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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF THE
SEA-BED AND OCEAN FLOOR BEYOND THE
LIMITS OF NATIONAL JURISDICTION

Study on marine pollution which might arise from the
exploration and exploitation of the sea-bed and the
ocean floor and the subsoil thereof beyond the limits
of national jurisdiction

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. The General Assembly in its resolution 2467 B (XXIII), adopted 21 December 1968, considering that:

"in connexion with the elaboration of principles underlying possible future international agreements for the area concerned, a study should be made with a view to clarifying all aspects of protection of the living and other resources of the sea-bed and ocean floor, the superjacent waters and the adjacent coasts against the consequences of pollution and other hazardous and harmful effects arising from various modalities of such exploration and exploitation",

and considering further that:

"such a study should take into consideration the importance of minimizing interference between the many means by which the wealth of the ocean space may be harvested, and that it should extend to the examination of the circumstances in which measures may be undertaken by States for the protection of the living and other resources of those areas in which pollution detrimental to those resources has occurred or is imminent",

requested:

"the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the appropriate and competent body or bodies presently undertaking co-ordinated work in the field of marine pollution control, to undertake the study referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 above and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction."

2. In order to secure the co-operation of all appropriate and competent body or bodies undertaking work in the field of marine pollution, and in order to define the scope and the ways of implementing the said study and to prepare its outline, the Secretary-General, following the suggestion of the ACC Sub-Committee on Marine Science and its Application, convened a meeting of representatives of interested agencies and organizations. That meeting was held on 11 July 1969 at the World Meteorological Organization headquarters in Geneva and attended by the representatives of the United Nations, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

3. It was agreed that the study would deal essentially with the pollution arising from various modalities of the exploration and exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed and the ocean floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The study would also take into account other aspects of pollution and hazardous and harmful effects on the whole marine environment and on men, if related to this exploration and exploitation.

4. It is contemplated that the study should cover the following points:

(a) Definition of the problem of marine pollution (identification of hazardous and harmful effects resulting from present exploration and exploitation of the resources of the sea-bed and ocean floor and trends - possible levels and extent of pollution and order of magnitude of the problem);

(b) Causes, types, effects and level of marine pollution (geological and geophysical prospecting - petroleum drilling operations - solid mineral dredging);

(c) Research requirements (research on ways and methods of minimizing pollution produced by exploration and exploitation activities - research on the effects, movement and ultimate fate of pollutants - research on abatement methods - research on measuring and monitoring techniques);

(d) Legal aspects of the problem;

(e) Suggestions for action required (monitoring systems and programmes - prevention and protection measures).

5. In preparing this report due account would be taken of some recent related studies and programmes, such as the report of the first session, held at the headquarters of IMCO in March 1969, of the joint (IMCO/FAO/WMO/UNESCO) group of experts on the scientific aspects of marine pollution, the report of the joint working party of the Advisory Committee for Marine Research Resources, the Scientific Committee on Ocean Research and WMO (AGOR) on Global Ocean Research held in Ponza and Rome from 23 April to 7 May 1969 and the draft Comprehensive Outline of the scope of the long-term and expanded programme of oceanic exploration and research prepared by the Special Working Group of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on the Long-term and Expanded Programme at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 16 to 21 June 1969.

6. In this connexion, the Secretary-General would like to recall that he had previously requested the co-sponsoring agencies of the group of experts on scientific aspects of marine pollution to make its services available for the purpose of the study on the pollution effects resulting from the exploration and exploitation of the ocean floor. This joint group of experts has already started some preparatory work, and the co-sponsoring agencies offered that the group of experts continue to assist in preparing the draft sections of the study falling within its terms of reference. It was agreed that, on the basis of this work, the Secretary-General would circulate a first draft of the study to all the agencies and organizations concerned for comments, corrections or additions. A final consolidated study would then be prepared.

7. The present progress report is circulated for the information of the members of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction, and further details will be transmitted as they become available.
