

Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea

1973-1982

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Summary Records of Plenary Meetings 44th plenary meeting

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States, and Mr. ABDEL HAMID (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab States, made brief statements endorsing the draft resolution.

15. The PRESIDENT said that he would take it that the Conference adopted the draft resolution and the programme by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Statement by the Representative of the
Palestine Liberation Organization

16. Mr. AL-AMERICANY AMERCANI (Palestine Liberation Organization) complimented the Conference on its decision to invite the representatives of the national liberation movements to participate in the Conference as observers. He noted that the Palestine Liberation Organization had been specified by name. By taking that decision the Conference was responding to the imperatives of history which proved that true democracy, freedom and revolution were always victorious in the end, although the oppressors and reactionaries could not grasp that fact. History would testify that those who had supported the participation of the national liberation movements had contributed to the acceleration of the historical process by allowing the peoples struggling for their freedom to become masters of their own destiny and defend their national interests at international conferences.

17. He did not wish to reply to the attack made against his Organization by the representative of world Zionism but he would refer that representative to the decision of the Conference that it was master of its own procedures and entitled to invite the liberation movements to take part in its deliberations. The Palestine Liberation Organization had come to the Conference not to discuss the problem of Palestine but to participate constructively in the work of the Conference and co-operate fully with its members.

18. The fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization was speaking in the Conference proved that the people of Palestine was strong and alive. In the past its enemies had claimed that time alone would bring an end to the problem of Palestine, and when that theory had proved untrue they had resorted to a war of genocide. For its part, the Palestine Liberation Organization wished to establish a democratic Palestinian State in which there was no discrimination among Jews, Christians and Moslems, a State based on full equality of rights and obligations, regardless of race, colour or religion.

19. The Palestine Liberation Organization believed that the struggle for liberation would change the *status quo*, which was based on injustice, and create conditions of peace based on equity and justice. It must not be forgotten that the struggle for freedom had always grown out of oppression and injustice.

20. The Palestine Liberation Organization hoped that the Conference would be successful and it pledged to work for that end, in the light of the national interests of the Palestinian people with regard to their land, air and sea.

21. The PRESIDENT welcomed the assurance that the Palestine Liberation Organization would co-operate constructively in the Conference and limit its contribution to matters germane to the Conference's work.

Additions to the list of non-governmental organizations
(A/CONF.62/L.2/Add.1)

22. The PRESIDENT said that if there was no objection, he would take it that the Conference wished to include the International Conference of Catholic Charities and the National Shippers' Councils of Europe in the list presented for its approval (A/CONF.62/L.2).

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

44th meeting

Wednesday, 24 July 1974, at 10.15 a.m.

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

Tribute to Simón Bolívar the Liberator (*concluded*)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the special plenary meeting of the Conference was being held as an act of homage to the memory of Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, on the 191st anniversary of his birth. Men of that fibre belonged not to one people or one continent but wherever human dignity and freedom were respected as the essence of the human condition. Bolívar had been born during an age of revolutionary ferment, which had witnessed two events that had had a dramatic effect on world history, the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution. The finest elements in the human spirit and character often emerged during the most tempestuous periods of history. Although born into conditions of affluence, Simón Bolívar had at a very early age renounced those privileges and had waged a bold struggle to win independence for his homeland and other fellow Latin Americans from a powerful and tenacious foreign ruler. In his own words, he had fought for liberty and everything that was great and beautiful. In 15 years he had won freedom for five Latin American countries and, throughout all the vicissitudes that had barred his way to final triumph, had displayed indomitable perseverance and invincible courage born of faith in his mission and of the genuine conviction that all men were entitled to be free. He was the stuff of which great leaders and liberators were made: undaunted by defeat, a stranger to fear and fatigue, animated by

an indestructible faith in the justice of his cause and sustained throughout by unswerving devotion to his people. Such men served as an example and inspiration wherever freedom and liberty were cherished.

