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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 II

Letter dated 16 August 1973 from the Chairman of the Working Group
of the Whole addressed to the Chairman of Sub-Committee II

I have the honour to inform you of the progress of the work of the Working Group of the Whole of Sub-Committee II.

At the meeting of officers of the plenary Committee held on Monday, 6 August 1973, the question of discussion of reports in Sub-Committees and Working Groups came up for consideration. After a discussion on the subject, the officers set the date of 15 July as a time-limit, to be applied flexibly, for the discussion of reports in the Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

At the Committee's 100th meeting, held on Monday, 13 August, the Chairman reminded the Committee that it had been decided that the Working Groups were to finish their work by 15 August, on the understanding that they could still meet after that date if necessary.

At the meeting of the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairmen of Sub-Committees held on Friday, 10 August, it was stated that the Working Group of the Whole needed more meetings in order to continue and complete its work. At the Committee's 100th meeting I stated that it was desirable to allow the Group the time it still needed in order to complete its work. In the course of several meetings of the Working Group of the Whole, the members stated that, in view of the particularly difficult task entrusted to the Group and the complexity of the subjects it had to deal with, it needed to be allowed as many meetings as possible. It was consequently decided, at the last meeting of the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairmen of Sub-Committees, that in the week 13 to 17 August the Working Group would hold seven meetings, including a meeting on Friday afternoon, 17 August. It was further decided that Sub-Committee II would hold three meetings on Monday, 20 August.

Also at the Committee's 100th meeting, with your consent, I delivered an oral report on recent progress in the Working Group. That report is dated 13 August. It refers to the reports I have made on the work of the Working Group of the Whole (see documents A/AC.138/SR.93 and 95, A/AC.138/SC.II/SR.57, 62, 65 and 71). The latest report is reproduced in document A/AC.138/SR.100.

In the light of all these progress reports on the work of the Working Group of the Whole, therefore, I consider that all delegations have been well informed about that work.

With regard more specifically to the latest activities of the Working Group of the Whole, the Group has made appreciable progress since the members have been supplied with such useful tools as the comparative table and consolidated texts. Variants have been submitted to the Secretariat on item 2 (territorial sea) and related questions; item 4 (straits used for international navigation); item 16 (archipelagos); item 5 (continental shelf); item 6 (exclusive economic zone); item 6 (preferential rights); item 8.4 (management and conservation of living resources); item 9 (rights and interests of land-locked countries); item 10 (rights and interests of shelf-locked States and States with narrow shelves or short coastlines); and item 11 (rights and interests of States with broad shelves). Hence the Secretariat is now in possession of a great many variants in the form of formulae, draft articles or parts of draft articles. At its 40th meeting, held on 15 August, the Working Group of the Whole decided, in order to expedite its work, that delegations might transmit direct to the Secretariat, not later than Friday, 17 August, any variants which they might wish to see included in a text containing all variants. What is needed now is to sort these variants, set them in order and classify them item by item in accordance with the list of subjects and issues. It was decided that the Chairman of Sub-Committee II and the Chairman of the Working Group would use their influence to reduce the number of variants, so far as possible, to a reasonable figure. The three meetings assigned to the Working Group by the officers last Monday will be used for this purpose.

I am sending you this letter for information. I would emphasize that its contents are purely preliminary and not to be regarded as a report. I should be grateful if, as Chairman of Sub-Committee II, you would kindly bring this letter to the notice of the Sub-Committee's members.

I would also inform you that I intend to submit to Sub-Committee II a report on the work of the Working Group of the Whole at the beginning of next week. This report will be short and simple, and no attempt will be made to reproduce or analyse the views expressed in the course of discussion. The report will lay the stress on any tangible results which the Working Group manages to achieve and which may facilitate the task of preparing for the Conference.

(Signed) Moncef KEDADI

Chairman of the Working Group of the Whole
of Sub-Committee II