

42nd meeting

Friday, 14 April 1978, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. P. B. ENGO (United Republic of Cameroon).

Organization of work

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, after consultations with the President of the Conference and the chairmen of the various regional groups, it was proposed that the composition of the negotiating group on item (1) of recommendation 5 in document A/CONF.62/62 should be as follows: for the African group—Egypt, Gabon, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia; for the Asian group—China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Singapore and Viet Nam; for the Latin American group—Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago; for the Eastern European group—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; for the group of Western European and other States—Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom; and for countries not belonging to a group—the United States of America. It had been proposed by consensus that Mr. Njenga of Kenya should be chairman of the negotiating group. In the absence of objections, he would take it that the Committee agreed to his appointment.

It was so decided.

2. Mr. DE SOTO (Peru) and Mr. ROZENTAL (Mexico) both wished it to be placed on record that they reserved their position with respect to the composition of negotiating group 1 as just announced by the Chairman, since it did not correspond to the agreement reached within the Latin American group at its meeting on the previous day with respect to the number of seats that would be reserved for its members. They further insisted that the composition of the group should not be taken as a precedent.

3. The CHAIRMAN assured the representatives of Peru and Mexico that their observations would be placed on record. The nominations agreed upon in the morning were not intended to be taken as a precedent but merely met the need to establish a nucleus of States for purposes of negotiation. He hoped it was understood, however, that every delegation had the right to participate in the discussions of the groups on an equal footing; and all delegations were, in fact, encouraged to do so.

4. Mr. TORRAS DE LA LUZ (Cuba) said that his delegation shared the reservations expressed by the representatives of Peru and Mexico with regard to the membership of the group, but accepted the assurances given by the Chairman with regard to the participation of all delegations in the discussions.

5. Mr. AL-NIMER (Bahrain) recalled that it had been announced in the General Committee that, at the close of the discussions, consultations would be held between the chairmen of the various negotiating groups and the nucleus coun-

tries. He hoped that the views of the other countries that had participated in the discussions on an equal footing would be taken into account in those consultations.

6. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of Bahrain that the views of all the countries that had participated in the discussions would be taken into account so that a universally acceptable treaty could be drafted. The purpose of departing from United Nations practice and establishing a number of groups that were all open-ended was precisely to give non-members the same right to express their views on a question of particular interest to them and to have those views taken into account. It was the hope of the Conference that every member of the First Committee would make a determined effort to achieve compromise solutions on the outstanding issues in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

7. Mr. OLZVOY (Mongolia) asked by what criteria the members of the negotiating group had been chosen. It was his delegation's understanding that the members were to be nominated by their respective regional groups in order to ensure that all the interests involved were properly represented.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that the list of members had been drawn up in consultation between the President of the Conference, the chairmen of the committees and the chairmen of the different regional groups, and it had been decided in the plenary that all States should be allowed to participate in the negotiating groups on an equal footing with the elected members.

9. Mr. BARNES (Liberia) and Mr. FONSECA TRUQUE (Colombia) stressed the fact that membership of the nucleus was not a privilege but a position of special responsibility for the progress of the work.

10. Mr. WUENSCHÉ (German Democratic Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that it was not for the Committee to discuss decisions reached in the plenary. The decision to set up negotiating groups in which non-member States could participate on an equal footing was precisely a decision taken in the plenary. He stressed the importance of proceeding as soon as possible to a discussion of the hard-core issues beginning with item (1) of recommendation 5, on the system of exploration and exploitation and resource policy.

11. Mr. KOH (Singapore) asked whether discussion of item (2) could be postponed until the following Tuesday to allow the regional groups more time for consultation. He wondered whether the Chairman wished to have item (3) discussed in the full Committee or proposed to set up a negotiating group for the purpose.

12. The CHAIRMAN agreed that the discussion on item (2) should be deferred until the following Tuesday, when he would also express his preference with regard to the second question put by the representative of Singapore.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.