2. Mr. DE ALWIS (Sri Lanka), speaking on behalf of the Asian group of countries, said that history recorded the names of many conquerors and colonialists but rarely those of a single individual who had been chosen by the free will of the people. President of five countries, with one of them named after him, Simón Bolívar had told the newly formed Congress, when requested to be head of State, that Venezuela must be ruled by laws made by representatives of all the people, not by a dictator, and had considered it a greater honour to be a liberator than to be king of all the nations of the world. History recorded instances of pioneers of freedom and freedom fighters in individual States, but rarely had one single individual fought for the freedom of a continent and changed the course of history.

3. All States members of the Conference joined with the people of Latin America and Venezuela to pay homage to their noblest son, as an expression of the gratitude of freedom-loving peoples.

4. Simón Bolívar and what he epitomized struck a familiar chord for Asian countries whose freedom and civilization, dating back many thousands of years, had been interrupted by periods of colonial domination and which, although they had

regained political freedom, were still battling for economic freedom.

5. It was appropriate that the Conference should join in paying a tribute to the great Liberator because its aim was to ensure that the riches of the sea could be used to free the peoples of the world from poverty and want, so that political freedom could be made a living reality.

6. National and personal self-interest were, within limits, understandable, but at times must give way to the demands of social justice. In the name of that great Liberator, Simón Bolívar, he appealed to delegations to subject national interests to a spirit of compromise, motivated by the interests of mankind as a whole.

7. Mr. GOERNER (German Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Eastern European group of countries, assured the Conference's hosts, the Venezuelan Government and people, of those countries' gratitude for the opportunity to express the high appreciation Simón Bolívar and his deeds enjoyed in the socialist countries. Simón Bolívar had dedicated his life to the struggle for independence of the Latin American peoples, striving for a society which would result in the largest possible amount of happiness, social security and political stability. His social programme had included fundamental changes which he knew could not be brought about immediately but he had been well aware that the consequences of the movement inspired and led by him would reach far into the future. Among his historic merits were his early endeavours for the international organization of peoples, for instance, the convocation of the Congress of Panama. It was therefore not surprising that he was honoured not only in Latin America but in the socialist States and throughout the world.

8. The peoples of Latin America were paying their tribute to Simón Bolívar by strengthening their political and economic independence and participating actively in the universal struggle for the consolidation of world peace and détente in international relations and their success in that struggle was a source of satisfaction to progressive people all over the world.

9. Mr. MANNER (Finland), speaking on behalf of the West European and other States, said that the statements made during the general debate had shown the great admiration of speakers from the whole world for Simón Bolívar, who had led the fight for the independence of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Many heroes were of an essentially national character, but occasionally history had known individuals whose significance to mankind as a whole had proved to be so outstanding that they had in fact become the common heritage of mankind. Simón Bolívar was still universally known as a symbol of independence for all nations, of the conviction that freedom and self-determination were the prerequisites for all people to reach the highest values of human life. He had been one of the first champions of the third world, a statesman the results of whose aims and ideals were to be seen, *inter alia*, in the high number of independent States represented at the Conference.

10. Mr. ABDEL HAMID (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab countries, said that every participant in the Conference was privileged to be present in Caracas upon the historic occasion of Simón Bolívar's birthday. The Liberator belonged to the entire world and was a spiritual leader for all free peoples and for those yearning for liberation.

11. Simón Bolívar had been a visionary, soldier, statesman, political prophet and internationalist. His vision had enabled him to see the potential of America and he more than anyone else had been responsible for keeping alive the idea of independence in the face of overwhelming odds. His faith in his ideal and in himself had given him the courage to face adversity as few men in history had faced it and from each reversal he had emerged stronger than before.

12. Internationalists throughout the world claimed Simón Bolívar as one of their heroes. To many he was the spiritual

father of Pan-Americanism, and an early prophet of the League of Nations and the United Nations. His thinking had caused him to convene the Congress of Panama in 1826, which had been a success in a number of respects. It had established that there was an underlying need for continental unity in peace-time as well as in armed struggle; had provided the first opportunity for a number of new nations to express opinions on matters of common concern and it had been the first of a series of congresses out of which had emerged the Organization of American States, the Central American Common Market and the Latin American Free Trade Association.

