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

STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC UNIONS (ICSU)
REGARDING CONDITIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE CONDUCT OF OCEANIC RESEARCH

[Pursuant to the request of the representative of the United Kingdom to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction, made at the 38th meeting of Sub-Committee III, and conveyed to the Secretariat in his letter dated 3 April 1973, the following statement of the International Council of Scientific Unions is hereby circulated as a document of Sub-Committee III.]

Natural phenomena seldom correspond in location with national boundaries and their understanding often requires them to be studied wherever they extend or move. This is particularly true in the oceans where ease of access and flexibility of movement are essential for the effective conduct of oceanic research. Yet, because of the distribution of resources and of man's activities and their effects on the environment, much of this research must take place in the waters and on the sea-bed within a few hundred kilometres of the coast.

It is for this reason that in 1954 the Bureau of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) asked UNESCO to convey to the United Nations Organization its belief that fundamental marine research carried out with the intent of open publication is in the interest of the whole of mankind. In 1958, following the Convention on the Continental Shelf, the General Assembly of ICSU requested its National Members to assist in ensuring that permission to conduct investigations of the bottom and the subsoil of the continental shelf be granted to any bona fide scientific research vessel.

Scientific research leads to improved understanding of oceanic features, processes and populations and is, therefore, important for all mankind as a basis for the rational use of the oceans, their resources and for protection of the marine environment. Any regulations or restrictions, on the conduct of open research in the areas beyond the limits of territorial waters, would inhibit the advancement of scientific understanding and would be detrimental to the future welfare of people of all countries.

ICSU, believing that it is in the common interest of all nations to participate and co-operate in ocean research, and to facilitate it to the fullest extent possible, adopted at its 14th General Assembly in Helsinki the following resolution:

"Recalling the position on fundamental research taken by the ICSU Bureau in 1954, and the resolution by the 8 General Assembly in 1958, on research on the continental shelf,

"Noting that the scientists of all countries should be able to conduct open research in the ocean, on the understanding that in so doing they accept an obligation to the adjacent coastal States to ensure that these States shall be able to participate in the research and share fully in its benefits,

"Recognizing that for many countries this will require that greater attention be paid and necessary assistance be provided to strengthen their capability to participate in the research and to utilize the results,

"Recognizing further that there must be an improvement in the exchange and dissemination of scientific information and in the other means whereby scientific results are made available,

"Recommends that in all cases, oceanic research should be conducted so as not to harm the environment or to interfere unjustifiably with other marine activities,

"Urges that every Nation concerned with developing the law of the sea give special consideration to the need for facilitating the conduct of open research in the ocean - research which is intended for everyone's benefit and is characterized by full and timely availability of research plans and results, and

"Requests its National Members to bring this important matter to the attention of their governments."
