

# **Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea**

1973-1982

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Document:-

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## **142<sup>nd</sup> Plenary meeting**

Extract from the *Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Volume XV (Summary Records, Plenary, General Committee and First Committee, as well as Documents of the Conference, Tenth and Resumed Tenth Sessions)*

# PLENARY MEETINGS

## 142nd meeting

Monday, 9 March 1981, at 3.30 p.m.

*Temporary President:* The Secretary-General

### Opening of the tenth session

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the tenth session of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

**Tribute to the memory of Mr. Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe, first President of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea**

*On the proposal of the Temporary President, the representatives observed a minute of silence.*

### Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

2. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that, in his report to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly,<sup>1</sup> he had stated that the work of the Conference could be completed in early 1981. Regrettably, it appeared that those expectations might have been affected by changing circumstances. Apart from the achievement of the specific objectives of the Conference, the potential impact of success on strengthening the role of the United Nations in finding viable solutions to great global issues was of the highest importance.

3. The nations of the world could not sensibly or safely face the future without a régime of law and order for the sea. Since all the problems of ocean space were closely interrelated and needed to be considered as a whole, it was obvious that only a generally acceptable convention could offer a solution that would take into account the sovereign equality of all States. In so doing the convention would facilitate international communication, promote the peaceful uses of the seas and oceans, ensure the equitable and efficient utilization of their resources and, above all, involve mankind as a whole in the study, protection and preservation of the marine environment. The problem confronting the Conference was larger than the separate and specific issues of ocean management, for the ocean was an essential source of life and had to be protected for future generations.

4. The work of the Conference to date had manifestly had a great influence on the general practice of Governments with regard to some aspects of the national jurisdiction of coastal States over areas of the sea adjacent to their coasts. Nevertheless, it would be a delusion to believe that unanimity of practice on all aspects pertaining to the peaceful uses of ocean space would develop in the absence of a general rule of law.

The delicate balance between the rights and duties of States, whether coastal or land-locked, would not be maintained if left exclusively to the unilateral decisions taken by individual countries to protect what they perceived to be their national interests. States, particularly those facing enclosed or semi-enclosed seas, had many different problems and might have to find different solutions in the absence of a general rule of law acceptable to all.

5. The rational management of the sea-bed and ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction as the common heritage of mankind would likewise be impossible in the absence of a convention implementing the Declaration of Principles adopted by the General Assembly in 1970.<sup>2</sup>

6. The international community had given the Conference the great responsibility of adopting a legal régime and establishing machinery not only to ensure that the exploration and exploitation of the ocean's resources would be conducted for the benefit of mankind as a whole but also effectively to protect the marine environment from any harmful effects of such activities.

7. Every nation, large or small, had an interest in those resources and in the preservation of the sea-bed environment and was entitled to participate, through adequate international machinery, in the study and protection of the delicate ecological system that might affect the survival of future generations. The work performed by the Conference in that connexion could be preserved only if it was adopted as a general rule of law.

8. Younger people throughout the world were, to their credit, expressing their concern over such issues. It is they who will inherit the legacy of the endeavours of the international community to establish a world order for the oceans, and that inheritance has to be safeguarded.

9. The issues at stake were serious, and it was his hope that existing disappointments or delays would soon be overcome. It was essential to persevere until the Conference's noble effort had been crowned with success.

10. He understood that no agreement had yet been reached on the election of the President of the Conference. The meeting would therefore be adjourned in order to enable further consultations to take place.

*The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.*

<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 1 (A/35/1).*

<sup>2</sup> *Declaration of Principles Governing the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor, and the Subsoil Thereof, beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction (resolution 2749 (XXV)).*