13. Many of the lofty principles that Simón Bolívar had stood for and even given his life for were embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the constitutions of other international organizations, and were the basis of the whole process of decolonization and rejection of foreign occupation which had taken place since the establishment of the United Nations.

14. For Latin Americans, Simón Bolívar was no vague historical character but a living entity, an omniscient being who guided their destinies, and for millions of other people in Africa and Asia, his achievements, based on concepts of liberty and justice, were a constant source of inspiration in the pursuit of their struggle aimed at the same noble objectives.

15. For the peoples of the Arab world, many of which had been subjected to colonial domination over the years, while others were still struggling against foreign occupation or seeking to achieve respect for their legitimate rights, Simón Bolívar's lofty principles were of particular significance. History could testify that freedom was indivisible. It could not be achieved for some nations and denied to others. Simón Bolívar had believed in freedom in its true meaning and had wanted it for the peoples of the whole world.

16. Mr. ABAD SANTOS (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed their pride in paying homage to the great Liberator. With the exception of Thailand, the members of ASEAN had emerged from colonial domination after the Second World War, but all shared the heritage of freedom personified in South America by Simón Bolívar. They hoped that the freedom which pervaded Latin America would continue to flourish and inspire other peoples still struggling for emancipation and, above all, that the libertarian spirit would permeate the deliberations of the Conference and unify its efforts to establish a new world order for the oceans where all nations would enjoy freedom, justice and equality for the benefit of all peoples.

17. Mr. JEANNEL (France) said that France, the country of liberty, could obviously not remain silent on the birthday of a man who had devoted his life to gaining freedom and justice for his fellow citizens. He was, however, speaking not only on behalf of his own country but of the nine members of the European Economic Community, which pursued and defended those ideals to which Simón Bolívar had devoted his life. It was fitting that the Conference should honour his memory at a special meeting.

18. Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal), speaking on behalf of the group of African States, welcomed the opportunity to participate in the ceremony to honour the memory of Simón Bolívar, a shining example who had inspired the people of the third world and the liberation movements, and a man whose name was indelibly engraved in the minds and hearts of those who upheld the cause of peace and freedom.

19. Mr. BÁKULA (Peru) expressed the admiration of the Latin American countries, and in particular those five States liberated by Simón Bolívar, for the great thinker, politician and soldier, the anniversary of whose birthday it was. The battles of Junín and Ayacucho, the 150th anniversaries of which were being celebrated in 1974 and the convening of the Congress of Panama had marked the zenith of his political achievement and had paved the way for his influence in Latin

America and throughout the world. The battle of Junín was of decisive importance for the future campaign. It was the first great patriotic victory in which the troops of José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar had fought together. These men from all parts of Latin America had been supported by citizens of other countries, faithful to the cause of freedom for which many of their countrymen had died. The battle of Ayacucho had even more reason to be called "the battle of the nations" and had ensured political independence and the end of the colonial era.

20. No liberation movement supported by the people could fail, but the ability to organize, direct and inspire was necessary to ensure its triumph. Bolívar had used those gifts in the campaign for freedom but could not have achieved success without the support of thousands of ordinary people from the countryside and the towns.

21. Bolívar had shown his inspired imagination and political vision in his organization of the peace. Even before he had known that colonial domination had ended, he had been planning a congress of neighbouring States, the seeds of which had been sown in the *Cartas de Jamaica* and developed in the document countersigned by the Peruvian Chancellor in December 1924 which had reconciled Utopia and reality.

