VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 51st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia)

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QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA: GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION UPON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS (continued)

PROGRAMME OF WORK
The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 70 (continued)

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA; GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF AND ACTION UPON DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. OKUN (United States of America): At this session of the General Assembly we are marking the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations. It is a time for assessing how well the principles of the Charter have been realized and for rededication to their achievement in the future. It is noteworthy in this regard that there is one region of the world - Antarctica - in which those principles and purposes have been, and continue to be, given consistent and concrete expression. As a result of the operation of the Antarctic Treaty, and the system which has evolved from it, Antarctica for the past quarter of a century has been the scene of a unique and successful achievement in international co-operation among States of differing political, social and economic systems as well as differing stages of economic development.

It is for this reason that my delegation is of two minds as we initiate consideration of this agenda item. On the one hand, we continue to question the rationale for the prolongation of the debate itself. Like other parties to the Antarctic Treaty, we do not accept any implication that there is any problem or defect in the Antarctic Treaty system requiring remedial action. The facts deny any such presumption. Extended discussion of this item in the United Nations risks an artificial and unnecessary polarization. It also wastes needed United Nations resources.

Likewise, the United States would have the greatest difficulty with any efforts aimed at using the General Assembly as a forum for calling into question the international legal obligations assumed under a treaty such as the Antarctic Treaty. Such approaches are not justified, nor do they serve the interests of the United Nations. They are, in fact, contrary to the Charter itself. As the
President of the General Assembly recalled in opening this fortieth anniversary session, one of the opening paragraphs of the preamble to the Charter: "calls for respect for the obligations arising from treaties." *(A/40/PV.1, p. 17)*

On the other hand, discussions may have value if they create a wider appreciation, support for and awareness of, the Antarctic Treaty system and its operation. The United States attaches fundamental importance to the Antarctic Treaty and the system which has evolved from it. It is prepared, therefore, to seek to contribute to a broader awareness of the Treaty's nature and achievements.

A number of elements are fundamental to the effective operation of the Antarctic Treaty system. The Treaty promotes important scientific research and international co-operation. It guarantees freedom of scientific research in Antarctica and the availability of resulting observations and data. As a result, Antarctica has been an area of important scientific advances, advances which have made essential contributions to the understanding of our planet.

The Treaty also represents one of the most important arms control agreements concluded since the establishment of the United Nations. It bans all military activities in Antarctica, including the testing of weapons. It prohibits nuclear explosions in Antarctica and the disposal of radioactive waste there. Moreover, these provisions - as with all provisions of the Treaty - are subject to verification through the rights of on-site inspection included in the Treaty.

The United States regularly exercises these inspection rights. We have within the past week completed another such inspection, including on this occasion stations in the Antarctic peninsula. In all of the inspections we have conducted, American observers have reported no instances of non-compliance with the letter or spirit of the Treaty.
The Antarctic Treaty system represents an effective mechanism for anticipating and peacefully resolving potential conflicts. The Treaty itself deals with basic differences over the question of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica. Through imaginative juridical provisions, the Treaty permits its parties to apply common obligations to, and properly manage, activities in Antarctica without prejudice to their positions on the status of Antarctica.

The functioning of the Treaty as a mechanism for conflict-avoidance and conflict-resolution also rests upon its capacity for dealing with new issues and circumstances. The Treaty establishes a system of regular consultative meetings. Representatives of the 12 original signatories participate in these meetings, along with representatives of acceding parties which demonstrate their interest in Antarctica by the conduct of substantial scientific research there. Other parties to the Treaty also participate in consultative meetings as observers.

This consultative mechanism, which links consultative status with the expression of concrete interest in Antarctica, is an important element in ensuring that issues relating to Antarctica are dealt with in a pragmatic and equitable fashion, removed from ideological or polemical competition. This mechanism is also the means for the extension of the principles and purposes of the Treaty to new activities and circumstances in Antarctica. In effect, it has been the basis for the evolution of the Antarctic Treaty system. This system is an open and effective one, one which welcomes new participants and which has demonstrated the capacity for accommodating new interests. There are at present 32 parties to the Treaty. Eighteen of these are Consultative Parties, the most recent of which are China and Uruguay. As noted, the other 14 parties also participate in consultative meetings as observers.

Through the operation of the Treaty system, a wide range of measures has been adopted to ensure protection of the Antarctic environment, to facilitate support for, and international co-operation in, scientific activities and to conserve
resources. Two important new international agreements to conserve Antarctic seals
and Antarctic marine living resources have been concluded as a result of
initiatives taken at previous consultative meetings.

