

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

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## **51<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Second Committee**

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## 51st meeting

Wednesday, 29 June 1977, at 10.50 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. A. AGUILAR (Venezuela).

**Request for a study by the Secretariat on the implications of various formulae for the definition of the outer edge of the continental margin (concluded)**

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the 50th meeting the delegations of Colombia and Austria had been asked to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to define the terms of reference for the study which they had proposed in the Committee. They had proceeded to do so and he called upon the Secretary of the Committee to read out the draft statement prepared by the Secretariat concerning the results of their discussions.
2. Mr. BARSEGOV (Secretary of the Committee) read out the draft statement, which indicated that it was understood that the study would be a preliminary one, including maps, and that the purpose would be to show both on maps and in figures the difference in area between various approaches to the problem of the limit of national jurisdiction over the continental shelf. The maps should show a 200-mile line around all elevations permanently above the surface of the sea, a line showing a 500-meter isobath, a line showing the outer edge of the margin and lines illustrating the effect of the Irish formula. The 200-mile line on the maps should be drawn utilizing known baselines or, where baselines either had not been established or were not known, the line would be based on the configuration of the coast. It was clear that the Secretariat would have to use such information as it might be able to secure in the public domain or information furnished by delegations. The Secretariat would not be expected to assume responsibility for the information so obtained beyond identifying the nature of the source.
3. Should the Committee decide to request a preliminary study along these lines, the Secretariat would do its utmost to have the results ready by the end of the current session. However, the Secretariat felt bound to point out that those results would necessarily be incomplete and would only be indicative of orders of magnitude with a substantial probability of error. Naturally, the Secretariat would appreciate as much assistance as delegations in a position to do so could provide, assuming that such was the wish of the Committee.
4. Mr. LISTRE (Argentina) said that his delegation had no formal objection to the proposed study but felt that the map should show the continental margin in all cases rather than only when it exceeded the limit of 200 miles

beyond the baseline and that it should also show the limit of the continental shelf in accordance with the criterion of exploitability prevailing under international law by virtue of article 2 of the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf<sup>1</sup> and in the light of currently available technology. His delegation also wished to know the financial implications of the study.

5. Mr. MORALES SUAREZ (Colombia) said that the Argentine delegation's very useful suggestions, which would enhance the value of the proposed study, served to emphasize that the study would be a preliminary one and should be continued until delegations had obtained the greatest possible amount of information on the subject.

6. The CHAIRMAN suggested that Argentina's second request should be considered after the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had had an opportunity to comment on it.

7. Mr. LISTRE (Argentina) said that his delegation could wait for a reply to its second request but wished to know whether under the terms of reference of the study as indicated in the draft statement the continental margin would appear in all cases, regardless of whether it exceeded the 200-mile limit.

8. Mr. TUERK (Austria) said that during the discussions with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General it had been concluded that it was not necessary to include the continental margin when it did not exceed the 200-mile limit but his delegation had no objection to Argentina's request.

9. Mr. MWANGAGUHUNGA (Uganda) said that the agreement which had been reached indicated that the study would be only a preliminary one and that there would be a substantial margin of error. His delegation, however, felt that the margin of error must not be significant if the Committee was to take an objective decision which would stand the test of time.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection he would take it that the Committee adopted the joint proposal by Colombia and Austria as set forth in the draft statement on the understanding that Argentina's requests would be considered after the comments of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had been heard.

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 499, p. 312.