22. Although the heroes of American independence had not been able to complete their work, their influence had lasted to the present day. The revolutionary Government of Peru was continuing the work of Bolívar and his precursor Tupac Amaru by abolishing structures which threatened the sovereignty and dignity of the people and was promoting a new, just society at home and eliminating any links with domination and dependence abroad. The aim of the Peruvian people was to attain that liberty for which Bolívar had given his life, to achieve the unity of peoples fighting to that end, to contribute to an international organization which guaranteed peace and justice for all and, when the process of integration enabled them to bring about the objective set forth in the convocation to the Congress of Panama, namely to obtain the system of safeguards which, in peace and in war, would be the shield of their new destiny, to make the whole of America and each of its inhabitants a monument to his memory.

23. In Peru, Bolívar had heard what was perhaps the most prophetic of all words of praise, at the foot of the walls of an Inca fortress, when a descendant of the ancient Kings of Tahuantinsuyo had told him that he had achieved what no man before him had achieved and that his glory would grow with the centuries. The truth of those words was proved by the homage rendered to the Liberator by all nations of the earth, gathered together at Caracas to discuss a new order for the ocean space.

24. Mr. DE ABAROA Y GOÑI (Spain) said that his delegation felt special satisfaction in joining in sponsoring the draft resolution in tribute to Simón Bolívar, who had devoted his life to the emancipation of the Latin American nations. Their independence had not broken their unity of interests; rather, that unity had to seek new channels. The current Conference was a manifestation of Bolívar's ideal of universal co-operation in the cause of peace, security and economic and social development.

25. Mr. STEVENSON (United States of America) said it was particularly appropriate that, in the very birthplace of Simón Bolívar, the representatives of States should be meeting with a view to ensuring the reign of peace and justice over the oceans of the world. The work of the Conference would be in harmony with the noble ideals to which Simón Bolívar had devoted his life.

26. In the United States, the large number of monuments to the memory of the Liberator showed the admiration felt for a man whose influence had benefited all nations. His delegation was therefore very proud to pay a tribute to the memory of a great leader who had fought for justice and freedom under the

law. He felt it would be a fitting tribute if Conference delegates could extend Bolívar's vision of justice, freedom and law to the world seas.

27. Mr. DORON (Israel) welcomed the opportunity to recall the work and thought of Simón Bolívar, an undisputed champion of the principles of law and justice whose genius transcended continents, seas and the barriers of time. Despite the great distance that separated them, Israel felt spiritual kinship with the nations that he had founded.

28. The foremost desire of the nations gathered to pay homage to Simón Bolívar was to see the fulfilment of the ideals to which he had dedicated his life—the ideals of a man who, by birth, was an illustrious son of Venezuela, whose fight for liberation had made him an illustrious son of America, and whose defence of the ideals of peace, harmony and freedom had also made him an illustrious son of the whole world.

29. Mr. SAULESCU (Romania) said he took great pleasure in supporting the initiative of the Latin American delegations in commemorating the birth of Simón Bolívar, who had devoted his entire energies to the cause of revolution and independence and to co-operation among States. His perseverance and his profound love of freedom and justice provided a constant source of inspiration.

30. Through the efforts of the people of Venezuela and the other Latin American countries, the ideals upheld by Simón Bolívar had not foundered. The Government and people of Venezuela should be congratulated on their success in achieving the ideals of progress and peace to which he and the other heroes of Venezuela had dedicated their lives.

31. Mr. LILIC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation welcomed the opportunity to pay a tribute to Simón Bolívar, the great humanist and fighter for independence. It was symbolic that the Conference should be held in the birthplace of a man whose ideals had inspired the countries of Latin America to free themselves from the colonialist yoke, just as they continued to inspire the peoples still struggling against oppression.

32. While the Conference was working in the cause of progress, peace and a fair distribution of the riches of the seas, it was fitting to bear in mind the principles of peace, justice and sovereign equality for which Bolívar had stood.

33. Mr. BONILLA ABAR (Dominican Republic) said that the genius and influence of Simón Bolívar remained a powerful incentive. His ideals had formed the basis for the inter-American system for the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of States. The lack of an effective world legal order was due to the failure to apply, on a world scale, the principles that Simón Bolívar had advocated.