As a result of a similar initiative, the parties are committed to developing
an agreement to deal with possible mineral resource activities in Antarctica.
These discussions are aimed at developing an international system for determining
whether possible future mineral resource activities in Antarctica would be
acceptable, and would seek to develop rules to govern any such activities
determined to be acceptable. This régime, it is agreed, will prohibit any such
activities unless it can be demonstrated, based on sufficient information, that
they would be undertaken in conformity with the necessary protection of the
Antarctic environment. It has been agreed that this international agreement would
also be open to all.

The operation of the Antarctic Treaty system, in the American view, is an
outstanding success. Antarctica is the one continent of our planet which is a zone
of peace and a nuclear-free zone. It is the one continent on our planet from which
the arms race has been excluded. It is the one continent on our planet which is
reserved exclusively for peaceful uses, with an emphasis upon co-operative
scientific research. It is the one continent on our planet in which the protection
of the environment is the controlling principle applied to the management of human
activities.

I have dwelt upon the characteristics of the Antarctic Treaty system not
simply to point out the achievement of the system and its contribution to the
achievement of the goals of the United Nations itself, but also to demonstrate that
the system is a dynamic and responsive mechanism for dealing with Antarctic
issues. It continues to evolve in an effective fashion to meet changing
circumstances and new or increasing activities. For those with growing interests
in Antarctica, it offers an open and sound vehicle for pursuing those interests.
Activities carried out within the treaty system over the past year further testify to that fact. Important work was accomplished in discussions of Antarctic mineral resources, held in March and September/October. The fourth annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources took place in September. The Commission continued development of measures necessary to regulate fishing activities in Antarctic waters and elaboration of the data requirements necessary for population assessments. The Thirteenth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting took place in Brussels in October. At that meeting a number of steps were agreed upon to improve the operation of the Antarctic Treaty system, including steps to ensure availability of information about the system, as well as new provisions to prevent the harmful impact of human activities in Antarctica. These and other issues will continue to challenge the innovative capacity of the Treaty system. However, we are confident that this capacity will continue to be sufficient to respond successfully.

The United States of America is fully committed to ensuring the continued vitality and effective operation of the Antarctic Treaty system. For this reason, we welcomed the contribution of the report of the Secretary-General on Antarctica in describing the Treaty system and summarizing its accomplishments.

For the same reason, however, the United States cannot accept any presumption that the Antarctic Treaty or Treaty system requires modification or replacement. We will therefore oppose any effort based on that view or directed towards that end, as well as attempts to establish some sort of parallel mechanism for dealing with Antarctic issues. In the view of the United States, those who imply that there is some inconsistency between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations system misread both, and establish an artificial and unnecessary dichotomy.
We have had occasion in the past to make many of the points I have outlined today. They merit re-emphasis. The United States has been an active participant in the Antarctic Treaty system from the outset. It is an outstanding international treaty system, both in its existing achievements and in its demonstrated ability to meet new challenges. It is, I believe, extraordinary that this record has been built entirely upon the principle of consensus. As in the past, the United States is also prepared to seek consensus on this item in this forum.

What we are not prepared to accept are proposals which rest upon any premises which encourage the polarization of views about Antarctica.

We see no reason for further debates in the United Nations on the Antarctic Treaty system. This is not because we deny that the United Nations has an interest in Antarctica. On the contrary, it is because the United Nations has a basic interest in promoting the kind of regional treaty system embodied in the Antarctic Treaty system, a system which gives continuing realization to the Charter's principles.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): This is the third session at which the item "Question of Antarctica" has appeared on the agenda of the General Assembly. We hope that at this session the First Committee will be able to give it deeper and broader consideration and adopt an appropriate draft resolution regarding it.

There can be no doubt that the study submitted by the Secretary-General last year has increased our understanding of this important issue, and we should like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to him for his interest in this question, which has significantly contributed to a better understanding of this question by third world countries, as reflected in the resolution adopted by the members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in July of this year. In that resolution, the OAU declared Antarctica to be the common heritage of mankind. The
Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, meeting at New Delhi from 7 to 12 March 1983, and the Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Luanda from 4 to 7 September of this year, reaffirmed that Antarctica was the property of all mankind. Saudi Arabia expresses its thanks to those States for having emphasized the international community's interest in this important question.

