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CONSERVATION OF CLIMATE AS PART OF THE COMMON HERITAGE OF MANKIND

Report of the Second CommitteeRapporteur: Mr. Martin WALTER (Czechoslovakia)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 23 September 1988, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in its agenda the item entitled "Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind*" and to allocate it to the Second Committee, on the understanding that the item would first be introduced at a plenary meeting before its consideration by the Second Committee.
2. The Second Committee considered this item at its 21st to 26th, 30th and 44th meetings, on 24 to 28 October and 2 and 23 November 1988. An account of the Committee's discussion is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/43/SR.21-26, 30 and 44).
3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it a letter dated 9 September 1988 from the Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/43/241).

II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

4. At the 30th meeting, on 2 November, the representative of Malta introduced a draft resolution (A/C.2/43/L.17) entitled '*Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind*', which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Welcoming with appreciation the initiative taken by the Government of Malta in proposing for consideration by the Assembly the item entitled "Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of **mankind**",

"Concerned that certain human activities could change global climate patterns threatening present and future generations with severe economic and social consequences,

"Noting with concern that continued growth in atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse' gases could produce global warming with eventual rise in sea levels whose effects could be disastrous for mankind if timely steps are not taken at the national, regional and global levels,

"Concerned also that emissions of certain substances are depleting the **ozone** layer and thereby exposing **the earth's** surface to increased ultra-violet radiation, which may pose a threat to human health, agricultural productivity, animal and marine life and non-living things,

"Noting its resolution 42/186 on the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and resolution 42/187 on the report of the World Commission on Environment and **Development**,

"Convinced that climate change is a major challenge to sustainable development,

"Aware that considerable valuable, work at the scientific level has already been carried out on climate change and in particular by the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological **Organization** and the International Council of Scientific **Unions** and under the auspices of individual States,

"Convinced that the problem of climate change affects humanity as a whole and can only be confronted on a global basis so as to take into account the vital interests of all mankind,

"1. Recognizes that climate change is a common concern of mankind, since climate is an essential condition which sustains life on earth;

"2. Determines that urgent action must be taken to deal with the problem of climate change within a global framework;

"3. Appeals to Governments to become parties to international instruments elaborated specifically for the protection of the global environment and of the atmosphere;

"4. Reaffirms its resolution 42/186, in which it agreed that the United Nations Environment Programme should **attach** importance to the problem of global climate change and that the Executive Director of the United Nations

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Environment Programme should ensure that the Programme co-operated closely with the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Council of Scientific Unions and maintained an active role in the World Climate Programme;

"5. Notes the conclusions of the meeting held at Villach, Austria, in 1985, which, inter alia, recommended a programme on climate change to be promoted by Governments and the scientific community through the World Meteorological Organisation, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Council of Scientific Unions;

"6. Emphasizes the need to increase understanding of the world's climate system and to apply that understanding to human activities;

"7. Considers that activities in support of the World Climate Programme, approved by the Congress and Executive Council of the World Meteorological Organisation and elaborated in the system-wide medium-term environment programme for the period 1990-1995, approved by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, be accorded high priority by the relevant organs and programmes of the United Nations system;

"8. Welcomes the establishment by the World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme of an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to carry out internationally co-ordinated scientific assessments of the magnitude, timing and potential impact of climate change;

"9. Urges Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and scientific institutions, to treat the problem of climate change as a priority issue to accelerate specific action-oriented programmes and research on climate change, including its regional aspects and specific time-frames; and to contribute, as appropriate, with human and financial resources to multilateral efforts to protect the global climate)

"10. Calls upon other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, including the Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, the Centre for Science and Technology for Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations University, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, the International Maritime Organisation, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to support the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

"11. Encourages the convening of conferences on climate change, particularly global warming, at the national, regional and global levels in order to make all Governments, intergovernmental organisations and the international community better aware of the importance and urgency of dealing effectively with all aspects of climatic change resulting from human activities;

"12. Calls upon Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and industry to collaborate in making every effort to prevent further detrimental effects on climate and other activities affecting the ecological balance;

"13. Reauests the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, together with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change immediately to initiate action leading, possibly within the next eighteen months, to a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to:

"(a) The state of knowledge of the science of climate and climatic change, with special emphasis on global warming;

"(b) Programmes and studies of the social and economic impact of climate change particularly global warming;

"(c) Possible policy responses by Governments and others to delay, limit or mitigate the impact of adverse climate change;

"(d) Relevant treaties and other legal **instruments** dealing with climate:

"(e) Elements for possible inclusion in a future international convention on climate;

"14. Reuuests the Secretary-Genera to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Governments, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and well-established scientific institutions with expertise in matters concerning climate;

"15. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution:

"16. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of the forty-fourth session the item entitled 'Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind'."

5. At the 44th meeting, on 23 November, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. José Fernández (Philippines), informed the Committee that, as a result of informal consultations, agreement had been reached on a revised text of the draft resolution (A/C.2/43/L.17/Rev.1) entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind", sponsored by Malta. Subsequently, Australia, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, Fiji, Finland, India, Jamaica, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Sweden, Togo, the United Kinadom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Vanuatu joined in sponsoring the revised draft resolution.