34. Mr. KAKODKAR (India) welcomed the opportunity to pay a tribute to Simón Bolívar, the great leader whose ideas of national sovereignty, self-determination, co-operation and solidarity among nations had been the precursors of present-day internationalism and the welfare of mankind. His principles and ideals of continental freedom, international political organization, brotherhood among peoples and the peaceful settlement of disputes within the context of the commonwealth of nations found their expression in the objectives sought by the current Conference. There could be no worthier tribute than that paid by the greatest gathering of countries in the history of the United Nations to Simón Bolívar, the illustrious emancipator of peoples and creator of nations.

35. Mr. KOLOSOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that today his delegation shared the thoughts of Venezuela and Latin America in whose war of independence there had been many admirable personalities whose memory still survived. In the constellation of heroes, the star of Simón Bolívar shone with particular brilliance. The Soviet people, together with all the Latin American countries, honoured the name of the Liberator. The sympathy of the Soviet people with all those struggling for freedom and independence was well

known. Simón Bolívar had dedicated his entire life to that struggle and it was to him that a special tribute had been paid by another leader of the Latin American liberation movement, the national hero of the Cuban people, José Martí.

36. The revolutionary movement of the peoples of Latin America during the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century had been warmly welcomed by progressive people in every country, including Russia. While there could not have been direct contacts between Russia and the republics of the new world at that time, a notable manifestation of the links between Russia and Latin America had been the visit to Russia by another great son of Venezuela, Francisco de Miranda. The great October Socialist revolution had opened wide perspectives for the development of cultural links and co-operation between the Soviet Union and the Latin American countries and Soviet public opinion constantly demonstrated great interest in the history and current affairs of the Latin American countries. It was sufficient to state that books by Latin American authors published in the Soviet Union during the years of Soviet power exceeded 20 million copies.

37. In commemorating Simón Bolívar's birth, the Conference was once again underscoring the universal nature and meaning of the life and work of the Liberator, an ardent patriot, a great military leader and an outstanding statesman who had totally dedicated his life to the cause of the struggle for the freedom of Venezuela and other Latin American countries. He had stated that his only love had been that of country, his only ambition its freedom and that he would not rest until that freedom had been completely ensured, and he had honoured that pledge.

38. Bolívar had demonstrated his extraordinary statesmanship by expressing himself in favour of the close union of the Latin American peoples in order to strengthen their political and economic independence. As a great military leader, he had gained a series of brilliant victories and his final goal had been the re-establishment of peace and the prosperity of the free peoples of Latin America. It was particularly fitting that the anniversary of his birth should be commemorated in his native country and dearly loved city.

39. He wished to express the respect and sympathy of the peoples of the Soviet Union towards the Venezuelan people which linked them in friendship and co-operation.

40. Mr. THOMPSON (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean countries of the Latin American region, said that he wished to pay a special tribute to Simón Bolívar, who, though he had suffered illnesses and military set-backs, had always resumed the fight for freedom. He was a giant of history whose ideals should be taught to the children of today so that they would understand that, were he alive, there would be less isolationism and more individual freedom.

41. Simón Bolívar had found solace in Jamaica and while there had written his famous *Cartas de Jamaica*. The Liberator had also been welcomed in Haiti and other countries and had thus sown the seed of freedom throughout the area. The people of the Caribbean countries were therefore greatly honoured to pay a tribute to that great man.

42. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that for the people of his country, the present meeting was a solemn occasion of great significance. Simón Bolívar had stood for the same cause as the people of Bangladesh to whom his life and work had a special appeal since they were inspired by his ideals of human dignity. Bolívar's credo had been the total respect for all human rights and neither comfort nor honour nor pleasures had kept him from fighting for freedom. He belonged to all countries and his work transcended all boundaries and languages since he had spoken for all oppressed peoples who had fought against tyranny. For him, the inalienable human rights were the cherished goals of all mankind. The meeting was a fitting tribute to a fearless and determined person who knew that truth and justice would ultimately triumph.