There is no comprehensive international treaty dealing with sovereignty over the Antarctic region, which represents one tenth of the earth's surface and is strategically located in a region of extreme scientific and economic importance. Thus it has a critical role to play in terms of security, peace, environment, scientific research and telecommunications. It is therefore incumbent upon the United Nations to play a major role in that part of the world.

The first draft of what was eventually adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 1984 as resolution 39/152, recommended the establishment of an ad hoc committee to conduct a study of the issue of Antarctica in its entirety, which was to include the report submitted by the Secretary-General, which the General Assembly was unable to discuss at its last session owing to lack of time. The hope was that such a committee could help to narrow the gap between Consultative and non-consultative Parties to the Treaty, on the one hand, and the rest of the Member States of the United Nations on the other. Unfortunately the Consultative Parties opposed that recommendation on the pretext that such a committee might overlap with the Treaty system governing Antarctica.

That fear on the part of the Consultative Parties was taken into account in preparing the draft resolution to be submitted at this session. The role proposed for the ad hoc committee, if established, is now limited to a study of the relationship between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations system.
It is time to reconsider the Antarctic Treaty, which was concluded among a few countries that shared that important part of the world out among themselves. Over 25 years have passed since the signing of that Treaty, and during that time international ideas about the issue of Antarctica have undergone changes. Consequently the terms of the Treaty no longer fulfil the main purpose for which it was drafted, namely, peaceful scientific research in a spirit of co-operation.
Now, as Antarctica begins to attract the attention of the international community at large, the Consultative Parties have begun among themselves to consider the question of the exploitation of the vast resources of that part of the world, and how to share those resources among them.

Moreover, the sole African country among the Consultative Parties is racist South Africa; there is not one single Arab country among them, and there are only two Asian countries, India and China.

United Nations involvement in that region, through an ad hoc committee, would ensure the demilitarization of Antarctica, would facilitate scientific research in an atmosphere of international co-operation, would safeguard the environment, would prevent international rivalry over sovereignty, would govern the exploitation of natural resources, and would isolate Antarctica from the rest of the world.

We have heard many statements on this item; all of them - apart from those made by Parties to the Antarctic Treaty - were unanimous in their view of the necessity for the United Nations to play an important role in that part of the world, which is the common heritage of mankind, to oversee its natural resources and prevent the consequences of participation by racist South Africa in the Antarctic Treaty.

The study in the report of the Secretary-General represents a beginning in the comprehensive treatment of the issue. While it includes much important information and draws attention to many issues, we hope that the Secretary-General will be able to supplement the study, especially with regard to the flow of information on Antarctica beyond information about the biennial meetings of the Consultative Parties; this should also cover ongoing talks on the exploitation of the natural resources of Antarctica, news of scientific research in the region, and information
about observance of the Treaty. We hope too that the Secretary-General will treat the matter of co-operation between the States Parties to the Antarctic Treaty and the relevant United Nations organizations, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the International Telecommunication Union, and will undertake a legal study on the possibility of applying the concept of the common heritage of mankind, as incorporated into the Convention on the Law of the Sea, to the question of Antarctica.

The Saudi Arabian delegation is ready to make an effective contribution to the work of an ad hoc committee on Antarctica should the General Assembly agree at this session or in the future to the establishment of such a body. We reaffirm our keen desire to co-operate with the other members of this Committee and with the Secretary-General on devising a just system to govern this critical region of the world in conformity with the wishes of all parties concerned.

Mr. DJOKIC (Yugoslavia): It has been pointed out that this is the third year the United Nations is discussing the question of Antarctica. That is a relatively short period of time, but interest in Antarctica has increased considerably during that period. Since the matter was raised in the United Nations, there have been frequent negotiations, by Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, on the question of minerals.

Continuing the initiative launched at the Seventh Summit, in New Delhi, non-aligned countries took a clear position on the question of Antarctica, at the ministerial meeting at Luanda. One of the main points is that the interest of the international community in the continent of Antarctica can be expanded by the United Nations being kept fully informed about developments there. The Foreign Ministers of non-aligned countries stressed too that the General Assembly should
remain seized of the question of Antarctica. It must be emphasized as well that the question of Antarctica has been considered by the Organization of African Unity at its summit meeting; that body declared Antarctica to be the common heritage of mankind.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, we have had an opportunity of studying in greater detail the content and conclusions of the United Nations study on Antarctica. It bears out that the question of Antarctica is exceptionally complex and is of general importance. It also bears out that this question requires careful consideration and that a further, more comprehensive, assessment of all aspects of the question of Antarctica is needed.

