antarctica would be included in the arms race, old territorial claims would be revived and new territorial claims might emerge. The present well-proven legal régime, which provides that Antarctica shall continue to be used exclusively
for peaceful purposes, would be destroyed. In that event, Antarctica would become another area of international conflict and discord, which is by no means compatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter or in the interests of mankind as a whole.

These are the major reasons why the People's Republic of Bulgaria is not in a position to support the initiative of some countries, which seek revision of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The Treaty constitutes a system of agreements that is valid for an unlimited period of time. It is open for accession to any other interested State. The Treaty is fully consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Everything has to be done to maintain it as an instrument of peace and co-operation, particularly at a time of increased international tensions and confrontation.

It is not revision but accession to the Treaty by other States interested in the Antarctic that would promote the reinforcement and development of equal co-operation by States in the exploration and use of Antarctica for exclusively peaceful purposes.

The Bulgarian delegation has taken note of the study contained in document A/39/583, prepared by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 38/77. In this connection, I should like to express the warm gratitude of my delegation to the Secretary-General and his associates for the prodigious effort to digest the voluminous materials from many sources, including the submissions of Member States, and to produce an excellent piece of work, a comprehensive, factual and objective study, and my delegation thanks them all for it.

It is our hope that the study will contribute by informing all Governments on the functioning of the Antarctic Treaty and help to prevent misconceptions as to its nature and objectives. As the study has been circulated only recently, it would be useful for Governments to give it in-depth consideration.

In concluding, may I express once again the importance that the Bulgarian delegation attaches to a consensual solution. My delegation stands ready to work constructively to that end.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.