43. Mr. EHRMAN (Panama) said that the day was one on which the heroic Republic of Venezuela commemorated the birth of its worthiest son. It was in Panama that Simón Bolívar had brought together the plenipotentiaries of free America and it was on Panama's soil that the two great oceans had been linked. The people of Panama revered Simón Bolívar and hoped that their land would achieve the fulfilment of his promise.

44. Mr. SCHACHT ARISTEGUIETA (Venezuela), on behalf of the people and Government of Venezuela, thanked the President for his generous words. He also thanked the regional groups and those countries that had spoken spontaneously in paying a tribute to the father of his country. There were no words to express his delegation's sincere acknowledgement of the public tribute of admiration and respect paid by nearly all the nations of the world to Venezuela's greatest hero, Simón Bolívar. He thanked the Conference which, on the initiative of the representative of El Salvador and the Latin American countries, had unanimously agreed to hold a commemorative meeting on the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of the Liberator, a visionary precursor of the international organization, whose historical figure was universal in nature and whose work, based on the concepts of respect and justice for the progress of peoples, had left an indelible mark on history and was a source of constant inspiration.

45. For Venezuela, Simón Bolívar held a high place of honour among the immortals of the world. His dimensions as a citizen, statesman, thinker, humanist and, later military man, extended beyond the geographical confines of Venezuela and had made him a universal and legendary figure. Despite his brief life, he had left behind him important achievements of universal interest promoting the highest principles of freedom in law and justice. He had traced a new history for mankind in which men, peoples and civilizations had followed, step by step, an inevitable cycle, not yet complete, to show that freedom was not a myth but a goal to be achieved.

46. Before Simón Bolívar, another illustrious Venezuelan, Francisco Miranda, the most universal American of the nineteenth century, had shown the way of redemption of the oppressed Latin American peoples. A third outstanding Venezuelan had been Andrés Bello, America's greatest humanist and its cultural "liberator". Those three had brought international recognition to their country which today, deeply moved and proud, was receiving a tribute of admiration and respect for one who, through the supreme sacrifice of his efforts, had laid the institutional foundation for Venezuela's political, economic and social sovereignty.

47. Simón Bolívar had conceived and designed, more than 100 years ago, a scheme similar to that which the members of the contemporary international community were attempting to bring about. His thoughts and deeds had not been based on provincial or local concepts, but had been universal in their scope. He had been a visionary statesman who had taught the most permanent lesson of unity for the achievement of peace. When he had ended, at Ayacucho, one of the most prolonged struggles of man for his freedom, he had convinced the Congress of Panama to establish the fundamental rules of a broad hemispheric co-operation.

48. A true nation-builder, he had also been the idealistic precursor of today's modern multinational organizations. The League of Nations, the United Nations and the Organization of American States, along with other experiments conceived by statesmen, internationalists and jurists to promote international co-operation in the search for peace, had been conceived many years before in the prodigious mind of Simón Bolívar. Venezuela would be displaying false modesty if it failed to note, before the Conference, some of the valuable ideological and conceptual contributions of Simón Bolívar to international institutions.

49. The generous act of tribute to the Liberator honoured both his memory and Venezuela. However, it should also be interpreted as a demonstration of international unity and solidarity, so indispensable in contemporary multinational society. Venezuela wished to interpret that grand gesture of friendly nations, not only as proof of their admiration for its hero and friendship for Venezuela, but also as a promise and hope whereby nearly all the countries of the world were seeking the instruments for understanding among peoples that would transcend naturally opposing interests and inevitable ideological differences and political systems.

50. Venezuela was satisfied and proud to serve as the scene of such an example of universal brotherhood since it was firmly convinced that only such fraternity could combine the necessary efforts and sacrifices to save the human race from the multiple dangers which it faced. However, with imagination and daring, there was still time to make the corrections which history required. Today's world and that of succeeding generations could still be saved from disaster. International social justice called for social and economic levelling which was only being partially achieved and in very few nations of the international community. The task was arduous, but inevitable and necessary.