It should be stressed once again that any question of significance to the world in general should, as a rule, be considered by this Organization. The United Nations provides the best framework for the expansion of international co-operation on Antarctica. Global interests and ways to safeguard them can best be determined by the entire community of nations, represented in this Organization.

The view that the mere consideration in the United Nations of the question of Antarctica represents the dismantling of the régime established in 1959 is arbitrary and unfounded. The régime has stood the test of time and there is no reason to question its numerous positive results. Partisanship can never bring about generally acceptable solutions, and this is true also in the case of Antarctica. What we need is understanding, patience and, above all, good will on the part of all interested parties.

It is hard to understand the view that continued consideration of the question of Antarctica will start off an avalanche of unwanted events. Various arguments are put forward; it is alleged that Antarctica would become a new ground for confrontation, for militarization, for non-regulated exploitation of natural
resources, and so on. We do not believe that such arguments are well founded. Continued action on the question of Antarctica is based on the premise that questions of global significance should be the object of harmonization by the community of equal nations. Nobody can question Antarctica's considerable environmental, climatic, scientific and potential economic significance to the world.

The Antarctic Treaty has not regulated all forms of co-operation in the continent, particularly not the area of the exploitation of natural resources. Consultative Parties to the Treaty are stepping up negotiations to conclude an agreement on exploration and exploitation of the mineral resources of Antarctica. Non-member States are thus excluded from participation in the solution of these important issues and cannot benefit from the possible exploitation of Antarctic resources. Agreement on these issues should be achieved within the framework of the United Nations, whether or not exploitation of the natural resources of Antarctica is undertaken.
The delicate nature and complexity of the subject now under consideration should not influence the resolve to continue an open and constructive dialogue on the possibility of promoting equitable international co-operation in respect of Antarctica. What we want to see is not the division of States into two groups, namely, those that are parties and those that are not parties to the Treaty, but rather a consistent search for points of convergence and common interest in accordance with the principle of equality. The efforts being made within the United Nations should supplement the numerous positive aspects of the existing régime in Antarctica. Likewise, we feel that the United Nations should satisfy the need for international regulation in areas of co-operation of equal interest to all Members of the United Nations, regardless of their capacity to be present in Antarctica.

One possible way of doing so is to carry out a further examination of areas of co-operation between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations. It would be advisable therefore, to have the existing United Nations study updated and expanded. We are convinced that such a decision would not harm any of the parties. It would also be desirable if, in the future, the United Nations were informed of the activities of the parties to the Antarctic Treaty. That would provide a better insight into activities whose implications are of importance to all.

Mr. SAID (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): As we enter a new phase of our programme of work it gives me great pleasure to tell you, Mr. Chairman, how pleased we have been with the most efficient manner in which you, with a blend of firmness and flexibility, have so far conducted our deliberations. We are quite sure that, with the same efficiency, you will be able to bring our work to a successful conclusion.
By deciding, at its thirty-eighth session, to include the question of Antarctica in its agenda, the General Assembly in fact endorsed the interest shown in that area of the world by a number of States Members of the United Nations. The General Assembly thereby acknowledged that the question of Antarctica was a matter of general interest and that it fell within the direct competence of the United Nations.

How could it be otherwise, indeed, when that continent, as yet unexploited and without any indigenous population, represents approximately one-tenth of the earth's surface and when, at the same time, there is no internationally acknowledged agreement defining sovereignty over it?

It cannot be otherwise, for that region is of considerable interest for scientific research and the protection of the environment, comprising as it does particularly rich seas and, undoubtedly, various mineral and other resources that the international community cannot properly assess because it is being kept on the sidelines.

It cannot be otherwise because Antarctica is situated in a region which is of undeniable strategic importance and whose implications for international peace and security cannot be disregarded by the United Nations.

The General Assembly's legitimate interest in this question confirmed the interest which was expressed by the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement at their seventh Summit Conference in New Delhi in 1983, and which was reiterated last September at their Ministerial Meeting held at Luanda. The same interest was also explicitly expressed in an ad hoc resolution adopted by the African Heads of State or Government at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit Meeting in July this year.

All this provides ample justification for the debate on this question in the United Nations and in our Committee.
We have been reminded here that, since 1959, an international Treaty has governed activities in the Antarctic region and that this Treaty has demilitarized the continent, which it has opened up for scientific purposes. We have been told that that Treaty has been functioning smoothly since its entry into force, and that there is no need to reopen the question or, for that matter, to consider it at all.

