

Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea

1973-1982

Concluded at Montego Bay, Jamaica on 10 December 1982

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Summary Records of Plenary Meetings

3rd plenary meeting

Extract from the Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Volume I (Summary Records of Plenary Meetings of the First and Second Sessions, and of Meetings of the General Committee, Second Session)

3rd meeting

Monday, 10 December 1973, at 4 p.m.

President: Mr. H. S. AMERASINGHE (Sri Lanka).

Results of informal consultations

1. The PRESIDENT said that he had held further informal consultations with the chairmen of the regional groups and the representative of the United States concerning the number and distribution of seats in the General Committee, the three Main Committees and the Drafting Committee. It had been agreed that the General Committee would consist of 48 seats distributed as follows: African group—12; Asian group—12; Latin American group—9; Western European group—9; Eastern European group—6. The seats would be filled by the President, 31 Vice-Presidents, 15 members drawn from the officers of the three Main Committees, and the Rapporteur-General. Each Main Committee would have a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, each officer being drawn from a different regional group. The 31 posts of Vice-President of the General Committee would be distributed as follows: African group—9; Asian group—8; Latin American group—5; Western European group—6; Eastern European group—3. The post of Rapporteur-General would be allocated to the Latin American group. The Drafting Committee would have 23 seats distributed as follows: African group—6; Asian group—6; Latin American group—4; Western European group—5; Eastern European group—2.
2. The African, Asian, Latin American and Eastern European groups understood that any United States candidature

would be accommodated in the allocations to the Western European group. The Chairman of the Drafting Committee would have the right to participate in the meetings of the General Committee without the right to vote and the Rapporteur-General would have the right to participate in meetings of the Drafting Committee without the right to vote.

3. It had further been decided that the elections, which would take place at the next meeting, should be by acclamation, unless there were more candidates than seats.

4. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Conference adopted the arrangements he had set out.

It was so decided.

5. The PRESIDENT said that agreement had been reached only with great difficulty and had been made possible by the spirit of co-operation and understanding shown by all concerned. He hoped that the Conference would be able to conclude the elections very quickly. Much work remained to be done on the rules of procedure and it must be clearly understood that organizational matters, which were the business of the present session, could not be deferred until the Caracas session. Thus, the Conference must complete its work by Friday, 14 December. He appealed to the Conference to be ready to begin consideration of the draft rules of procedure at the next meeting, after the elections had been held.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.

4th meeting

Tuesday, 11 December 1973, at 12.15 p.m.

President: Mr. H. S. AMERASINGHE (Sri Lanka).

Results of informal consultations

1. The PRESIDENT noted that the next item on the agenda was the adoption of the rules of procedure and recalled the decision taken at the 2nd meeting, at his suggestion, that the Conference should be guided by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in so far as they were applicable, until it had adopted its own rules of procedure. Before discussing the rules of procedure, he suggested that the Conference should elect the officers of its Main Committees and the Drafting Committee so that those bodies could begin their work. He informed the Conference that certain regional groups had not yet reached agreement on the candidates they wished to put forward and had asked for further time to consider the matter.
2. Mr. LING Ching (China) formally proposed that before the Conference proceeded to elect the remaining officers it should take a decision on the principle of one State, one seat, concerning which divergent views had been expressed. The Asian, African and Latin American groups had indicated their support for that principle, a position which his delegation endorsed in view of its long-standing conviction that all countries, large or small, should have equal rights and that no country, however powerful, should enjoy a privileged position at an international conference. It should be noted that only the two super-Powers were asking for more than one seat. That was an unfair and unreasonable manifestation of super-Power hegemony, which his delegation firmly opposed.

3. The PRESIDENT said that no agreement had been reached in the informal consultations regarding the principle of one State, one seat, and he had not expected the matter to be raised at a plenary meeting. He pointed out that it was not correct to say that only two States were seeking election to more than one seat. In his informal consultations with the chairmen of the regional groups, it had been agreed that no group should seek to dictate to others what candidates might be put forward.

4. Mr. WARIOBA (United Republic of Tanzania) proposed that, if the matter of elections could not be settled in informal consultations before the next meeting, the Conference should proceed to the next item, namely, adoption of the rules of procedure. It would be most unfortunate if, for lack of time, the Conference could not reach agreement at the present session on its agenda, thus detracting from the time available for the discussion of substantive matters at the second session.

5. Mr. KOLESNIK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that from the outset his delegation had supported the view that each regional group should itself decide which candidates it wished to put forward for key seats in the organs of the Conference. The so-called one State-one seat principle had nothing to do with what one representative had just said about the possibility of certain States achieving hegemony. The assertions of that representative should be categorically rejected. The Charter clearly stipulated that the five permanent members