

REPRESENTATION IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

United Nations

During 1968, the United Nations saw the admission of Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea and Swaziland, which brought total membership to 126.

As in 1967, the Middle East situation continued to be a main source of contention in the Security Council, in plenary sessions of the General Assembly, and in the Special Political Committee in connection with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). A great deal of informal discussion and negotiation was carried out in support of the efforts of Ambassador Jarring (the Secretary-General's special representative) to bring about a peaceful settlement between Arabs and Israelis. Other areas of tension -- Nigeria, Czechoslovakia and Vietnam -- while not agenda items, nevertheless affected the atmosphere of the twenty-third session and coloured the views expressed by member nations on a number of other questions.

The twenty-third session of the General Assembly has been described as a not conspicuously productive session. Progress was made, however, in several fields which hold some promise for the future. A number of disarmament resolutions were adopted, one of which urged the opening of talks between the principal nuclear powers on strategic arms limitations (SALT), which are regarded as crucial to progress in the field of disarmament. The resumed twenty-second session had commended the conclusion by the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC) of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The problem of human environment and questions related to making more effective use of the world's limited resources under international co-operation were focal points at the twenty-third session, where debate ranged from the sea-bed and ocean-floor and pollution to questions of outer space. A resolution sponsored by 52 nations, providing for the First International Conference on Human Environment, to be held in 1972, was largely the result of a Swedish-Canadian initiative, as was the General Assembly's decision to establish a working group on direct broadcasting from satellites.

In the field of economic development, a number of important resolutions were passed, some of which dealt with resources of the sea, edible protein, the outflow of trained personnel and multilateral food aid. The foremost of these established a preparatory committee for an enlarged Economic Committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to prepare for the Second Development Decade. An attempt by developing countries to suspend South Africa from membership in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), a controversial and divisive issue which raised important legal and constitutional questions, was blocked in the General Assembly.