I must say that this fierce resistance to the notion of any consideration of the question has taken us aback. We believe that the existence of an international Treaty cannot, in itself, be an obstacle to the consideration of the question by the United Nations General Assembly. We hasten to add that we welcome the positive aspects of that Treaty, and particularly its demilitarization of the continent. We believe that all those positive aspects should be brought out, strengthened and consolidated, and that the United Nations is the best framework in which to do so. Such an exercise should not be aimed at destroying an existing system, but rather at enhancing and broadening it.

However, we must note that the situation today and the Treaty as it is now functions do not provide appropriate answers to the legitimate questions that resulted in the inclusion of the question of Antarctica in the agenda of the General Assembly. True, the 1959 Treaty is functioning, but for whom and to whose advantage?

In both its spirit and its letter the Treaty governing Antarctica seems to us to be based on obsolete or highly questionable notions - notions that confer rights on the basis of material and technological power, notions that legitimize appropriation by discovery, and notions that grant supremacy to the quickest and strongest.

We had thought such notions were outmoded, but it seems that they are the ones that count. How otherwise, for example, can we explain the ease with which some
have allowed themselves to be associated, within the framework of that Treaty, with
the outlawed régime of South Africa? How can there be any so-called fruitful and
peaceful co-operation with that régime?

For our part, we find it hard to believe that a warmongering and racist
expansionist State, notorious for its contempt for justice and for international
peace and security, and therefore banned from taking part in the work of the
General Assembly, can contribute to the promotion of peaceful and scientific
activities in that important region of the world.

It is incumbent upon the States parties to the Antarctic Treaty to uphold the
credibility of that legal instrument. There can be no question that the Treaty's
credibility has been eroded by the unfortunate involvement of the South African
régime in its deliberations and decision-making.

If the question of Antarctica is no longer to be the subject of controversy it
is essential, in our view, to establish among the States parties to the Treaty and
the other States Members of the United Nations a dialogue that must be as broad and
as open as possible, as offering the only way to dispel misunderstanding and
suspicions, particularly with regard to the deliberations that have been held here
and there on activities being carried out in Antarctica that are now shrouded in a
disquietening secrecy.
It is therefore through such a dialogue and debate, bearing in mind the well-established principles of international law, especially those governing land and sea, that in due course answers will have to be found to the substantive problems of Antarctica, answers which must be jointly drawn up by all the members of the United Nations and thus have the backing of the international community as a whole. My delegation believes that that reasonable approach is the only one that can effectively advance the cause of science and human progress, avoid confrontation and turn to good account the common heritage of mankind.

For that purpose, it is essential to define and create the appropriate framework for a constructive dialogue, free of mistrust and oriented towards the future, a dialogue that will strengthen relations between the States parties to the Antarctic Treaty and the other members of the international community, between the Treaty system itself and the United Nations.

Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand): Once again, for the third successive year, the First Committee has been entrusted with the responsibility of considering the agenda item entitled "Question of Antarctica". This clearly demonstrates the increased awareness of, and attention given to, this issue by the United Nations. Although the region is still perceived as remote and inaccessible, particularly at certain times of the year, advances in modern technology and communications are gradually increasing access to the vast continent. Moreover, there is general agreement that peaceful conditions and use must prevail, and that conflicts should be avoided in all matters pertaining to the development of its natural resources and the maintenance of its ecosystem. It is therefore a matter of general concern that the discovery of potential wealth of mineral resources beneath the snow and ice, and any rush to exploit the rich marine and other natural resources in the waters and the vast land mass of Antarctica, as well as other uses
of the region, could result in discord and conflict in the years to come. The Thai
dlegation is grateful, therefore, that the United Nations has begun to involve
itself in this issue of world-wide concern, with a view to preventing future
problems that may affect international security and co-operation.

The importance of Antarctica in the fields of science, the environment,
meteorology and telecommunications has already been much discussed, and need not be
repeated. My delegation wishes to stress only that the region should be designated
a common heritage of mankind and that its exploration and exploitation should be
carried out for the benefit of the human race in a manner consistent with the need
to protect its environment. It should also remain a frontier accessible to all
nations and a place where international co-operation is not only desirable, but
also vital. Nor should it become an area of contention or discord. And, above
all, it must not be used for military purposes, and whatever undertakings are
carried out there must be in peaceful and constructive pursuit of common benefits.
In this regard, Thailand shares the views expressed by most of the developing
countries that the régime administrating the waters and continent of Antarctica
should be truly universal in character and totally committed to the goals I have
mentioned.

