

86. The concept of an international system of verification is shared by many delegations. The representative of India, Ambassador Husain, for instance, stated on 17 April last:

"The issue of verification for a sea-bed treaty would have to be dealt with in the light of the principle of international means of verification, so that all parties could feel assured that the prohibitions of the treaty were being complied with. The right of verification would need to be available to all parties and denied to none." (ENDC/PV.404, para.70).

87. We noted with particular attention also the view expressed on 22 July by the representative of the United Arab Republic, Ambassador Khallaf, when he said:

"A system of verification and inspection, in order to be both workable and attractive, should ... take into due consideration the manifold interests of the large part of the community of nations. In this light it becomes of the utmost importance that such a system should be tailored in such a way as to afford every country, even a small country, an opportunity to put it into operation whenever it deems it necessary. The right to inspect should therefore acquire, as far as possible, practical value for all. Without that a non-armament agreement on the sea-bed would fall short of enlisting the wide adherence which is an essential factor if it is to be meaningful." (ENDC/PV.421, para.114).

88. The two draft treaties now before the Conference, the Soviet draft treaty — to which we have already referred — and that submitted by the United States delegation (ENDC/249) contain considerable differences regarding the main elements of the agreement we are called upon to elaborate: the nature of the prohibition, its field of application and the methods of verification. The solutions we arrive at must represent the reflection of the willing agreement of the member States and the political, economic and security interests of all countries. The final regulation must ensure the exploration, exploitation and utilization for purely peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor and the subsoil thereof beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. At the same time it must respect the sovereign rights of States over the continental shelf and over the natural riches to be found in the area contained within the limits of national jurisdiction, as well as the international norms in force governing the régime of the high seas.

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62. I should like now to refer to the problem of verification and control of the obligations under the treaty.

63. The primary consideration here is that the system of verification and control should be in keeping with the nature and scope of the obligations assumed under the treaty and with its geographic area of application. This concordance is essential, but not exclusively so, because of the right proportion that there must be between the risks and the magnitude of the control that is exercised. It is easy in this matter to fall into the temptation of aspiring to exercise a control that is perhaps excessive and complex and is in fact unnecessary. As the Soviet representative very rightly said (ENDC/PV.400, para.25), to areas where there are no national borders — such as Antarctica, outer space and the sea-bed and ocean floor — the principle of free access for all parties can be applied fully and is the most complete and effective method of control — especially when, one might add, they are unpopulated. Furthermore, that method is the simplest and most economical.

64. Under article 2 of the Soviet draft, all installations or structures emplaced on the sea-bed or the ocean floor "shall be open on the basis of reciprocity to representatives