

There will obviously arise a number of legal problems in respect of matters now before us. As of now, there exists only one international instrument dealing with the exploration and the exploitation of the resources of the seabed and the sub-soil of submarine areas. That is the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf. This Convention in principle is limited to submarine areas adjacent to the coast but lying beyond the territorial sea. However, while the inner limit of the immediately adjacent coast is adequately described in international instruments as "the territorial sea", the outer limits are at present subject to a definition based upon the test of exploitability - a definition which would eventually permit coastal states to explore and exploit the resources of the abyssal depths. But, if exploitation of the abyssal depths beyond the continental shelf were in fact to occur on this basis, this would inevitably result in the carving of the ocean floor into areas over which individual states would exercise or seek to exercise sovereign rights; it could eventually give rise to serious differences between states whose coasts are opposite one another; and it could also lead to a situation where less developed countries would be at a definite disadvantage. That is one of the problems which has to be faced. Before the United Nations can begin to seek to establish an international juridical regime for the deep seabed, capable of avoiding claims to national sovereignty and providing an