At the same time, I wish to point out that my country's position on this issue
should in no way be misconstrued as an indication that Thailand wishes to undermine
the existing Antarctic Treaty system, which has governed and regulated activities
in various fields in the region since 1959. We take note of its many praiseworthy
elements, particularly the prohibition of any military activities and nuclear
tests, as well as the ban on radioactive waste disposal in Antarctica. The Treaty
system also regulates scientific and environmental research. Yet the system lacks
wide participation, due to its origin and scope, as well as certain rules of the
club, which tend to inhibit universality.
Moreover, it is generally recognized that the Treaty system was designed to enable it to coexist with the various national claims. It has been able to do so because of its general recognition of the larger interest shared by the individual claimants and other Treaty parties. It should therefore be possible, as well as desirable, in the common interest, to envisage a United Nations system that can also live with the Antarctic Treaty system.

Last year, a comprehensive factual and objective study on Antarctica (A/39/583), prepared by the Secretariat, was submitted to the General Assembly and was adopted without a vote, in resolution 39/152, of 17 December 1984, which took note of the report and expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for it. Such an informative and objective study has not only enhanced interest in Antarctica among Member States but has also assisted us in following developments in and concerning that region. In view of the study's value and usefulness, my delegation believes that its expansion and updating would benefit the international community in general and assist in the consideration of this issue in particular. It is therefore the hope of my delegation that the proposal will receive the support it deserves.

Mr. SIPOS (Hungary): My delegation wishes today to define its position on agenda item 70, "Question of Antarctica". This is my delegation's first statement here on the question, because Hungary became a Party to the Antarctic Treaty only last year.

We note with satisfaction that since our accession Sweden, Finland and Cuba have also become Parties, and that two of the formerly non-consultative parties, the People's Republic of China and Uruguay, became the seventeenth and eighteenth Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty in October.
In its resolution 38/77 the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive, factual and objective study on all aspects of Antarctica. As the study (A/39/583) was completed at the last minute, it was impossible to examine its contents thoroughly in the First Committee last year. It contains a valuable summary of available information relating to Antarctica and the Antarctic Treaty system. Constructive interaction already exists between the Antarctic Treaty system and the United Nations system. There are practical links with a number of United Nations specialized agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as other international bodies outside the United Nations system.

During the general debate at the fortieth session of the General Assembly, representatives of 11 nations mentioned Antarctica in their statements. Many speakers stressed the importance of the Antarctic Treaty's peace-keeping and denuclearization roles, several of them noting the recent South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zone agreement, which has created an adjoining nuclear-weapon-free area, and which my delegation welcomed in the Committee earlier.

In the view of my Government, the Antarctic Treaty system represents another practical step in the realization of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

My Government attaches great importance to international co-operation as practised in Antarctica, in accordance with the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV)), of 24 October 1970, under which the States should - regardless of differences in their political, economic and social systems - co-operate and maintain relations of friendship with one another. Since the conclusion of the
Antarctic Treaty, countries with different social systems have united their efforts to make Antarctica a continent of peace and international co-operation and to safeguard it reliably from any military preparations, such as the testing of weapons and nuclear explosions, and from disposal of radioactive waste materials.

Joint actions in solving the mysteries of the sixth continent - which covers one tenth of the world's surface - enrich humanity with valuable information about the phenomena and processes occurring there and serve the interests of all States and peoples. My delegation is of the view that under international law Antarctica is res communis omnium usus. This is expressed by article XIII, which leaves the Treaty open for accession by all States, thus enabling them to participate in activities carried out in Antarctica for peaceful purposes and to join in scientific research there.

The Antarctic Treaty gives expression to the principle of coexistence as an underlying generic principle of modern international law, which includes the principles of sovereign equality and co-operation of States, the non-use of force and fulfilment in good faith of international obligations, as is implied in article X, which serves as a guarantee that the régime established with respect to Antarctica will be lasting. Therefore, my delegation is interested in the unchanged maintenance of the régime established by the Treaty as it operates in respect of Antarctica.