6. At the same meeting, before the adoption of the revised draft resolution, **statements** were made by the representatives of Malta, the Waited Kingdom of Great

Britain and Northern Ireland, Papua New Guinea (on behalf of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Member States that are members of the South Pacific Forum), Jamaica, Norway, India, Venezuela, Canada, Colombia, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Morocco, El Salvador and Togo (see A/C.2/43/SR.44).

7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.17/Rev.1 without a vote (see para. 9).

8. After the adoption of the draft resolution, the representatives of the United States of America and Egypt made statements.

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE

9. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

The General Assembly,

Welcoming with appreciation the initiative taken by the Government of Malta in proposing for consideration by the Assembly the item entitled "Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind",

Concerned that certain human activities could change global climate patterns threatening present and future generations with potentially severe economic and social consequences,

Noting with concern that the emerging evidence indicates that continued growth in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse" gases could produce global warming with eventual rise in sea levels, whose effects could be disastrous for mankind if timely steps are not taken at all levels,

Recognizing the need for additional research and scientific studies into all sources and causes of climate change,

Concerned also that emissions of certain substances are depleting the ozone layer and thereby exposing the earth's surface to increased ultra-violet radiation, which may pose a threat, inter alia, to human health, agricultural productivity and animal and marine life, and reaffirming in this context the appeal, contained in its resolution 42/182 of 11 December 1987, to all States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its related 1987 Montreal Protocol as soon as possible,

Noting its resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 of 11 December 1987 on the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1/ respectively,

Convinced that changes in climate have an impact on development,

Aware that a considerable amount of valuable work, particularly at the scientific level and in the legal field, has already been initiated on climate change, in particular by the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organisation and the International Council of Scientific Unions and under the auspices of individual States,

Welcoming the convening in 1990 of the Second World Climate Conference,

Noting also the conclusions of the meeting held at Villach, Austria, in 1985, which, inter alia, recommended a programme on climate change to be promoted by Governments and the scientific community with the collaboration of the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Council of Scientific Unions,

Convinced that climate change affects humanity as a whole and should be confronted within a ~~global framework~~ so as to take into account the vital interests of all mankind,

1. Recognizes that climate change is a common concern of mankind, since climate is an essential condition which sustains life on earth;

2. Determines that necessary and timely action should be taken to deal with climate change within a global framework;

3. Reaffirms its resolution 42/184 of 11 December 1987, in which, inter alia, it agreed with the Governing **Council** of the United Nations Environment Programme that the Programme should attach importance to the problem of global climate change and that the Executive Director should ensure that the Programme co-operates closely with the World Meteorological Organization and the International Council of Scientific Unions and maintains an active, influential role in ~~the~~ World Climate Programme;

4. Considers that activities in support of the World Climate Programme, approved by the Congress and Executive Council of the World Meteorological Organization and elaborated in the system-wide medium-term environment programme for the period 1990-1995, approved by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, be accorded high priority by the relevant organs and programmes of the United Nations system;

1/ See A/42/427, annex.

5. Endorses the action of the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme in jointly establishing an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to provide internationally co-ordinated scientific assessments of the magnitude, timing **and** potential environmental and socio-economic impact of climate change and realistic response strategies, and expresses appreciation for the work already initiated by the Panel;

6. Urges Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and scientific institutions to **treat** climate change as a priority issue, to undertake and promote specific, co-operative action-oriented programmes and research so as to increase understanding on all sources and causes of climate change, including its regional aspects and specific time-frames as well as **the** 'cause and **effect** relationship of human activities and climate, and to contribute, as **appropriate, with human and** financial resources to efforts to protect the global climate;

7. Calls upon all relevant **organizations** and programmes of the United Nations system to support the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

8. Encourages the convening of conferences on climate change, particularly global warming, at the national, regional and global levels in order to make the international community better aware of the importance of dealing effectively and in a timely manner with all aspects of climate change resulting from certain human activities;

9. Calls upon Governments and intergovernmental organisations to collaborate in making every effort to prevent detrimental effects on climate **and** other activities affecting the ecological balance, and also calls upon non-governmental organizations, industry and other productive sectors to play their due role;

10. Requests the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization and the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, utilizing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, immediately to initiate action leading, as soon as possible, to a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to:

(a) The state of knowledge of the science of climate and climatic change;

(b) Programmes and studies on the social and economic impact of climate change, including global warming;

(c) Possible response strategies to delay, limit or mitigate the impact of adverse climate change;

(d) The identification and possible strengthening of relevant existing international legal instruments having a bearing on climate;

(e) Elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate;

11. Recruests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Governments, as well as intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and well-established scientific institutions with expertise in matters concerning climate;

12. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

13. Decides to include this question in the provisional agenda. of its forty-fourth session, without prejudice to the application of the principle of biennialisation.