



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/44/125
13 February 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-fourth session

QUESTION OF ANTARCTICA

Letter dated 13 February 1989 from the Permanent Representative of
Malaysia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Uganda and Zambia, I have the honour to transmit to you, annexed to this letter, a statement on the question of Antarctica.

We should be grateful if you would arrange to have this letter and its annex distributed as an official document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Question of Antarctica".

(Signed) RAZALI Ismail
Ambassador

ANNEX

Statement by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Uganda and Zambia on the question of Antarctica

Reports of the oil spill from the supply ship Bahia Paraiso, which ran aground on 28 January and sank on 1 February 1989 off the coast of the Western Antarctica Peninsula, raises again the important question of an appropriate machinery for the management of Antarctica in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The fragile and vulnerable nature of the continent's ecosystem makes it imperative that all activities on the continent be undertaken with full regard for the need to safeguard the continent from such dangers.

The oil spill from the Bahia Paraiso, reportedly carrying 250,000 gallons of diesel fuel, has already resulted in the killing of krill and has also affected the penguins, giant petrels, gulls and other forms of wild life near the site of the spill. An accident of this nature, unless attended to with swift and effective action, can turn out to be a major disaster to the continent's sensitive marine and terrestrial life system. The Bahia Paraiso accident underscores the need for a universal régime that would be able to assume responsibility in the event of threats to the environment. It is apparent that the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, despite their technological and scientific knowledge of the continent, have not lived up to their responsibilities to deal with such threats to the environment, due to the absence of appropriate institutional mechanisms within the Treaty system itself.

The debates on the question of Antarctica at the United Nations have drawn attention to the fragility of the Antarctica ecosystem and the necessity for a stringent multilateral framework negotiated with the full participation of all members of the international community in accordance with the common heritage principle. It was against this backdrop that the majority of Member States condemned the disregard by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties of General Assembly resolutions relating to Antarctica, particularly resolution 42/46 B of 30 November 1987, which, inter alia, called for a moratorium on the negotiations to establish a minerals régime in Antarctica.

The Bahia Paraiso incident further underscores the urgency of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties reconsidering the ratification of the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities and according full support to relevant General Assembly resolutions on Antarctica, particularly resolution 43/83 A of 7 December 1988.