Last year we reached consensus in the Committee on a draft resolution on Antarctica which became General Assembly resolution 39/152. My delegation strongly believes in the importance of maintaining a consensus approach to any discussion of Antarctica in the United Nations this year, and will do its utmost to achieve that goal in the Committee this year.
Mr. TORNUNN (Finland): In view of developments during recent years concerning the Antarctic Treaty, my delegation warmly welcomes the opportunity to continue the discussion of this subject in the General Assembly. The debates in 1983 and 1984 have already clearly contributed to a wider and deeper understanding of the Antarctic Treaty system. Previously, little was known by outside States, including the non-consultative parties to the Treaty, of the achievements under the Treaty system and the intricate questions involved. Even today there are only 32 contracting parties to the Treaty, and only 18 of them have acquired the status of consultative parties, which includes decision-making power.

The excellent study on the question of Antarctica prepared by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 38/77 was presented to the thirty-ninth session of the Assembly only shortly before the matter came up for discussion. Consequently, my delegation, like many others, did not have enough time then to acquaint itself thoroughly with this impressive report which contains several hundred pages of useful information. We therefore wish to take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General and his staff, particularly those in the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs and in the Office of Legal Affairs, on their work.

Part I of the study contains an analysis and in-depth description of all the various physical, legal, political, economic and social aspects involved. These complex issues are presented accurately, thoroughly and — what is important — objectively. The Secretary-General's study in part I of the report constitutes probably the most comprehensive presentation of the Antarctic question available today.

Part II of the report contains the views of 54 Governments on the issue. The views submitted by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties contain very open and
detailed information on their activities in Antarctica, both from a historical point of view and with regard to their future activities. This information is very useful in understanding how the Treaty régime works in practice.

In this report the Secretary-General has provided a key to the secrets so far surrounding not only Antarctica, but also the activities of the Consultative Parties. He has provided an analytical and descriptive instrument to enable every Member of the United Nations to understand the complex questions involved in this issue and the need to tread carefully in order not to cause the existing Treaty régime to fall apart.

Considering all the complexities involved, the Treaty has worked remarkably well. It has proved to be a successful instrument of international co-operation and adaptable to new changes. Thus, we do not today speak about the Antarctic Treaty only, but of the Antarctic Treaty system, referring to a whole series of international conventions, agreements and regulations which the Consultative Parties have adopted and committed themselves to comply with. It has been said that the Antarctic Treaty is one of the most successful existing instruments for the resolution of conflicts, and my delegation fully agrees.

In statements made during previous sessions the delegation of Finland has already underlined the importance of the Treaty in creating a large demilitarized area and a nuclear-weapon-free zone, providing a moratorium on territorial claims, and preserving the living and other natural resources of Antarctica. Our interest in contributing to research activities in the Antarctic is also on the record.
Since acceding to the Treaty in 1984 we have surveyed the interest of our scientific community, as well as our industry, with a view to possibly undertaking active research in Antarctica. The response has been very positive, and it seems that the scientific interest covers a wide spectrum, including disciplines such as geomorphology, geology, ionospheric and magnetospheric studies, glaciogeology, permafrost, sedimentology, marine biology, sea ice, meteorology, medicine, biology and offshore activity, as well as transport and research vessels. It may be that in a few years' time this interest will result in a scientific expedition to the Antarctic, possibly in co-operation with other Nordic countries.

Thanks to the renewed interest in Antarctica, the Consultative Parties decided in 1983 to invite non-consultative parties to attend consultative meetings as observers. Further, the Consultative Parties decided to invite the non-consultative parties to attend, as observers, meetings on an Antarctic mineral resources régime. Finland has this year participated for the first time both in a meeting of the Consultative Parties and in meetings on mineral resources. We were pleased to note that the working conditions for observers were very good. The observers had full access to all deliberations - formal as well as informal - and they were thus able to play an active role in the meetings.

We are very pleased to note that all the Consultative Parties give paramount significance to environmental protection issues.

Although Antarctica is of interest to the world community, for a great variety of scientific, geographic, climatic, environmental and political reasons, it is mainly the prospect of the potential commercial exploitation of Antarctica's possibly vast mineral resources that has aroused widespread concern. Before continuing I therefore wish to note one important observation in the Secretary-General's report. According to information presently available, the
prospects of finding any mineral deposit which would be economically worth developing are extremely remote. In any case, no exploitation of a mineral resource on the continental shelf or on the continent itself is foreseen for several decades.

Through our participation in the meetings on an Antarctic mineral resources régime we now have a better understanding of the questions involved. The question of protection and conservation of the Antarctic environment is of paramount importance in this respect. It is therefore also important to ensure that interests representing environmental and scientific knowledge in the world community are taken into account in any decision-making.