51. Simón Bolívar had stated that the lessons of experience should not be forgotten and that the schools of Greece, Rome, France, England and America had taught the difficult science of establishing and preserving nations through appropriate, just, legitimate and, above all, useful laws, never forgetting that excellency in government did not reside in its theory, form or machinery, but in its being appropriate to the nature and character of the nation for which it was instituted.

52. He hoped that those great thoughts of the Liberator would guide peoples and Governments and that the spirit of that man of vision would inspire all to find the best way of bringing final and permanent peace to nations.

53. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela for his statement and said that, accompanied by the Chairmen of the Main Committees and the Drafting Committee, the Rapporteur-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Secretary, he would proceed to the National Pantheon to lay a wreath in commemoration of the anniversary of Simón Bolívar's birth.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

45th meeting

Friday, 26 July 1974, at 10.30 a.m.

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

Address by Mr. Luis Echeverría Álvarez, President of the United Mexican States

Mr. Luis Echeverría Álvarez, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted to the rostrum.

1. The PRESIDENT, speaking on behalf of the Conference, welcomed the President of the United Mexican States to the present meeting, which had been specially convened to hear an address from him. The Conference was honoured by the visit of the President, who had already shown his keen interest in promoting international accord in the sphere of economic relations between States by his initiative aimed at securing the adoption by the international community of a charter of economic rights and duties. The new international legal order governing the use of the oceans and their resources which the Conference was expected to formulate should, if it satisfied the principles of justice and equity, be a stimulus and an inspiration in the framing of that charter.

2. President ECHEVERRÍA ALVAREZ (Mexico) said that he was honoured to bring in person to the sister nation of Venezuela, with which Mexico shared so many ideals, a tribute of friendship and gratitude from the Mexican people. He wished to transmit the Mexican people's affection and appreciation to the President of Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez, the inheritor of the tradition of Bolívar, a friend, and a Latin American statesman. In greeting the distinguished assembly of representatives, he expressed his most fervent wishes for the success of the Conference and, on behalf of the delegation of Mexico, he paid a tribute to the President of the Conference, Mr. Amerasinghe, for the wisdom with which he was directing its proceedings.

3. It was the first time that a major conference for the codification of the law of nations had been held in a developing country. Venezuela, the country that was host to a conference of a unique kind, complexity and size, was providing a magnifi-

cent example of how a people and a government could assume and discharge responsibilities and tasks of unusual scope.

4. Mexico had a long and rich maritime tradition. Since the remote times when the early Chinese sailing ships had crossed the oceans, Mexico had served as a bridge between the commerce, culture and communications of the East and West.

5. Extending in all for 10,000 kilometres, the Mexican coastline was one of the longest in the world. Its coasts were bathed by three seas—the Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, in addition to the Gulf of California. The ample stocks of fish in Mexican waters were well known. The fact that the submerged part of the land territory contained vast deposits of oil and a number of minerals explained his Government's special concern to preserve and manage the marine resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the Mexican nation. It also accounted for Mexico's keen interest in the present Conference, quite apart from its desire to contribute to the creation of a new universal legal order for the sea.

6. The community of nations had been convened for a third time in order to codify and develop the law of the sea. What had begun in 1967 as a limited effort simply to establish a régime of the international sea-bed had grown into a vast undertaking for the review of maritime law as a whole. Thus, barely 15 years after its elaboration, it had been deemed necessary drastically to amend the impressive and almost comprehensive code of the sea constituted by the four Geneva Conventions of 1958 and even to question some of its basic principles.

7. The vertiginous speed with which obsolescence was overtaking international institutions was unparalleled in history and was principally due, as everyone agreed, to the swift and significant scientific and technological advances in the exploitation of the resources of the sea and the sea-bed. But that was not the only reason. The new law of the sea now in preparation was one more indication that the third world had ceased to be the passive object of international relations, and had now be-