Finland believes that it is necessary that the future mineral resources régime be recognized as just and equitable by the world community at large. It should therefore be possible also to accommodate within the régime the legitimate concerns expressed by those that do not conduct substantial scientific research activities in Antarctica.

Any agreement with regard to Antarctica must further take the legal and political realities in Antarctica into consideration. Any other course would jeopardize the whole fragile Antarctic Treaty system and give rise to new tensions and rivalries.

My delegation believes that the best way for States at present outside the Antarctic Treaty régime to influence the outcome of the work on a mineral resources régime for the Antarctic is to accede to the Treaty, which is open to all United Nations Member States without cost. In this way it will be possible to participate in the work - formally as an observer, but in practice with a real possibility of influencing the final outcome.
It is important not to upset the present Antarctic Treaty system, which has worked so successfully since its inception. New challenges have been met before, and we are convinced that in due time constructive solutions will also be found with regard to the mineral resources régime. We must continue to keep the Antarctic continent outside international strife and discord.

Mr. SUZUKI (Japan): As this is my first statement in the Committee, Sir, may I say first how happy I am to see you in the Chair, guiding us in our debate on the question of Antarctica.

During the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly the Secretary-General submitted a report (A/39/583) containing the study on the question of Antarctica which had been prepared pursuant to the General Assembly's request in resolution 38/77. My Government has studied the report carefully and commends it highly for its comprehensive treatment of the questions concerned.

The basic views of my Government on the question of Antarctica are clearly set out in part II of the Secretary-General's report. However, I wish to take this opportunity to stress the following points in connection with the present debate on the question.

Twenty-five years have passed since the Antarctic Treaty came into force. The Treaty constitutes an unprecedented example of successful international co-operation, in that it has effectively frozen the status quo regarding the question of sovereignty, reserved the continent for peaceful uses, and secured the freedom of scientific research and the system of collaboration among States. It is an undisputable fact that the Treaty has contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security and has benefited all mankind. Without the Treaty, it is easily conceivable that various problems would arise, particularly regarding territorial claims in the Antarctic region. Furthermore, the freedom of
scientific research would be hampered, and the environment would be threatened or destroyed.

The truly significant contributions made in many respects by the Antarctic Treaty are, in our view, amply proved in the Secretary-General's study. My delegation is convinced that the international community should not fail to recognize the Treaty's achievements, and work to strengthen the Treaty system, which reserves the continent exclusively for peaceful purposes.
Secondly, my delegation emphasizes that, contrary to the repeated allegation that it is too "closed", the Treaty system is characterized by its very openness. As stipulated in article XIII, the Antarctic Treaty is open to all Member States of the United Nations, and consultative status is also open to all States parties which are engaged in substantive scientific research activities in the Antarctic region. Moreover, non-consultative parties have been invited to meetings of the Consultative Parties since 1983. Its openness was further strengthened recently by invitations extended to the non-consultative parties to attend consultations on the minerals régime as well.

Another aspect of its open nature which we regard as particularly significant is the inspection conducted pursuant to article VII of the Treaty. That article provides that all areas of Antarctica, including all stations, installations and equipment, and all ships and aircraft at points of discharging or embarking cargoes or personnel in Antarctica, shall be open at all times to inspection by any duly appointed observers from other parties. Furthermore, a large amount of published material is also available regarding meetings of the parties, their decisions and recommendations, as well as various activities conducted in Antarctica. Important examples in this respect are the Antarctic Treaty handbook, describing the Treaty system in detail, and the reports of Consultative Party meetings.

Lastly, I wish to comment briefly on the argument advanced by some delegations against the participation of South Africa in the Antarctic Treaty system. The position of my Government against apartheid is well known. It has been unequivocally stated in various forums of the United Nations. However, since the Antarctic Treaty does not envisage the possibility that a party may be deprived of its status as a party on account of a particular policy of that party, my delegation does not consider it appropriate for the General Assembly to make a request to that effect.
My delegation sincerely hopes that this debate will lead to a deeper understanding of the Antarctic Treaty system and that the system will be further strengthened through the participation of more States as parties to the Treaty.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind members that, in accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, the Committee will begin its general debate, consideration of and action on draft resolutions under agenda items 71, 72 and 73, related to international security, on Monday, 2 December. In order to make full use of the time allotted for the consideration of those agenda items, I opened the list of speakers today, and I urge representatives to put their names on the list as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.